Gender Disparities in Online Learning: A Case Study of LMD English Department Students at M'hamed Bougara University of Boumerdes, Algeria

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Introduction

The global landscape of education has been profoundly shaped by the enduring ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Responding to the imperative of mitigating its spread, authorities worldwide mandated a state of home quarantine, necessitating a paradigm shift in instructional methodologies. Consequently, emergent pedagogical strategies surfaced to address this exigent circumstance. This catalytic event engendered a precipitous and transformative alteration in educational modalities, effectuating a transition from traditional face-to-face pedagogy to a hybridized pedagogical approach encompassing both remote and blended modes of instruction. Central to this pedagogical recalibration is the assimilation of online education as an integral facet of the contemporary instructional paradigm.

Distance and Blended learning, emblematic of educational models wherein geographical separation segregates instructors and learners, are sustained by technological mediums for communication and interaction. The pandemic-induced zenith precipitated a compulsion for online or distance education, necessitating learners to engage with curricular content from their domiciles. Over time, this imperative has evolved into a blended pedagogical milieu, characterized by a limited physical presence in face-to-face instructional settings, complemented by persistent digital learning and pedagogy. Consequently, a ubiquitous reliance on online instructional resources has become de rigueur for educators and learners globally. Notably, the emergent hybrid model, epitomized by blended learning, has gained traction, proffering learners a pliant and individualized erudition trajectory.

Within the Algerian context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, akin pedagogical transformations have been implemented across

diverse educational establishments, predominantly manifest within the university stratum. The ascendancy of blended learning, acknowledged for its salient advantages, has been embraced by students. Comprising a tapestry of digital resources such as videos, podcasts, and interactive modules, blended learning epitomizes accessibility and caters to varied learning predilections. This pedagogical framework accommodates self-paced advancement while concurrently fostering interpersonal engagement and collaborative interaction between students and educators, spanning both the corporeal and virtual domains. Moreover, the economic prudence of blended learning is underscored by its judicious resource allocation, obviating the need for extensive material provisions and dedicated physical infrastructure. Evidently, blended learning engenders a supple and dynamic educational milieu aligned with the diverse proclivities and exigencies of the contemporary learner.

Despite the extolled virtues of blended learning within Western scholastic discourse, a corollary exploration within the Algerian EFL purview has unveiled nuanced student apprehensions regarding this modality. Although students manifest a favorable predisposition towards blended learning, espousing its adaptability and convenience, along with the opportunity for multi-dimensional interaction with peers and instructors, a cohort of students bemoans certain impediments. These challenges encompass paucity of faculty and peer interaction, technical encumbrances, and motivational dearth.

In a bid to elucidate this domain, the present paper aspires to augment the corpus of scholarship by dissecting the Algerian EFL students' perception of the pedagogical impact of online learning. Moreover, the investigation delves into gender-based differentials to ascertain potential perceptual disparities contingent on sex-based categorization. Ascertaining this intersectionality remains relatively uncharted within both Algerian and Western scholarly investigations. Thus, this inquiry undertakes a dual-pronged agenda : foremost, unraveling the multifaceted ramifications of blended learning introduction within the Algerian academic echelons ; secondly, dissecting the contours of gender-borne disparities in perception. The ensuing inquiry is propelled by two overarching research questions :

- How do Algerian EFL students construe the pedagogical effects of online education on their learning trajectory?
- Do discernible disparities in perception manifest across gender lines amongst students?

1. Methodology and Literature Review

1.1. Methodology

The current study, as elucidated in the introduction, investigates the ramifications of online education on the learning outcomes of Algerian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Employing a descriptive/quantitative approach, the research delves into the variations of these consequences based on the participants' gender. A purposive sample consisting of thirty-eight students from the Second year, Master 1, and Master 2 classes at the English Department of M'hamed Bougara University of Boumerdes was engaged in responding to a ten-question online questionnaire. The ensuing analysis is presented through tabulated data and graphical representations, enhancing the elucidation of the findings and their subsequent interpretation.

