

An Investigation of the EFL Learners' Perceptions about Virtual Classes During COVID-19 in Hafr Al Batin University

Aishah M. Mubarak^{1*}, Intisar Hassan Abdel Magid²

^{1,2}Assistant Professor, Hafr Al Batin University KSA Al- Khafji University College, English and Translation Programme

ABSTRACT

COVID-19 pandemic and the following preventive measures required a transition from the traditional face to face learning methods to the online ones. The study aimed to investigate the EFL Learners' perceptions about virtual classes during the pandemic in Hafr Al Batin University in Saudi Arabia. In the study, a quantitative research method was adopted. It aims at assessing EFL learners' perspectives towards virtual classes and the main benefits gained from them. The participants were composed of randomly selected a hundred and thirty-four Saudi female undergraduate EFL students at the University of Hafr Al Batin. The data were collected via a thirty-item questionnaire developed by the researcher. The results revealed that the EFL learners at Hafr Al Batin University were positively disposed toward virtual classes. The merits of virtual classes that the participants cite were efficient communication, immediate feedback, and exciting teaching methods and materials. The study recommended virtual classes for learning and teaching in EFL environments like Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: COVID- 19, EFL Learners, Perceptions, University students, Virtual classes.

INTRODUCTION

One of COVID-19's consequences was the shutdown of almost all educational institutions across the globe. This closure has hastened the expansion implementation of the online learning environment, ensuring that the educational process is not disrupted (Çalık & Altay, 2021). Consequently, many institutions developed an interest in delivering course content online, engaging learners, and conducting assessments via various computer applications. The unexpected transition of traditional classes to online classes compelled Saudi universities to search for the appropriate alternatives among the available applications. During COVID-19, the usage of online modalities is expected to rise, thus it's important to evaluate their efficiency in teaching and learning processes from many perspectives. In this scenario, Blackboard has been a popular learning platform, and this necessitates testing its efficiency through investigating users' perceptions to promote its performance.

Variations exist in learner perceptions of virtual learning. This study aims to identify the general trend of EFL learners' perceptions of virtual classes and their views on the advantages and disadvantages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Virtual Learning

Technology is fully integrated into the educational process as a practical and preferred teaching aid. Dalgarno(2002) and Balcikanli, (2012) stated the the emergence of online learning was in the 2000s. Various circumstances and conditions influence online learning (Podhajecka, 2018). Garner and Rouse (2016) defined an online classroom as a non-restrictive, inexpensive, flexible, practical, and accessible online learning environment

In the mid of the Coronavirus pandemic, United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) suggested that universities, schools, and institutions adopt online teaching to ensure social distancing, in direct contrast to the traditional methods of teaching (Bansal, 2020; Doğan & Mirici, 2017). Students and teachers can access learning materials at any time and from any location during the teaching process when using online or virtual teaching.

Beatty (2013) defined an online classroom as an electronic classroom that can be elastic in time, content, and space. Çakýroglu, (2014) stated that all students can engage in them simultaneously with their instructors. Hussien (2016) claimed that online classes contain many of the same qualities as traditional classrooms, but without the same limits as traditional classrooms. They utilize communication between students and teachers, such as oral interaction, PowerPoint presentations, videos, and audio (Yadav, 2016). Students and teachers can use collaborative web browsing, whiteboards, break-out online rooms, sharing applications and other online

Corresponding Author e-mail: ammobaraki@uhb.edu.sa.

ORCID Number: 0000-0002-4505-5262

How to cite this article: Mubarak M A, Abdel Magid H I,(2022).

An Investigation of the EFL Learners' Perceptions about Virtual Classes During COVID-19 in Hafr Al Batin University. Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2022, 32-43

Source of support: Nil

Conflict of interest: None.

DOI: 10.47750/pegegog.12.03.04

Received : 06.10.2021

Accepted : 10.02.2022

Published: 01.07.2022

tools to collaborate on content (Cakiroglu, 2014; Salayo, 2021; Hamouda, 2020; Korkmaz & Mirici, 2021).

In the online teaching process, there is simultaneous logging in of the participants and the course instructor who provides the course material in a lecture. Most stakeholders are involved in this activity, sharing information, group discussions, question-answer sessions, etc. Here all the participants collaborate in sharing knowledge and participating in discussions (Mezirow, 2000). That is why it is also called collaborative group-based learning.

Blackboard Properties as a Platform

Blackboard is one of the most famous Learning Management Systems (LMS) (Narwani & Arif, 2008). This application includes course content, course portfolio, discussion forum, virtual classroom, assignment and test submissions, e-mails, and a grading center, to name a few tools and features. It's a platform for web-based meetings and collaborations. This allows for various teaching and learning methods to be used at the accessibility of course teachers and students. According to Alharbi (2015), the Blackboard is a collaborative learning modality designed to suit the educational process requirements. It is possible to schedule and record online sessions so that they can be accessed at any time. The declaration tool keeps students informed of all teaching activities and procedures on the Blackboard platform. Students and teachers communicate through forums and e-mails and the interaction and communication between student and teacher.

