



Theoretical and Applied Linguistic Studies Laboratory

The PRFU Research Team

# Blended Learning in Higher Education Insights and prospects

Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects

Edited by : Dr. Assia Baghdadadi

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**Blended Learning in Higher Education:  
Insights and prospects**

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# **The International Collective Book**

## **Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects**

Edited by: Dr. Assia Baghdadi

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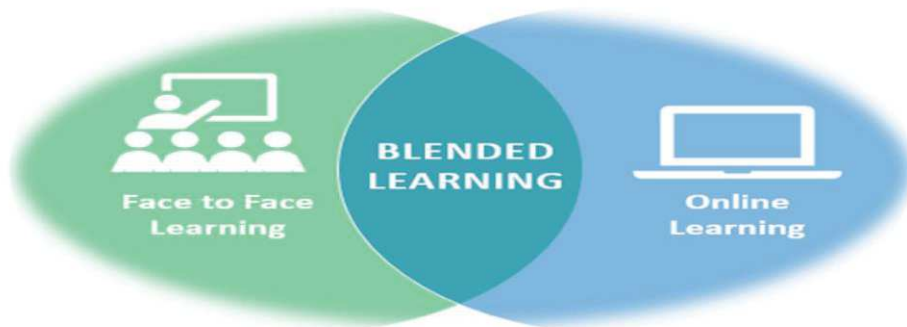
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## Theoretical and Applied Linguistic Studies Laboratory

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# Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects



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## **Introduction**

In the quest for effectiveness and efficiency of teaching and learning, the adaptation of blended learning in higher education has been growing in popularity as a systematic approach that combines the values of traditional face-to-face teaching while adding the advantages of online learning. Well-grounded in research, the perception of blended learning has clearly moved from the oversimplification of being merely addressing learners' access to education to encompassing understanding of the various learning styles of the targeted audiences, building active engagement through a wide variety of technologies and materials, the design and implementation of suitable courses, and communication and collaboration among experts to develop new strategies and provide constructive feedback and evaluation. The complexities of the aforementioned entail extensive research, particularly in this transformative era.

In this vein, this international collective book offers insights and perspectives on blended learning by practitioners, educators, and researchers in the field. The topics bring to light new research regarding the adaptation of blended learning in higher education. The themes in the book correspond with the irrevocable changes invoked by the pandemic, the development of the sociocultural sphere, the rapid advancements in the internet, and the existence of sophisticated software and hardware. Authors in the book reflect on these topics by dealing with different aspects of blended learning sharing their expertise and findings in the field.

The twelve articles the book comprises reveal the multifariousness of factors involved in the research around the concept of blended learning and teaching in higher education. They provide valuable results confirming further the research gaps the field has. The results ponder on various aspects such as cultural perspectives, digital literacy, hybrid classes, the adaptation of online platforms, learners ' styles, challenges, and prospects. Besides the contribution to the existing literature, this collective book helps in deepening our understanding in order to yield relevant improvements in the field.

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## Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects

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### Notes on Blended Learning in Higher Education: Cultural Perspective

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#### Abstract

The recent effects of technology as well as of the unprecedented Covid-19 across the globe marks a shift in teaching approaches, with increasingly more research examining the methodologies and potential procedures for the improvement of a blended learning (BL) experience. This turn requires new data patterns and new analytic scopes which uphold the principles of e-learning and traditional teaching approaches. Hence, an exploratory study is presented, exemplifying a mixed-method approach, addressing with reference to Hofstede's (2001) cultural framework the impact of culture on Algerian students' perceptions and attitudes towards blended learning. Data were collected using a questionnaire targeted to 33 students and semi-structured interviews conducted with 4 teachers at the department of English in the University of Bordj Bou Arreridj, Algeria. This research argues for the need to consider students' national cultural values when designing BL courses, particularly in light of the fact findings reveal that students' national culture influences their perceptions and attitudes towards the blended learning practice. Hence, the present paper outlines the cultural values to be considered in the implementation of blended learning in the Algerian higher education.