1.2. Literature Review

In recent times, the realm of online learning has gained considerable traction as an educational modality, largely attributable to advancements in technology. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has further underscored the imperative of distance learning, transforming it into an essential pedagogical approach for a myriad of students worldwide. Within the Algerian context, the practice of distance learning has been extant for a notable duration, prompting investigations into students' perspectives vis-à-vis this mode of instruction.

In Algeria, investigations concerning the English language teaching landscape amid the pandemic, as well as the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors and students toward blended learning, have remained limited in scope (Ghounane, 2022 ; Bara, 2022 ; Benamor & Adil, 2022). In a recent inquiry, Bara (2022) delved into the constraints associated with blended learning and the discernment of EFL educators and students. Beyond conventional classroom observations, diverse instructors and students affiliated with distinct English departments across Algeria participated in an online questionnaire survey. While a favorable disposition toward blended learning was evident among educators and students, empirical findings unveiled challenges pertaining to practical implementation and adoption. These predicaments were attributed to deficiencies in information and communication technology (ICT) proficiency and the impediments arising from technological infrastructure and internet accessibility.

Examinations by Benamor and Adil (2022) concerning educators' outlooks on these twin dimensions divulged the limited efficacy of both the blended

learning model and the adapted curriculum. This situation emanated from systemic quandaries entrenched within Algeria's educational framework, typified by substandard infrastructure, curriculum overburden, restricted availability of technological resources, and an insufficiency of well-trained educators. These persistent impediments have gravely compromised the quality of education dispensed within Algeria.

Similar academic pursuits have been undertaken by Bouzidi and Bouzidi (2020), elucidating the favorable inclinations of Algerian students towards distance learning. Outcomes of their investigation unveiled the learners' pronounced appreciation for the inherent flexibility of this approach, facilitating adept management of their academic pursuits alongside concurrent commitments. Additionally, recognition was accorded to the economical nature of distance learning relative to conventional classroom settings, effectively mitigating costs linked to transportation and lodging. Notwithstanding these positive assessments, the study also uncovered certain challenges confronted by learners in the course of their distance learning journey. Paramount among these difficulties was the constrained interaction with instructors and peers, engendering sentiments of social isolation and compromising a pivotal facet of their educational engagement. Moreover, technical complications pertinent to online platforms impeded access to course materials and active involvement in virtual discourse.

Despite these adversities, the investigation concluded that distance learning has demonstrated viability within the Algerian milieu. Authors underscored the pivotal role of institutional support in assisting learners to surmount these impediments. Numerous recommendations have been posited to furnish learners with the requisite support throughout their educational trajectory. Among the suggested measures are the provision of technical training and assistance pertaining to online platforms, alongside the promotion of peer and educator interaction. These endeavors collectively converge toward the shared aspiration of equipping learners with the means to triumph over hurdles.

Likewise, Aleb and Labed (2021) conducted an exploration into the benefits of blended learning, scrutinizing a cohort of 60 students from the University of Mostaganem. Noteworthy differentials between the experimental and control groups emerged from the study, with the former displaying superior academic achievement and a more sanguine orientation toward learning. Participants who engaged in blended learning evinced marked contentment, which in turn engendered constructive effects on their

scholastic performance. Remarkably, achievements in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) domain exhibited a positive correlation with learners' perceived satisfaction, thus affirming the study's endorsement of integrating computer-mediated instruction in tandem with conventional pedagogy.

Additionally, the work of Rahmani and Zitouni (2022) centered on the assessment of blended learning amalgamated with the flipped classroom paradigm within Algerian foreign language courses. The inquiry, executed at Batna-1 University and Barika's University, encompassed a sample of 165 students spanning varying educational tiers. The salient outcome underscored the efficacy of the flipped classroom and blended learning configurations in cultivating elevated cognitive engagement among learners. Furthermore, empirical evidence underscored the enhancement of learners' acceptance and utilization of virtual learning resources through the adoption of this pedagogical strategy. These findings underscore the latent potential of blended learning and the flipped classroom model in engendering efficacious and captivating learning experiences for Algerian students pursuing foreign language studies.