The researchers have found out many qualities of the Blackboard. Narwani and Arif (2008) reported that the Blackboard was supposed to be the most effective online learning and teaching platform for content and assessment handling. At the same token, Alamer (2020) noted that Blackboard was recognized for its ease-of-use, ubiquity, and user-friendliness. Gökgöz Gördeslio and Ergün Yüzer (2019) emphasized that Blackboard provide students with all features to accomplish the course and track their activities. According to Whitmer et al. (2016), all these characteristics of accessibility, quick feedback, and enhanced communication made Blackboard a unique learning platform from other Learning Management System applications. They provided students with a better chance to interact with teachers.

Because it also provides feedback on teaching and learning and quality guarantee (Dyson & Campello, 2003; Al-Ahdal & Alharbi). LMS tools have proved to be effective in education through students' perspectives, and utilization has become a well-established practice (Al-Dosari, 2011; Alshehri & Cumming, 2020; Dhawan, 2020; Hao, 2020; Yen, 2020). Such input is required to assure the virus's potential and usefulness (Weaver et al., 2008), particularly throughout the virus's transmission. In a study conducted at Qassim University, Hamouda (2020) assigned 70 English students into

two groups. The first one is called the control group, which consisted of 35 students, and the second group is experimental, which compromised 35 students. The researcher employed a questionnaire and an interview for data collection. The findings showed that students have positive attitudes towards utilizing online classes. These students considered that online learning is beneficial in improving their speaking skills. Another study conducted by Demuyakor (2020) assessed the opinions of Ghanaian international students who study in China. He investigated their opinion on online learning in higher educational institutions in Beijing. He administered an online survey. His study concluded that applying online learning was an excellent idea for most of the respondents. The impact of the online classroom on foreign /second language (L2) interaction was explored by Alahmadi and Alraddadi (2020). This study included ninety Saudi female undergraduate students join an English course in the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) in a Saudi English Language Centre. The participants in the study had positive perceptions regarding using online classes for L2 learning.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Virtual Learning

Positive Impact of Virtual Classes

Use of Technology: With the help of technology, in this contemporary era, virtual learning offers teaching-learning course materials in diverse forms such as audios and videos, slideshows, PDFs and word documents, e-mails, etc. It also provides free access to e-journals like PDFs. E-learning opens the doors for webinars and direct interaction between teachers through various chat forums providing the learners with clear, straightforward, comprehensive instructions for their better understanding.

Ease of Monitoring: In the traditional classroom, the students must take notes during the lecture. In online classes, however, the course can be recorded for future reference.

The Human Factor: Online Learning, even though helpful, does not mean learning by oneself. Instead, one needs guidance from the instructor.

Learn from the Safety of Your Home: Traditional learning, in this COVID-19 pandemic, is risky, and because of the nationwide lockdown imposed on schools and colleges for an indefinite period, it is not possible to continue the same. Thus, online courses are deemed to provide a secure and effective alternative to the traditional classroom.

Save Time and Money: With the non-resumption of traditional classroom teaching, online courses provide a more affordable means of education. The new mode of learning is also environment-friendly.

Bias-Free Allotment of Marks: Since the human intervention is limited (there being no physical exams) in the online result

management system, the student's results are unbiased and impartial. In the traditional classroom, the prejudices can creep in unknowingly, affecting the student's results and morale. In contrast to the above, the online result management system is free from such prejudices.

Readily Available Learning material: Absence from physical classrooms can hamper the learning process as what is missed once is usually not available again to the learners. E-learning is different as it is accessible anytime and anywhere. With learning apps such as Blackboard, one can access lectures recorded for asynchronous use.

Negative Impact of Virtual Classes

Virtual learning comes with its cons. The students have developed a casual attitude towards learning by being in their comfort zone, poor learning attitudes and self-discipline, and, sometimes, non-availability of appropriate learning materials. The students' significant obstacles in virtual learning are network issues, lack of communication and interaction, and inability to comprehend instructional goals, (Song et al., 2004).

Lack of Interaction: This can arise due to lethargic tendency, usually from the students' end. This passive tendency results from a physically relaxed learning environment and absence of interaction with peers and teachers, and limited opportunities for class participation on the patterns that the learners are habitual to. These factors also adversely affect learner motivation. Hence, there is no scope for error correction.

Lack of Motivation: In a traditional classroom scenario, the students are pushed towards achieving their learning objectives since peer pressure and ready availability of teacher feedback maintain a healthy pressure on the learners to learn. However, in the virtual learning environment, fewer such factors enable them to perform well. Students are left to find by themselves in most cases as there are no constant reminders to achieve their learning goals. Unlike traditional classes with a higher scope of adherence to the deadlines, there is no pressure. In online courses, the students are expected to confront complex learning material they have to accept without resistance. Subsequently, students who lack self-motivation and time management skills may often face difficulties abiding by deadlines. As it is, the students are challenged to be participative in the dull, monotonous routine of online learning; students find it difficult to follow the deadlines of the assignments.