**Keywords:** Blended learning; Hofstede's cultural framework; National culture.

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## Notes on Blended Learning in Higher Education: Cultural Perspective

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### 1. Introduction

Face-to-face (F2F) and online learning (OL) delivery modes lived an insular existence relative to each other, due to their diverse pedagogical methods. F2F learning is instructor-centred, for it is grounded on human-human in-class interaction. OL is student-centred, as it is self-paced and learner-material instruction, be it in asynchronous (e.g., online webinars, social media platforms, etc.) or in asynchronous (e.g., blogs, educational websites, etc.) environment (Alsaif, 2021). These dichotomized modes started learning from each another due to the intensified interest in Information Communication Technology (ICT) and the increase of international students' influx in higher education (Chen et al., 2010). Many educational institutions have completed a shift towards incorporating OL methods with the traditional F2F learning to cope with the ongoing technological and (intercultural) demographic change (Hiasat, 2018). This pedagogical practice is referred to as Blended Learning (BL).

In spite of the extensive research examining diverse pedagogical and technological issues related to BL, such as institutional transition (Adekola et al., 2017), organizational policies (Graham et al., 2013), and/or the impact of students' perception on BL (Owston and York, 2018), little conceptual insight has been provided on the aspect of culture, which can, arguably, facilitate or hinder the implementation of BL in higher education (cf. Alsaif, 2021). It can regulate learners' perception and behaviour in a learning environment (Kemp, 2013). Educators are alarmed about how people with diverse cultures can react, in terms of acceptance and adaptability, to the shift from traditional learning to OL (Alsaif, 2021). In this, empirical research has revealed that 'Western' OL frameworks have not effectively engaged Arab learners, owing to the socio-cultural differences (cf. Adham and Lundqvist, 2015).

Against this background, the present research endeavours to contribute to the existing scholarship on BL by investigating the significant influences of culture on the implementation of BL in the Algerian higher education context. It makes use of Hofstede's (2011) cultural framework for the insights it can offer on the cultural values of the Algerian society. As BL programmes are characterized by dynamicity and flexibility (cf. Smith and Hill, 2019), working knowledge of how the cultural values of a particular

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society shape the integration of F2F with OL can promptly assist higher education institutions in rethinking BL practice.

Following this initial overview of the current research state, in section two, we look at the advantages and the challenges of BL in higher education. Subsequently, we look at the concept of national culture and Hofstede's model. The section is concluded by charting the existing research on the interlink of culture with the implementation of BL.

### **2. Literature Review**

#### **2.1. Benefits and Challenges of Blended Learning in Higher Education**

Blended learning represents an innovative delivery mode, whereby educators seek to offset the weaknesses of F2F and OL methods, by “using the Web for what it does best and using class time for what it does best” (Osguthorpe and Graham, 2003, p. 227). Several academic benefits are associated with BL, for a plethora of learning and teaching materials can be adapted to suit both environments (Smith and Hill, 2019). For instance, it assisted many higher education institutions to exert control over institutional challenges, including infrastructure, cost reduction, and rapid growth (Graham et al., 2013). Empirical research showed that students who were enrolled in BL programmes outperformed their counterparts who went to traditional teaching classes. The integration of BL was found to be correlated with increased flexibility for both students and staff, and it supported students' self-regulated learning and autonomy (Smith and Hill, 2019).

Despite these potentials, BL appears to also create several challenges. Mirriahi et al. (2015) reported that some higher education institutions were challenged by the shortage of employees to support BL programmes. They went further as to suggest that this paucity of staff was due to the unavailability of a comprehensive understanding of BL and of its objectives, thereby leading to a misinterpretation of its theoretical principles. Medina (2018) found that a lack of teacher's training regarding how to create appropriate BL courses generated challenges for the success of the approach. In a qualitative study, Tshabalala et al. (2014) illustrated several hindrances that could impede the implementation of BL in higher education,



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including a “lack of policy, lack of faculty support, lack of technological and computer skills, large class sizes, and inadequate technological resources” (p.108). Consequently, BL environments have been found to cause some students isolation and alienation (Rasheed et al., 2020). In BL, students are likely to encounter some technological issues, such as low internet bandwidth, outdated exploitation systems or complex technology adopted by their institutions (Prasad et al., 2018). Therefore, they may develop a sense of inequality relative to their peers who are not affected by technical concerns (Safford and Stinton, 2016).