In parallel, Ghounane (2022) conducted an investigation into the learning modes embraced during the pandemic across four Algerian universities—Saida, Tlemcen, Ouargla, and Batna. Findings illuminated the unfavorable repercussions stemming from the abrupt transition to online learning and instruction, manifesting due to inadequate preparation and planning on the part of both educators and students. Evidentiary submissions from teachers and students alike pointed to disillusionment, attributing this sentiment chiefly to pedagogical resistance to change, limited experience in harnessing digital tools for content dissemination and assignment administration, and scarcities in technological access.

Gendered dimensions of online learning also captured scholarly interest, exemplified by Idrizi et al.'s (2022) inquiry into gender disparities within online learning landscapes and their ramifications on student learning experiences. Results spotlighted female students' heightened responsiveness to social presence in video-based instructional content vis-à-vis their male counterparts. Notably, this endeavor possesses distinct contextual, geographical, temporal, and methodological facets compared to extant literature. Crucially, this study assumes substantial significance as it elucidates the intersecting dynamics of Algerian students' learning experiences within a specific regional and gendered milieu.

The exploration of gender-based disparities within online learning has garnered considerable attention through diverse investigations, proffering consequential insights into factors influencing educational engagement and outcomes. Rovai and Baker's (2005) study, probing online graduate education courses, characterized by a predominance of female enrollees (n = 162) relative to their male counterparts (n = 31), illuminated discernible gender differentials. Specifically, female participants reported an augmented sense of camaraderie within the online learning environment, perceiving alignment between their pedagogical values and online experiences, and asserting the attainment of more profound knowledge compared to male peers.

In a cognate vein, Yu (2021) delved into the ramifications of gender, educational level, and personality traits on online learning outcomes amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The inquiry unveiled the superior online learning performance of postgraduate scholars (N = 599) vis-à-vis their undergraduate counterparts (N = 553). Furthermore, learners characterized by personality attributes such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to novel experiences exhibited enhanced performance, in contrast to those characterized by extraversion and neuroticism, who displayed attenuated performance. This array of findings underscores the import of encompassing not only gender but also individual attributes and traits when scrutinizing online learning outcomes.

Liu et al.'s (2021) research, similarly, probed gender disparities in self-regulated online learning (SRL) during the COVID-19 lockdown, involving high school students, comprising 125 males and 275 females. Findings unearthed substantial gender variances in SRL and its constituent components—preparatory, performance, and appraisal phases. Females consistently demonstrated more pronounced self-regulated learning skills across.

2. Presentation and Discussion of Results

Discernible variations emerged between the responses of male and female participants concerning the benefits associated with online course attendance. Notably, while merely 10.34% of females acknowledged the utility of time-saving, 16% of males expressed contentment with this aspect. Similarly, the concept of energy conservation through online learning was positively received by 3.45% of females as opposed to 18% of males. Conversely, a larger proportion of females (27.59%) expressed an inclination towards studying from the comfort of their homes compared to their male

counterparts (20%). Moreover, the adaptability to study at any location and schedule was seen as advantageous by 37.93% of females and 28% of males. Noteworthy, both males (4%) and females (6.90%) recognized the merit of autonomy as a benefit. The collective responses underscore distinctions in the perceptions of genders concerning the advantages of e-learning.

Table 1. Advantages of Online Course Attendance

	Males (%)	Females (%)
Saving Time	16	10.34
Saving Energy	18	3.45
Feeling More Comfortable at Home	20	27.59
Flexibility to Study Anytime, Anywhere	28	37.93
Being More Autonomous	4	6.90

Subsequently, an examination of the data revealed a conspicuous divergence in the responses between male and female participants regarding their familiarity with the digital tools employed in online education. Notably, 33.33% of males affirmed the utilization of platforms like YouTube and Google for online learning purposes, whereas only 19.05% of females reported the same. This discrepancy indicates a higher level of awareness among males concerning the array of resources available for virtual education. Conversely, males (66.67%) and females (80.95%) were equally reserved in responding to the query. This discrepancy may suggest a sizeable portion of the respondents possessing either an inadequate understanding of online education modalities or insufficient knowledge to furnish an accurate response. Overall, the findings suggest a relative deficiency in the comprehension of the daily mechanics of online education, albeit with a notable gender-based disparity.