Technical Difficulties: Students can face technical obstacles in their online learning process, and that can hamper their performance. Though a wide range of suitable technological devices is now available in the markets, these go redundant due to poor services issues such as downloading and installation, poor connectivity, and even low audio-visual quality (Favale et al., 2020).

Focus is on the Theory, not on the Practice: Online learning content primarily stresses theoretical aspects rather than making the students practice the acquired knowledge. This is a natural drawback as the very physical setting that can facilitate practice is missing in virtual education. The learning process cannot accomplish its maximum unless students run through what they have learned.

Virtual Learning Enhances Social Isolation: Studies in online learning conclude that students cannot balance their personal and social lives with their academics. E-learning methods, irrespective of any educational setting, tend to make even the actively participating students passive due to a lack of suitable interaction and discussion platforms. Consequently, many students and teachers who spend most of their time online begin to experience social isolation due to a lack of physical communication. This leads to several mental issues such as heightened stress, negativity, and anxiety. In a study, Boling et al. (2012) concluded that most of the respondents believed that online learning makes them isolated from their teachers, course content, and colleagues.

Online Student Feedback is Limited: Students can receive spot feedback in the class during traditional face-to-face learning. This facility enables them to stay more in line with the course content being taught, keeping their morale to learn high and self-confidence boosted. These are limiting factors in online learning. For example, in an E-learning scenario, students undergoing regular assessments become discontented when not given regular feedback. Jurik et al., (2014) highlighted that it is very significant to have communication between students and teachers. Verbal interactions between teachers and students and student qualities are essential for student learning and motivation (Alawamleh et al. 2020.)

Prevention of Use of Unfair Means during Online Assessments is Complicated

Online assessment is certainly a difficult task as teachers have no or limited means to check unfair means. In contrast to traditional assessments, students have various sources to access information/content during online reviews. In addition to this, without the proper identification system, students undertaking online assessments might use a proxy to take the evaluation instead, resulting in altogether deceptive test results.

Failure to Concentrate on Screens and Potential Distractions

During E-learning, one can encounter various disturbances from the surroundings, such as background noises, people moving around or passing by, etc. With no regular reminders from the faculty and classmates, the chances of getting distracted or missing the deadlines become relatively high. One has to keep oneself motivated and focused on completing

distance learning courses effectively. For most students, the biggest challenge they encounter is to focus on screens for a significant amount of time. Also, social media poses a more significant distraction. Thus, teachers are compelled to make their sessions concise and interactive to motivate the students.

Online Learning Requires Self-Discipline

Learners need a high degree of self-discipline in regular class scenarios by following rules and regulations. In the absence of physical classroom and class schedules, it becomes easy to lose concentration and allow the required time to complete the coursework. Disciplined students do avail the flexibility and convenience of online classes; however, undisciplined and unmotivated students suffer due to the lack of formal structure and schedule. This absence of guidance can result in students becoming undisciplined and less focused. On-spot quizzes can play a good role in keeping the students interactive and engaged.

The research questions of the study were formulated as in the following:

1. How do EFL learners at Hafr Al batin University perceive virtual classes during the pandemic?
2. What are the pros and cons of virtual classes compared with traditional classes?

METHODOLOGY

Research design:

In the study quantitative research design was adopted based on the data collected using a questionnaire. The other details about the methodology are presented below:

Setting & Participants

The setting of this study was Hafr Al Batin University, Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia, and the participants comprised randomly selected one hundred and thirty-four female EFL learners in Hafr Al Batin, Al- Kafji, Nasiriyah, and Quaryah Oliya. The median age of the participants fell at 21 years, and they broadly shared an EFL background with a minimum of seven years of exposure to language learning.

Instruments

The study data were collected using questionnaire which was administered via Google Forms to measure COVID- 19 commitment to social distancing.

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher and contained thirty close-ended statements, with each statement carrying a 5-point Likert Scale grade for a response. The range of the responses was from strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, and strongly disagree. The questionnaire contained within statements related to the advantages and disadvantages

of online classes for EFL students compared with traditional learning, divided into three sections. The first part of the questionnaire focused on the respondents' availability and ability to access the internet. In contrast, the second part covered the data on the positive impacts of online classes on EFL learners. In contrast, the third part concerned the Saudi student's negative perceptions of online courses in learning. Excel-based descriptive statistics tools were used to analyze the questionnaire data.

Procedures

The procedures followed were categorized into three stages. The first one included preparing the questionnaire relying on the paper's direct inquiries and objectives. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was evaluated by two Assistant Professors in English language teaching. Their comments were duly considered, and the questionnaire was modified accordingly. Afterward, the questionnaire was sent online to the participants. The data was then analyzed numerically using Excel software, and the findings were then discussed to answer the research questions and draw conclusions.

Reliability and Validity

This variable is described through 30 items. The Cronbach's alpha = 0.92, shows excellent reliability of the questionnaire; the validity statistic is high at 0.96.