In sum, BL represents a transformative instructional paradigm that can be subsumed under two headers: potentials and challenges. In many contexts, BL can empower students with flexibility and self-regulation, thus leading to improved learning outcomes. Meanwhile, in other contexts, where lack of training to both teachers and students, along with the unavailability of materials may impede integrating the BL approach (Al-Ismaiel, 2013).

### **2.2. Culture**

A wide consensus exists among scholars that the concept of culture is difficult to define, due to the existing social heterogeneity (Barron, 2003). Spencer-Oatey (2000) sees culture as an umbrella term, constituting “a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural conventions, and basic assumptions and values shared by a group” (p. 4). Although differences of opinion still exist, there appears to be some agreement that culture refers to “a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting” (Kramsch, 1998, p. 10). Each group of people has certain cultural values, which reflect their own reality and commit a sense of belongingness. These cultural norms are implied in how individuals perceive and interpret the world around them.

#### **2.2.1. Hofstede’s Cultural Framework**

Due to the conceptual complexity of culture, many scholars (cf. Hofstede, 2001; Hall, 1977; House et al., 2002) developed cultural frameworks to divide its constituents into manageable entities. As one model, Hofstede’s framework was developed in 1984, reflecting a series of systematic research conducted in multinational organizations by several

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researchers led by Geert Hofstede (Hofstede, 1984). In the view of Hofstede (1984), national culture is “a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (p.21). The original framework included four cultural dimensions: power distance, individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. In the modified framework, two further cultural dimensions were added: long-term orientation as well as indulgence versus restraint. This model treats the concept of culture at the national level (eco-logic), rather than the individual level (individual logic) (Minkov and Hofstede, 2011). It refutes universalism as well as holistic views of culture. Rather, it acknowledges the plethora of ways in structuring institutions depending on each national cultural value (Hofstede, 2001).

Whilst heavily criticized for being based on a questionnaire strategy (cf. McSweeney, 2002), Hofstede’s model is commonly applied in investigating aspects of culture in many educational contexts (cf. Bissessar, 2018). According to Hofstede (2013), pedagogical practitioners can “...develop teaching tools using the tables of differences between societies scoring high and low on each dimension” (p. 3). For higher education institutions, Hofstede’s cultural framework has proven to be an effective instrument in identifying cultural values related to classroom behaviour, thereby assisting in redesigning their programs accordingly (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010).

### **2.2.1.1. Power Distance Index**

The Power Distance Index (PDI) dimension is concerned with how a particular cultural group perceives equality. It is defined as “the degree to which members of a society expect power to be unequally shared” (Javidan and House, 2001, p. 295). A high PDI score conveys that inequality in a particular society is accepted by both leaders and followers. By contrast, a low PDI score refers to the fact that a society members refuse situations in which power is unequally allocated.

In classroom culture, learners in high power-distance societies tend to rely on their teachers’ expertise in their learning, for teachers are perceived as the primary providers of information (Hofstede et al., 2010). In these societies, teachers are not challenged with opposing opinions during class

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discussions. By contrast, teachers in low power-distance societies are, rather, facilitators. Learners tend to be autonomous and prefer individualism in their learning processes. Hofstede et al. (2010) suggest that “in the small-power-distance situation, teachers are supposed to treat the students as basic equals and expect to be treated as equals by the students” (p. 69). In low PDI societies, students demonstrate initiative works and strive for competition and success, while high power-distance individuals expect to be informed what to do (Al-Ismaeil, 2013).