Table 2. Opinion on the Effectiveness of Online Education Compared to Face-to-Face Instruction

	Males (%)	Females (%)
Strongly Agree	6.25	4.55
Agree	18.75	18.18
Neutral	25.00	13.64
Disagree	50.00	50.00
Strongly Disagree	0.00	13.64

The data from Table 2 reveals discernible gender-based disparities in the perceptions of the effectiveness of online learning compared to traditional face-to-face instruction. It is noteworthy that only a marginal percentage (4.55%) of female participants expressed strong agreement regarding the equivalence of online education and live instruction, whereas

a slightly higher percentage of male participants (6.25%) displayed strong agreement. Similarly, a moderate percentage of both males (18.75%) and females (18.18%) found common ground in agreeing to the notion to varying degrees. A divergence becomes evident when considering neutrality: a quarter of male participants (25.00%) held an ambivalent stance compared to a smaller percentage of female participants (13.64%). On the other hand, half of the male participants (50.00%) disagreed, mirroring the percentage of female participants who held the same stance (50.00%). Strikingly, no male participants strongly disagreed, while a substantial portion of female participants (13.64%) voiced strong disagreement.

These statistical findings underscore the complex interplay between gender and perceptions of the effectiveness of online education in contrast to traditional methods. Such divergences could potentially be attributed to a variety of factors, including varying learning styles, personal preferences, and individual experiences, all of which warrant further investigation in future research endeavors.

Table 3. Opinion on Level of Student Support Services in Online Educational Systems Compared to Traditional Systems

	Males (%)	Females (%)
Online systems do not offer same level of support	62.50	72.73
Level of support depends on student's perception of benefits of online courses	25.00	0.00
Online systems are difficult without teacher help	25.00	0.00
No response	25.00	19.18
Online systems offer same level of support	18.75	9.09

Table 3 presents a comprehensive view of participants' perspectives on the level of student support services in online educational systems when juxtaposed with traditional educational systems. The findings reveal that a substantial majority of male participants (62.50%) and an even higher percentage of female participants (72.73%) believe that online systems do not offer the same level of support as traditional educational environments. This marked difference in perception is underscored by the fact that only a mere quarter of male participants (25.00%) agreed with the notion that the level of support in online education is contingent on the student's perception of the benefits of online courses, whereas none of the female participants shared this viewpoint. Similarly, a quarter of male participants (25.00%) acknowledged difficulties in navigating online systems without teacher assistance, in contrast to none of the female participants.

Remarkably, a substantial proportion of both male participants (25.00%) and female participants (19.18%) refrained from providing a definitive response, hinting at a certain degree of uncertainty and ambivalence surrounding this aspect. In contrast, a proportion of male participants (18.75%) and female participants (9.09%) shared the belief that online systems offer the same level of support as traditional systems.

The insights provided by Table 3 emphasize the complexities inherent in assessing the adequacy of student support services in online educational contexts. The marked disparities between male and female perceptions underscore the importance of tailoring support mechanisms to accommodate the diverse needs and expectations of learners, regardless of their gender.

Table 4. Opinion on Being More Comfortable Engaging in Meaningful Discussions Online than in the Classroom

	Males (%)	Females (%)
Strongly Agree	12.50	9.09
Agree	43.75	50.00
Neutral	37.50	27.27
Disagree	6.25	13.64
Strongly Disagree	0.00	0.00

When probing participants' inclinations toward substantial dialogues, disparities in viewpoints between male and female cohorts concerning the ease of online versus classroom conversations emerged. Evident within the responses were both commonalities and variations in perspectives. Among male respondents, a notable 12.50% staunchly affirmed the ease of online discussions, juxtaposed with a comparatively lower 9.09% of females echoing this perspective. Equally noteworthy, 43.75% of males and an equal 50% of females concurred that they felt more at ease when engaging in topical discussions through online platforms. However, it is crucial to emphasize that such a sentiment does not inherently imply the superiority of online interactions over face-to-face engagements.