Table 1: Reliability and Validity of the study

Variables	Reliability	validity	Items
Virtual learning environment	0.92	0.96	30

Data Analysis of the Questionnaire

The percentages and the frequencies of the respondents' responses were calculated by using Excel-based descriptive statistics tools to answer the study questions, and the data analysis was divided into three tables depending on the findings. It's worth noting how the students' answers were received using a 5-point Likert Scale, which was used to estimate the means and deviations based on Likert scale scores.

FINDINGS

Findings of the study are presented via tables and figures below.

As the Table 2 below shows about (85.1%) of the study participants have access to computers or laptops. (56.0%) join the Blackboard with their laptops, (41.8%) access the Blackboard with their mobile phone, and only (2.2%) use desktops (Table 2 and Fig. 1).

Eighty-five percent of the students have laptops and computers (Figure 2).

Most of the students use mobiles and laptops by a percentage of 41% and 56.7% respectively (Figure 3).

Table 2: Availability of IT Facilities for Respondents)

	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mode	Direction	Standard deviation
Do you have a computer/Laptop?	Yes	114	85.1%	1	Yes	0.357
	No	20	14.9%			
How do you access the Blackboard?	Mobile phone	56	41.8%	2	Laptop	0.535
	Laptop	75	56.0%			
	Desktop	3	2.2%			
Is the internet /Wi-Fi Connection available at home home?	Yes	128	95.5%	1	Yes	0.207
	No	6	4.5%			

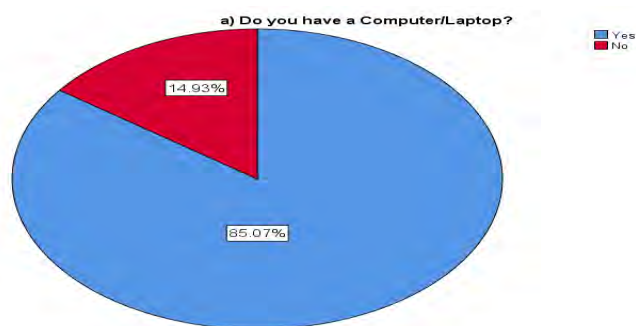


Fig. 1: Possession of a Computer/Laptop

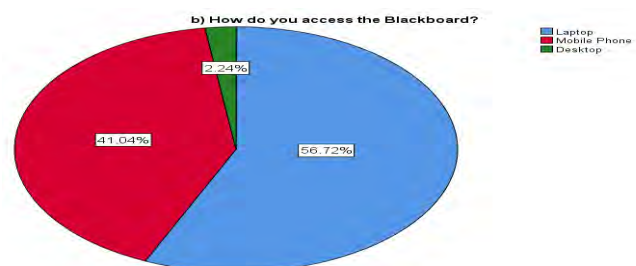


Fig. 2: Methods to access the Blackboard

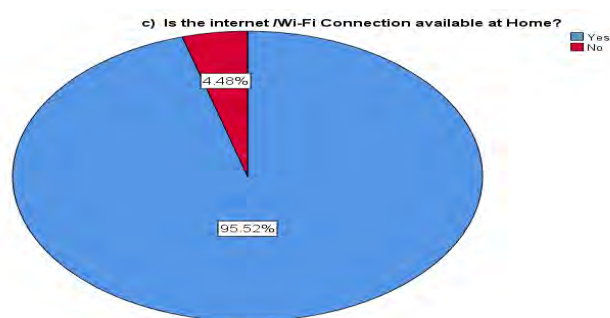


Fig.3: The availability of internet /Wi-Fi Connection at Home

Ninety-five point five percent of the students use the internet /Wi-Fi Connections available at home. Specific values are identified to analyze participants' responses for closed questionnaires. These values were assigned statistically.

All participants' responses toward the availability and ability to manage online learning showed that they have adequate facilities and equipment. They are also good at

Table 3: Data analysis and interpretation according to Likert scale

Statements	Responses
Strongly agree	1 to 1.79
Agree	1.80 to 2.59
Uncertain	2.60 to 3.39
Disagree	3.40 to 4.19
Strongly disagree	4.20 to 4.20+

Table 4: Measurement of the participants' availability and ability to manage online learning

	Mean	Standard deviation	Direction
Total	1.68	0.670	Strongly agree

Table 5: Measurement of EFL students' Positive Perceptions toward Virtual classes

	Mean	Standard deviation	Direction
Total	2.02	0.888	agree

handling computer and IT skills to use online learning tools properly with a mean of 1.68 ± 0.670 , corresponding to *Strongly Agree* shown in table 4.

Table 5 presents respondents' positive views towards virtual learning. It shows that EFL students have positive perceptions with a mean of 2.02 ± 0.888 , corresponding to agree according to the Likert Scale above.

As shown in the table 6, participants do not have negative perspectives toward Virtual classes with a mean of 3.41 ± 1.040 , which corresponding to *Disagree* according to the Likert scale above.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Perfect IT knowledge and availability of technical devices and internet connections are essential components to ensure successful virtual education. This study set out to evaluate learners' perceptions on these counts. The findings show that the participants have sufficient internet accessibility equipment and computer knowledge to manage online learning.