### **2.2.1.2. Collectivism Index**

This cultural dimension is regarded as “the degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action” (House et al., 2002, p. 5). Collectivistic cultural groups emphasise solidarity, cohesive in-groups, and collective accomplishments at the cost of individual achievements. By contrast, members in individualistic cultures strive for personal accomplishments as well as individual success at the expense of group goals. Unlike collectivistic cultures, members in individualistic cultures are encouraged to rely on themselves (Hofstede, 2011).

Hofstede et al. (2010) make several suggestions regarding classroom culture in individualistic and collectivistic societies. Learners in individualistic cultures are characterized by independence and responsibility in learning. Meanwhile, collectivistic learners are found to favour harmony and to work in groups (Hofstede, 2001). This category of people is inclined to develop social relations based on sharing resources and cooperation with each other. Individualistic learners seek to achieve the ‘how to learn’ as opposed to the collectivistic group learners aiming for ‘how to do’ (Al-Ismaeil, 2013).

### **2.2.1.3. Masculinity Index**

Masculinity (MAS) and Femininity (FEM) cultural dimensions are not specifically associated with the biological construct. Instead, they reflect the features of each category (Hofstede, 1984, 1991, 2001). A high MAS score refers to a society that is based on competition and success, as members tend to be defined by winners/or best in the area. This value system is implemented since the start of school and stretches to organizational life

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(Hofstede, 2022). By contrast, a low score on this dimension indicates FEM, which implies that an emphasis is placed on positive relationships with and caring for others (Hofstede, 2011).

Learners in MAS societies tend to be goal oriented. Researching and accessing information reflects the amount of competition for achieving their learning aims. On the contrary, learning in FEM societies is characterized by high degrees of cooperation and support. Hofstede et al. (2010) state that “on the masculine side, teachers' brilliance and academic reputation and students' academic performance are the dominant factors. On the feminine side, teachers' friendliness and social skills and students' social adaptation play a bigger role” (p. 162). An average student in FEM society is regarded as the norm, whilst MAS societies perceive the best student as the norm (ibid).

### **2.2.1.4. Uncertainty Avoidance Index**

This dimension reflects “the extent to which members of an organization or society strive to avoid uncertainty by reliance on social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices to alleviate the unpredictability of future events” (House et al., 2002, p. 5). A low index score implies that a society (or an institution) can perform under unstructured situations. A high UAI suggests that society members are slow when making change, and they maintain rigorous laws and policies in confronting novel and unusual situations (Hofstede, 2011).

Learners in high UAI societies favour structured learning, involving precise objectives and detailed assignments. Students prefer detailed instructions and rules when engaging in a learning activity. Teachers are regarded as experts and possess answers to all questions. Integrating technology in learning can be stressful for students who are characterized by high UAI. They may develop a sense of uncertainty and threat when they are engaged in OL situations. Alternatively, in individualistic societies with less UA scores, students are found to prefer open-ended learning situations with ambiguous and broad assignments (Al-Ismaeil, 2013). Teachers are expected to be facilitators in the learning environment. They welcome change and innovation in their learning and are found to excel in learning and social activities with the minimum amount of instruction.

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**2.2.2. Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture for Algeria**

The following table reflects Algeria's score on Hofstede Insights (2022)

(see: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/algeria/>).

**Table 1.** Hofstede's Dimension Scores in Algeria

<b>Cultural Dimensions</b>	<b>Description (Hofstede, 2011, p. 9-12)</b>	<b>Score (100%)</b>
<b>Power Distance</b>	"The extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally".	<b>80%</b>
<b>Collectivism</b>	"...is the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups".	<b>35%</b>
<b>Masculinity</b>	"Masculinity versus its opposite, Femininity, again as a societal, not as an individual characteristic, refers to the distribution of values between the genders...".	<b>35%</b>
<b>Uncertainty Avoidance</b>	"...it deals with a society's tolerance for ambiguity. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations".	<b>70%</b>

It can be clearly seen in the table that Algeria has a high score of 80 out of 100 on the PDI, which means that individuals in this social group endorse a hierarchical organization, and each member is aware of their ranks. Symbols of status are significant in this society as they indicate the social position, and therefore people should behave accordingly (Hofstede, 2010). For its low score of 35, Algeria is a collectivist society. The Algerian values emphasise in-group strong relationships where it is the duty of everyone to protect the other. Another low score of 35 in the masculinity dimension renders the Algerian society a feminine cultural group. These societies are characterized by solidarity, quality, and inclusion in the working life.