Conversely, a significant proportion of male participants (37.50%) and their female counterparts (27.25%) assumed a neutral stance on this assertion, neither endorsing nor disapproving of the proposition that digital exchanges outshine traditional classroom dialogues. Within this context, a minor subset of male respondents (6.25%) asserted a preference for classroom discussions over those conducted in the online sphere, a viewpoint echoed by 13.64% of female respondents.

It becomes evident that both male and female participants refute the assertion that classroom discussions surpass online discourse, as this notion lacks empirical substantiation. The statistical analysis underscores that a substantial segment of both genders derive satisfaction from participating in digital dialogues. Conversely, a notable portion of participants either remain indecisive or uphold a preference for face-to-face interactions. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the multifaceted factors, encompassing individual preferences, course content, and life circumstances, which may potentially influence these outcomes.

In situations where students grapple with impediments such as physical limitations, behavioral factors, or academic challenges, the integration of adaptive technologies such as text-to-speech tools within learning management systems can serve as invaluable aids. Noteworthy are the divergent perspectives of genders on this matter. A majority of male participants (62.5%) exhibited a predominantly optimistic perception, while a slightly diminished, yet still substantial, 72.73% of female participants held similar views.

Among the respondents, certain individuals expressed skepticism regarding the efficacy of learning management systems endowed with the aforementioned attributes. Specifically, 27.27% of female participants and 31.25% of male participants harbored doubts. Despite the absence of dissenting views among the female respondents, a marginal 6.25% of male participants voiced disagreement. Intriguingly, both genders refrained from unequivocally rejecting the concept. Generally accepted was the notion that students grappling with physical, behavioral, and learning-related impediments would likely derive enhanced benefits from the utilization of adaptive technologies, including text-to-speech tools and allied innovations.

Table 5 : Perspectives on the Potential of Online Programs to Overcome Temporal and Geographical Constraints

	Males (%)	Females (%)
Strongly Agree	31.25	31.82
Agree	43.75	63.64
Neutral	0.00	6.25
Disagree	12.50	4.55
Strongly Disagree	6.25	0.00

A substantial portion of respondents demonstrate concurrence that online educational programs offer a promising avenue for individuals burdened with obligations such as full-time employment or residing distantly from conventional learning institutions. Notably, males tend to display a relatively

lower level of alignment at approximately 31%, while nearly two-thirds or approximately 63% of females align with this sentiment. A fraction of men within the study (6.25%) opted to withhold their viewpoint, whereas women universally expressed their opinions. The sentiment generally garners consensus among most participants. However, a minority diverged in agreement, with only 12.50% of males and 4.55% of females withholding assent. Additionally, a minority subset of male participants (6.25%) unequivocally dissented from this statement.

The collective sentiment emanating from male and female participants, informed by empirical analysis, is largely favorable toward the potential benefits conferred by web-based educational initiatives, particularly in addressing geographical disparities and temporal constraints. Nonetheless, a subset of participants adopted a cautious or indecisive stance on this matter, indicating a nuanced appreciation for e-learning that may not universally apply. Considerations of age, socioeconomic status, and prior exposure to e-learning contribute as significant variables influencing individual perspectives on online educational offerings.

Table 6 : Perception of Online Students Achieving Comparable Learning Outcomes in Half the Time of Classroom-Based Students

	Males (%)	Females (%)
Strongly Agree	18.75	0.00
Agree	31.25	27.27
Neutral	25.00	50.00
Disagree	25.00	22.73
Strongly Disagree	0.00	0.00

From the vantage point of both genders, the data suggests that online students generally complete course requirements in half the time taken by their counterparts engaged in traditional classroom settings. The respondents were presented with five distinct response categories spanning from strong agreement to strong disagreement. A comparative analysis of these responses provides insights into variances and convergences with regard to the efficacy of online education for male and female learners. The survey outcomes indicate a propensity among male respondents to align with this statement. Approximately half of the male cohort (18.75% in strong agreement and 31.25% in agreement) opined that both remote and in-person instruction methods are equivalently efficacious. However, among female participants, a mere 27% expressed agreement, with no instances of full concurrence.