In terms of the respondents' perspectives on online courses, it is clear from the respondents' responses to the questionnaire that the average response was Agree

Table 6: Measurement of EFL students' Negative Opinions about Virtual classes

	Mean	Standard deviation	Direction
Total	3.41	1.040	Disagree

(see Table 5), indicating that they had a positive attitude toward online classrooms as compared to traditional ones. Hamouda's study (2020) came to the same conclusion as it found that students generally preferred the virtual courses. Our results also agree with what Demuyakor (2020), found regarding the Ghanaian students' opinion about virtual classes.

To answer the second research question, the study participants highlighted certain advantages provided by virtual classes compared to traditional ones, such as the suitability of the home environment for participating in online lectures, time-saving, and the availability of good communication with the teachers during online classes. Moreover, they asserted that all their questions could be clarified during the sessions quickly, and they regularly receive assignments/ homework from teachers after online courses. These findings agree with Alahmadi and Alraddadis' (2020) findings. They found that Saudi students are satisfied with the extent of communication and interaction provided by online learning. Furthermore, the current findings are similar to with Ng (2007) who found that most students concluded that there was no difference in the interaction between online and traditional classes, implying that online classes could be just as valuable as traditional courses.

Much research has been conducted on various online learning dimensions, but none concerned the perspectives of Hafr Al Batin University EFL learners towards it. In this turning point caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, investigating the perceptions of students and the utilization of Blackboard can assist in improving online-based courses in the future.

According to the present study findings, the researchers can conclude that EFL students in Hafr Al Batin University are contented and satisfied with virtual learning. Hence, we support the effective implementation of online learning, as well as considering its numerous advantages. These platforms encourage student-centered learning and are easily manageable in the current situation. However, some related studies disagree with these perspectives, which can be attributed to specific circumstances. For instance, Asad et al. (2020) surveyed to investigate Pakistani higher education students' (N= 126) views on university online learning courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants also reported complications such as lack of interaction with the teacher, traditional classroom socialization, and response time.

Although there are such challenges related to online learning, it has appeared to benefit learners and teachers worldwide, and its merits and efficiency are proved. The international dilemma has especially manifested the apparent

importance of this kind of learning in today's changing world. More studies to further investigate the means of learning platforms are recommended.

REFERENCES

- Al-Ahdal, A. A. M. H., & Alharbi, M. A. (2021). MALL in collaborative learning as a vocabulary-enhancing tool for EFL learners: A study across two Universities in Saudi Arabia. *SAGE Open*, 11(1), <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2158244021999062>
- Alahmadi, N., & Alraddadi, M. B. (2020). The impact of virtual classes on second language interaction in the Saudi EFL context: A case study of Saudi Undergraduate students. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume, 11*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.4>
- Alamer, H.A.H. (2020). Impact of using Blackboard on vocabulary acquisition: KKKU students' perspective. *Theory, and Practice in Language Studies*, 10(5), p. 598-603, DOI: 10.17507/ tpls.1005.14.
- Alawamleh, M., Al-Twait, L. M., & Al-Saht, G. R. (2020). The effect of online learning on communication between instructors and students during Covid-19 pandemic. *Asian Education and Development Studies*.<https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-06-2020-0131>
- Al-Dosari, H. (2011). Faculty members and students perceptions of e-learning in the English department: A project evaluation, *Journal of Social Sciences*, 7. (3), pp. 391-407, DOI: 10.3844/ jssp.2011.391.407.
- Alharbi, M. (2015). Effects of Blackboard's discussion boards, blogs, and wikis on effective integration and development of literacy skills in EFL students, *English Language Teaching*, 8 (6), 111-132, DOI: 10.5539/elt.v8n6p111.
- Asad, S., Adnan, S. M., Umer, F. M., Ali, S. M. A., Kainat, A. U., & Rubab, S. (2020). Classification of cucumber germplasm based on agronomic traits under natural climatic conditions. *GSC Biological and Pharmaceutical Sciences*, 10(2), 148-155.
- Balcikanli, C. (2012). Language learning in Second Life: American and Turkish students' experiences. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 13(2), 131-146.
- Bansal, S. (2020). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, rise of online teaching learning process & effects on health of kids. *Rise of Online Teaching Learning Process & Effects on Health of Kids (May 8, 2020)*.<https://doi.org/10.30574/gscbps.2020.10.2.0034>
- Beatty, K. (2013). *Teaching & researching: Computer-assisted language learning*. London: Routledge.
- Boling, E. C., Hough, M., Krinsky, H., Saleem, H., & Stevens, M. (2012). Cutting the distance in distance education: Perspectives on what promotes positive, online learning experiences. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 15(2), 118-126.<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2011.11.006>
- Çakýroglu, Ü. (2014). Evaluating students' perspectives about virtual classrooms about Seven Principles of Good Practice. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(2), 1-19. Challenges and pedagogical implications. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v8i1.335>
- Çahk, E. Ö. & Altay, İ. F. (2021). Analysis of English lesson broadcasts during emergency remote teaching from pedagogical,