Of particular note, a significant percentage of female respondents opted not to provide input on this assertion, reflecting a degree of skepticism regarding the presumed superiority of online coursework over conventional classroom engagement. The findings reveal a lesser degree of neutrality among male participants. Furthermore, there exist no substantial disparities between male and female participants concerning disagreement or strong disagreement with this assertion. The fact that almost one-fourth of males and just over one-fifth of females hold contradictory views with respect to this statement signals their reservations about the comparative efficacy of internet-based education in contrast to conventional classroom attendance. Notably, all female respondents either agreed or partially agreed with the given statement, underlining a prevailing consensus. While complete disagreement is absent, the data underscores nuanced variations in how men and women perceive the effectiveness of online learning. The assertion that digitally-based learners assimilate comparable knowledge in half the temporal span of traditional instruction garners more acceptance among male participants. In contrast, female participants tend to adopt neutral or opposing positions. Despite certain overlapping disparities between the genders' viewpoints on this subject, most respondents—irrespective of gender—exhibit a positive disposition towards online learning. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the origins of these divergent attitudes and perceptions towards online learning, further research is warranted.

Table 7 : Attitudes towards Utilizing Technology to Enhance Motivation and Learning in Online Education

	Males (%)	Females (%)
Strongly Agree	6.25	9.09
Agree	68.75	59.09
Neutral	25.22	73.04
Disagree	0.00	4.55
Strongly Disagree	0.00	0.00

Five distinct categories were employed to classify respondents' perceptions, ranging from « strongly agree » to « agree » and « not at all enough. » The advisory for online educators to integrate technologies like games, social networking, and virtual badges for improved student engagement and enhanced learning formed the premise of this inquiry. Through a comparative analysis of men's and women's perspectives on the integration of technology in online education, potential divergences and convergences emerge. Most

male and female participants manifest a favorable disposition towards technology incorporation in online education. Approximately 68.75% of males and 59.09% of females endorse this assertion, while a minor fraction of males (6.25%) and females (9.09%) express strong agreement.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that 25.22% of males and 73.04% of females remained neutral, suggesting a tentative stance on this matter. Notably, a greater propensity for disagreement or strong disagreement exists among females as compared to males, a salient observation. The assertion is opposed by only 4.55% of female participants. However, males contributing to comparable statements are absent. The data implies that females may perceive less value in integrating technology for online education, as indicated by the statistical distribution.

Aligned with the research, a noteworthy discrepancy emerges in the percentages of male and female participants who firmly support the statement. This underscores a substantial difference in perception based on gender. A mere 6.25% of male respondents strongly agree with the statement, while this figure is higher among females, indicating a greater inclination toward leveraging technology for enhanced learning outcomes. The outcomes underscore that technology integration is a viewpoint upheld by both genders. Nonetheless, while some participants adopt a neutral standpoint, suggesting the need for additional research to fully comprehend the nuances of technology's significance in online education. Such research endeavors can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of technology's role in online education.

Conclusion

The findings obtained from the post-examination analysis reveal a prevalent consensus among Master 1 and 2 students, as well as second-year undergraduate students, regarding the convenience, flexibility, and accessibility offered by web-based educational programs. Furthermore, a substantial number of students assert that online education holds the promise of mitigating obstacles to higher education for individuals engaged in full-time employment or residing in remote areas. The majority of students evince a favorable disposition towards online learning, perceiving it as equally efficacious as traditional classroom instruction. Notably, a subset of students even propounds the view that online learners can achieve equivalent learning outcomes within half the temporal duration of their traditional classroom counterparts.

Nevertheless, a minority of students who contest these affirmations underscore the necessity for further research and advancement in the domain of online education. Concurrently, the potential for technology to augment the effectiveness of online learning receives validation through students' positive inclinations towards immersive technologies such as games, social networking, and virtual badges across all delineated categories. Pertaining to gender-based differentiations, the outcomes accentuate substantial variations in perspectives and discernment towards online education between male and female respondents.