- instructional and technical aspects *International Journal of Education, Technology and Science*, 1(2), 71–87.
- Dalgarno, B. (2002). The potential of 3D virtual learning environments: A constructivist analysis. *Electronic Journal of Instructional Science and Technology*, 5(2), 1–19.
- Demuyako, J. (2020). Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Online Learning in Higher Institutions of Education: A Survey of the Perceptions of Ghanaian International Students in China. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 10(3), <https://doi.org/10.29333/ojcm/8286>
- Demuyakor, J. (2020). Coronavirus (COVID-19) and online learning in higher institutions of education: A survey of the perceptions of Ghanaian international students in China. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 10(3), <https://doi.org/10.29333/ojcm/8286>
- Dhawan, S. (2020). Online learning: a panacea in the time of COVID-19 crisis”, *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 49 (1), DOI: 10.1177/0047239520934018.
- Doğan, G. & Mirici, İ. H. (2017). EFL instructors' perception and practices on learner autonomy in some Turkish universities. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 13(1), 166-193.
- Dyson, M.C., & Campello, S.B. (2003). Evaluating virtual learning environments. Education response.
- Favale, T., Soro, F., Trevisan, M., Drago, I., & Mellia, M. (2020). Campus traffic and e-Learning during COVID-19 pandemic. *Computer Networks*, 176, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.comnet.2020.107290>.
- Garner, R., & Rouse, E. (2016). Social presence-connecting pre-service teachers as learners using a blended learning model. *Student Success*, 7(1), 25-36.
- Gökgöz Gördeslioğlu, N. & Ergün Yüzer, T. (2019). Using LMS and blended learning in designing a course to facilitate foreign language learning. *KnE Social Sciences*, 10-25, DOI: 10.18502/CSS.v3i24.5164.
- Hamouda, A. (2020). The effect of virtual classes on Saudi EFL students' speaking skills. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Translation*, 3(4), 174–204.
- Hao, Y. (2020), “A mixed-method investigation of the best practices of online education in southwestern China at four public universities Lindenwood University, available at: <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2020.3.4.18>
- Hussein, E.T. (2016). The effectiveness of using Blackboard in improving the female students' English listening and speaking skills at the University of Hail. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 3(12), 81–93.
- Jena, P.K. (2020). Challenges and opportunities created by Covid-19 for ODL: a case study of IGNOU”, *International Journal for Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Field*, 6 (5), 217-222. Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series: ERIC.
- Jurik, V., Gröschner, A., & Seidel, T. (2014). Predicting students' cognitive learning activity and intrinsic learning motivation: How powerful are teacher statements, student profiles, and gender?. *Learning and individual differences*, 32, 132-139. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2014.01.005>
- Korkmaz S. & Mirici, İ. H. (2021). Converting a conventional flipped class into a synchronous online flipped class during COVID-19: university students' self-regulation skills and anxiety, *Interactive Learning Environments*, DOI: 10.1080/10494820.2021.2018615
- Margaret, R. (2016). Product line management is fundamental to the new operating model. Retrieved from <http://www.techtarget.co.uk/nov04/mart02.htm>.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. The
- Mhlanga, D. & Moloi, T. (2020). COVID-19 and the digital transformation of education: what are we learning on 4IR in South Africa? *Education Sciences*, *Education Sciences*, 10 (7), 180, DOI: 10.3390/educsci10070180.
- Narwani, A. & Arif, M. (2008). Blackboard adoption and adaptation approaches, *Innovative Techniques in Instruction Technology, E-Learning, E-Assessment, and Education*, pp. 59-63, DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4020-8739-4-11.
- Ng, K. C. (2007). Replacing face-to-face tutorials by synchronous online technologies: Challenges and pedagogical implications. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 8(1), 1-15. <http://doi.org/10.19173/irrdlv8i1335>
- Olbertz-Siitonen, M. (2015). Transmission delay in technology-mediated interaction at work. *Psychology Journal*, 13(2-3), 203–234.
- Podhajecka, M. (2018). Russian loanwords in the Oxford English Dictionary revisited. *Przegląd Rusycystyczny*, 2(162), 133-158.
- Salayo, J., Fesalbon, J. E. R., Valerio, L. C., & Litao, R. A. (2020). Senior high school teachers' and students' engagements during the emergency remote teaching (ERT): Perceptions on readiness, attitude, and competence. *Studies in Humanities and Education*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.48185/she.v1i1.145>
- Song, L., Singleton, E. S., Hill, J. R., & Koh, M. H. (2004). Improving online learning: Student perceptions of useful and challenging characteristics. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 7(1), 59–70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2003.11.003>
- UNESCO Report, 'COVID-19 Educational Disruption and Response'. Retrieved from June 16, 2020, from UNESCO. Education: From disruption to recovery. <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/>
- Weaver, D., & Spratt, C., and Nair, C.S. (2008). Academic and student use of a learning management system: implications for quality, *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 24 (1), 31-41, DOI: 10.14742/ajet.1228.
- Whitmer, J., & Nuñez, N. and Forteza, D. (2016). How successful students use LMS tools – confirming our hunches – blackboard blog, Blackboard Blog, pp. 4-7, available at: <http://blog.blackboard.com/how-successful-students-use-LMS-tools/>
- Yadav, G. (2016). Reflection on virtual classes: Spirit of the time. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 4(4), 1162–1167. DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/333
- Yen, T.T.F. (2020). The performance of online teaching for flipped classroom based on COVID-19 aspect”, *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 8(3), 57-64, DOI: 10.9734/AJESS/2020/v8i330229.