Notwithstanding the robust faith exhibited by a significant majority of students in the merits of online learning, a faction of students remains skeptical. Additionally, a lack of comprehensive comprehension regarding the day-to-day mechanics of online education surfaces, with males evincing a greater familiarity with the available resources for online learning than their female counterparts. The data also manifests disparities in the evaluation of online education systems, with the majority of respondents displaying a proclivity towards conventional instructional frameworks. Although a substantial proportion of both male and female respondents express comfort in participating in online discussions, a notable contingent assumes a neutral stance or evinces a preference for face-to-face interactions.

The majority of respondents converge in acknowledging the effectiveness of learning management systems that incorporate text-to-speech and other adaptive technologies in accommodating learners challenged by literacy, behavioral, and physical impediments. However, females marginally outnumber males in expressing agreement with this assertion. Correspondingly, a shared concurrence emerges among respondents that online programs have the potential to surmount barriers to higher education, such as geographical constraints and temporal limitations. Nonetheless, a minor cluster of students exhibits indecision or a neutral standpoint, alluding to the notion that online programs might not universally cater to the diverse spectrum of learners.

In the context of evaluating the efficacy of online literacy, males exhibit a greater inclination to affirm that online learners achieve comparable literacy outcomes in half the duration of classroom-based learners. Conversely, females display a greater likelihood of dissent or neutrality towards this assertion. Nonetheless, the disparities are not profound, and both genders exhibit optimistic outlooks towards online learning. The comprehensive results collectively underscore the positive perception of both genders

towards the integration of technology in online education. However, the substantial proportion of respondents adopting an unresponsive stance underscores the necessity for comprehensive investigation to unveil the full extent of online learning technologies' effectiveness. The impact of gender on individuals' perceptions of technology utilization in education remains a realm necessitating further exploration for a holistic comprehension.

In summation, online learning has emerged as a consequential educational paradigm in Algeria, offering a means of education access to students confronted with impediments in attending conventional classroom settings. Students, on the whole, evince a favorable stance towards distance learning, yet challenges remain extant. To ensure the success of distance learning endeavors, educational institutions must prioritize the provision of adequate support and resources to aid students in surmounting these challenges. Moreover, the need for further research to gauge the efficacy of distance learning within the Algerian context and to devise strategies for its enhancement becomes evident.

Implications for Future Practice

The findings of this study bear substantial implications for the future implementation of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Algeria. First and foremost, educators are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that students receive the requisite guidance and training to effectively navigate online platforms. Achieving this objective could encompass workshops, tutorials, and the provisioning of online resources. Additionally, educators should be attentive to students' predilections and learning modalities when devising blended learning curricula. This approach entails the incorporation of a diverse array of activities and assessments tailored to the multifaceted needs of learners. Lastly, the persistent evaluation of blended learning's efficacy in the context of Algerian EFL education remains a fundamental imperative, necessitating adaptations as warranted.

In closing, blended learning has gained traction as an instructional paradigm in the milieu of EFL education in Algeria. While a subset of students may initially voice reservations, the predominant sentiment resonates positively with this approach. The delivery of customized and adaptable learning experiences by educators deeply committed to uncovering the benefits of blended learning is crucial. By unwaveringly scrutinizing the latent advantages of this pedagogical approach, an enriched educational journey can be furnished, one that impeccably caters to the individualized needs and preferences of each student.

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Abstract

The rapid global spread of the COVID-19 outbreak has profoundly impacted educational practices worldwide. A global quarantine was enforced to curb the virus's spread, leading to the emergence of new teaching approaches. This shift compelled Algerian universities to transition from traditional face-to-face teaching to remote learning, facilitated by the implementation of the Moodle platform to support both teachers and students in their teaching and learning endeavors. This study investigates the perceived effectiveness of online learning among Algerian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students, considering participants' gender. A total of 38 students from the second undergraduate year, Master 1, and Master 2 classes at the English Department of M'hamed Bougara University of Boumerdes participated in a ten-question online questionnaire. The findings underscore the advantages of remote learning, including enhanced time and content flexibility, while also revealing challenges related to students' struggles in comprehending course content independently. Regarding gender differences, no significant disparities were observed, as both genders demonstrated similar motivations for engaging with online courses, primarily driven by flexibility, and a shared preference for face-to-face interactions.

Keywords

Online learning, algerian EFL students, gender differences, online education

مستخلص

إن انتشـار وبـاء كوفيـد-19 علـى نطـاق عالمي بسـرعة كبيـرة أثـر بشـكل كبيـر علـى ممارسـات التعليـم فـي جميـع أنحـاء العالـم. تـم فـرض حجـر صحـي عالمـي لوقـف انتشـار الفيـروس، وظهـرت نهـج تدريـس جديـدة للتعامـل مـع الوضـع. بهـذه الطريقـة، اضطـرت الجامعـات الجزائريـة إلـى التحـول مـن التدريـس التقليـدي وجهـاً لوجـه إلـى التعلـم عـن بُعـد فـي جامعـات الجزائـر مـن خـلال إنشـاء منصـة مـودل لمسـاعدة الأسـاتذة والطـلاب فـي التدريـس والتعلـم علـى التوالـي. تقـوم هـذه الدراسـة بالتحقيـق فـي الفعاليـة المدركـة للتعلـم عبـر الإنترنـت بيـن طـلاب اللغـة الإنجليزيـة كلغـة أجنبيـة الجزائرييـن، مـع مراعـاة جنـس المشـاركين. شـارك مجموعـة مـن 38 طالبًـا مـن السـنة الثانيـة للدراسـة الجامعيـة، وطـلاب الماجسـتير 1 و 2 فـي قسـم اللغـة الإنجليزيـة بجامعـة محمـد بوقـرة بومـرداس فـي اسـتبيان عبـر الإنترنـت يتألـف مـن عشـرة أسـئلة. تسـلط النتائـج الضـوء علـى مزايـا التعلـم عـن بُعـد مـن حيـث

المرونة في الوقت والمحتوى، إلى جانب السلبيات المتعلقة بصعوبة الطلاب في فهم محتوى الدورة بدون مساعدة المدرسين. فيما يتعلق بفروق الجنس، لم يتم ملاحظة اختلافات كبيرة، حيث أظهرت النتائج استخدام كلا الجنسين للدورات عبر الإنترنت لأسباب مماثلة من حيث المرونة، وميلاً مشتركًا نحو التفضيل لوجود التواصل وجهاً لوجه.

كلمات مفتاحيّة

التعلـم عبـر الإنترنـت، طـلاب اللغـة الإنجليزيـة كلغـة أجنبيـة الجزائريين، فـروق الجنـس، التعليـم عبـر الإنترنـت

Résumé

La propagation rapide de l'épidémie de COVID-19 à l'échelle mondiale a eu un impact significatif sur les pratiques éducatives à travers le monde. Une quarantaine mondiale a été mise en place pour endiguer la propagation du virus, ce qui a conduit à l'émergence de nouvelles approches pédagogiques. Ce changement a contraint les universités algériennes à passer de l'enseignement traditionnel en face-à-face à l'apprentissage à distance, facilité par la mise en place de la plateforme Moodle pour soutenir à la fois les enseignants et les étudiants dans leurs activités d'enseignement et d'apprentissage. Cette étude examine l'efficacité perçue de l'apprentissage en ligne chez les étudiants algériens en EFL (anglais comme langue étrangère), en tenant compte du genre des participants. Un total de 38 étudiants de la deuxième année de licence, de Master 1 et de Master 2 au département d'anglais de l'Université M'hamed Bougara de Boumerdes ont participé à un questionnaire en ligne composé de dix questions. Les résultats mettent en avant les avantages de l'apprentissage à distance, notamment une meilleure flexibilité en termes de temps et de contenu, tout en révélant les défis liés aux difficultés des étudiants à comprendre le contenu du cours de manière indépendante. En ce qui concerne les différences de genre, aucune disparité significative n'a été observée, les deux sexes présentant des motivations similaires pour s'engager dans des cours en ligne, principalement motivés par la flexibilité, et une préférence partagée pour les interactions en face-à-face.

Mots-clés

Apprentissage en ligne, étudiants algériens en EFL, différences de genre, éducation en ligne