APPENDIX 1

The Study Questionnaire

This Questionnaire is for Research Purposes Only

Due to the recent coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, a temporary interruption of education activities occurred worldwide. The sudden and quick change from face-to-face learning mode to virtual classes method affects the whole education process. This study aims to investigate students' perceptions toward the virtual courses and to identify the impact of implementing a virtual learning environment (in English as foreign language (EFL) students at the University College in Al Khafji.

General Information about Availability of IT Facilities for Respondents:

- Do you have a Computer/Laptop?
 Yes No
- How do you access the Blackboard?
 Mobile Phone Laptop Desktop
- Is the internet /Wi-Fi Connection available at home?
 Yes No

Please answer all questions by circling one out of the options given against each statement.

- I have sufficient equipment and facilities (computer/laptop/Internet/software) to receive online lectures.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- I have sufficient computer knowledge and IT skills to manage my online learning.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree

EFL Students' Positive Perceptions toward Virtual classes Statements:

- I feel satisfied with online teaching methods and lecture materials.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- Online lectures are more effective than traditional/live classroom lectures.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- Participation in virtual classes is flexible than traditional lectures
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- Motivation is high in participating during online lectures.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree

- Home environment is suitable for participating in online lectures.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- Virtual learning saves my time.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- I can learn more or learn more through online material than through lectures.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- I can have good communication with my teacher during an Advanced online class.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- I understand the entire course (content) provided by the teacher during online class without any queries.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- I get notes/lecture materials from teachers even when I cannot join my online class.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- I can clarify my queries through question/answer during the sessions quickly.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- I get regular assignments/ homework from the teacher after an online class.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- I do not have any online problem doing homework/ assignments after online class.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- My teacher is providing feedback for my homework/ assignment.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- I feel satisfied with the balance of practical and theoretical knowledge provided by Online classes.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- I can make the same grade in an online course as in a traditional course.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree

- 19) I would like to have more courses using online education.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- 20) My performance in online exams is better than in traditional classes.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- EFL Students' Negative Perceptions toward Virtual Classes:**
- 21) Virtual classes are more complicated than classrooms.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- 22) I feel distracted at home while attending virtual classes.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- 23) I miss the direct contact with other students/colleagues/friends during online courses.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- 24) Teacher's attention and care during virtual classes are less.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- 25) Online courses make me uncomfortable.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- 26) Online Learning does not offer any advantages to me.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- 27) It is difficult to contribute to class discussions in an Online Learning course.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- 28) I get disturbed for my online class because of an internet problem
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- 29) I am not interested in joining my online class even if I do not have any problem joining.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- 30) I often feel uninterested in studying for online exams.
 Strongly agree Agree Uncertain
 Disagree Strongly disagree

APPENDIX 2

Data on Measurements of Students' positive and negative perceptions of virtual Classes

Data on Measurement of the availability and ability of EFL students' to manage online learning

Question	Scale	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	mean	Standard deviation	Direction
I have sufficient equipment and facilities (computer/laptop/Internet/software) to receive online lectures.	frequency	66	45	17	6	0	1.72	0.853	Strongly agree
	percent	49.3%	33.6%	12.7%	4.5%	0.0%			
I have sufficient computer knowledge and IT skills to manage my online learning.	frequency	70	44	19	1	0	1.63	0.751	Strongly agree
	percent	52.2%	32.8%	14.2%	0.7%	0.0%			
Total	frequency	136	89	36	7	0	1.68	0.670	Strongly agree
	percent	50.7%	33.2%	13.4%	2.6%	0.0%			

Data on Measurement of EFL students' Positive Perceptions toward Virtual classes

Question	scale	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Standard deviation	Direction
I feel satisfied with online teaching methods and lecture materials.	frequency	58	46	14	9	7	1.96	1.133	agree
	percent	43.3%	34.3%	10.4%	6.7%	5.2%			
Online lectures are more effective than traditional/live classroom lectures.	frequency	51	25	18	21	19	2.49	1.480	agree
	percent	38.1%	18.7%	13.4%	15.7%	14.2%			
Participation in virtual classes is flexible than traditional lectures.	frequency	60	35	15	9	15	2.13	1.353	agree
	percent	44.8%	26.1%	11.2%	6.7%	11.2%			
Motivation is high in participating during online lectures.	frequency	50	46	19	5	14	2.15	1.261	agree
	percent	37.3%	34.3%	14.2%	3.7%	10.4%			
The home environment is suitable for participating in online lectures.	frequency	68	32	19	7	8	1.19	1.182	Strongly agree
	percent	50.7%	23.9%	14.2%	5.25	6.0%			
Virtual learning saves my time.	frequency	80	37	5	5	7	1.67	1.074	Strongly agree
	percent	59.7%	27.6%	3.7%	3.7%	5.2%			
I believe that I can learn more or would learn more through online material than through lectures.	frequency	53	24	22	15	20	2.44	1.474	agree
	percent	39.6%	17.9%	16.4%	11.2%	14.9%			
I can have good communication with my teacher during an online class.	frequency	68	45	10	5	6	1.77	1.045	Strongly agree
	percent	50.7%	33.6%	7.5%	3.7%	4.5%			
I understand the entire course (content) provided by the teacher during online class without any queries.	frequency	54	39	19	13	9	2.13	1.237	agree
	percent	40.3%	29.1%	14.2%	9.7%	6.7%			
I get notes/lecture materials from teachers even when I cannot join my online class.	frequency	68	35	16	8	7	1.89	1.154	agree
	percent	50.7%	26.1%	11.9%	6.0%	5.2%			
I can clarify my queries through question/answer during the sessions quickly.	frequency	70	38	15	5	6	1.79	1.074	Strongly agree
	percent	52.2%	28.4%	11.2%	3.7%	4.5%			
I get regular assignments/ homework from the teacher after online class.	frequency	65	57	3	5	4	1.70	0.917	Strongly agree
	percent	48.5%	42.5%	2.2%	3.7%	3.0%			

<i>Question</i>	<i>scale</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>Direction</i>
I do not have any problem doing homework/assignments after online classes.	frequency	61	45	21	3	4	1.83	0.974	agree
	percent	45.5%	33.6%	15.7%	2.2%	3.0%			
My teacher is providing feedback for my homework/assignment.	frequency	58	44	19	8	5	1.94	1.074	agree
	percent	43.3%	32.8%	14.2%	6.0%	3.7%			
I feel satisfied with the balance of practical and theoretical knowledge provided by Online classes.	frequency	44	57	24	5	4	2.01	0.965	agree
	percent	32.8%	42.5%	17.9%	3.7%	3.0%			
I believe that I can make the same grade in an online course as in a traditional system.	frequency	59	41	14	9	11	2.04	1.249	agree
	percent	44.0%	30.6%	10.4%	6.7%	8.2%			
I would like to have more courses using online education.	frequency	51	37	19	14	13	2.26	1.326	agree
	percent	38.1%	27.6%	14.2%	10.4%	9.7%			
My performance in online exams is better than in traditional classes.	frequency	44	40	32	14	4	2.21	1.104	agree
	percent	32.8%	29.9%	23.9%	10.4%	3.0%			
Total	frequency	1062	723	304	160	163	2.02	0.888	agree
	percent	41.7%	28.4%	11.9%	6.3%	6.4%			

Data on Measurement of EFL students' Negative opinions toward Virtual classes

<i>Question</i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>Direction</i>
Virtual classes are more complex than classrooms.	frequency	22	32	13	30	37	3.21	1.482	Uncertain
	percent	16.4%	23.9%	9.7%	22.4%	27.6%			
I feel distracted at home while attending virtual classes.	frequency	25	20	18	35	36	3.27	1.473	Uncertain
	percent	18.7%	14.9%	13.4%	26.1%	26.9%			
I miss the direct contact with other students/colleagues,/friends during online courses.	frequency	46	32	23	17	16	2.44	1.384	disagree
	percent	34.3%	23.9%	17.2%	12.7%	11.9%			
Teacher's attention and care during virtual classes are less.	frequency	21	12	15	48	38	3.52	1.396	disagree
	percent	15.7%	9.0%	11.2%	35.8%	28.4%			
Online courses make me uncomfortable.	frequency	18	13	18	42	43	3.59	1.377	disagree
	percent	13.4%	9.7%	13.4%	31.3%	32.1%			
Online learning does not offer any advantages to me.	frequency	16	15	28	33	42	3.52	1.352	disagree
	percent	11.9%	11.2%	20.9%	24.6%	31.3%			
It is difficult to contribute to class discussions in an Online Learning course.	frequency	20	9	27	42	36	3.48	1.353	disagree
	percent	14.9%	6.7%	20.1%	31.3%	26.9%			
I get disturbed by my online class because of an internet problem.	frequency	25	24	19	37	29	3.16	1.434	Uncertain
	percent	18.7%	17.9%	14.2%	27.6%	21.6%			

<i>Question</i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>Direction</i>
I am not interested in joining my online class even if I do not have any problem joining.	frequency	10	7	11	46	60	4.04	1.191	disagree
	percent	7.5%	5.2%	8.2%	34.3%	44.8%			
I often feel uninterested in studying for online exams.	frequency	15	12	9	37	61	3.87	1.373	disagree
	percent	11.2%	9.0%	6.7%	27.6%	45.5%			
Total	frequency	218	176	181	367	398	3.41	1.040	disagree
	percent	16.3%	13.1%	13.5%	27.4%	29.7%			