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Meanwhile, the UAI in the Algerian society reached a high score of 70, meaning that the Algerian society favours avoiding uncertainty. High UAI societies consider future to be unknown; they maintain clear codes and are intolerant of novel systems (Hofstede, 2022).

### **2.3. National Cultures and Blended Learning Related Literature**

Serval research projects have been conducted to investigate the impact of culture on students' perceptions towards BL. For example, Al-Ismaeil (2013) designed a qualitative study to explore the ways in which cultural values and contextual factors can influence the integration of online collaborative instruments with face-to-face teaching. The sample of the study included 30 Saudi male education students enrolled in information technology class at King Faisal University. The data were collected by means of questionnaires, interviews, and an observation checklist implemented in a Design Based Research. The data collected was analysed with reference to Hofstede's (2001) cultural model and Hall's (1976) high-context and low-context cultural model. The study findings revealed that cultural and contextual factors influenced students' perceptions of the BL approach. This effect was manifested in their preference for face-to-face learning as well as in the lack of engagement in the collaborative online tools, reflecting a tendency of uncertainty avoidance.

Renner et al. (2015) examined empirically the impact of national culture on BL. The study included 81 participants from 25 different countries (i.e., national cultures). These participants were divided into five clusters: cluster 1 (Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Netherlands and USA) and cluster 2 (Austria, Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland) are classified as low power distance/individualistic societies; cluster 3 (Belgium, France, Italy, South Africa and Spain) is characterized as high power distance/individualistic, and cluster 4 (Arab countries, Brazil, Greece, Japan) and cluster 5 (Hong Kong, Indonesia, Portugal, Singapore, Taiwan) as high power distance/collectivistic. The data collected by a survey was analysed according to Hofstede's model. The results indicated that the national culture influenced the success of BL, as the instructor-cantered BL was more appropriate with high power distance/collectivistic culture of learners.

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In a similar study, Gómez-Rey et al. (2016) studied the effects of cultural norms on OL in four different countries, namely Spain, the USA, China, and Mexico according to Hofstede's six-dimensional cultural framework. The universities were divided into two clusters: a cluster consisted of Spanish, Chinese, and Mexican students, whilst the other structure consisted of American students. The main data collection tools in this study were two surveys distributed to students at the beginning of the educational process while the other one at the end of the educational term. The study revealed that the cultural differences between these universities were perceptible at the beginning of the research, yet these differences became less perceptible at the end of the study, because students became familiar with OL techniques.

Kemp (2013) examined the influence of Hofstede's Uncertainty Avoidance dimension in the United Arab Emirates on a BL programme. The sample of the study included a total of 40 students who had different nationalities that were characterized by high UA. The data were collected via a survey which comprises four questions. The findings indicated that students' uncertainty was manifested in their feedback on their skills with technology as well as on course organizations. The course organization used in this study constituted high quality teaching methods, yet they, purposefully, lacked structure and detail. The results showed that students' cultural background impacted their perception and performance in BL environments.

Based on the literature reviewed, the influence of national cultures on the implementation of BL can be perceptible in many contexts. It can play a facilitative or debilitative role in the implementation of the BL approach. Previous research addressing BL in the Algerian context, however, placed a heavy emphasis on students' experiences and attitudes towards BL (cf. Aleb and Labeled, 2021; Radia, 2019). To the best of my knowledge, no study to date has examined students' perceptions of BL with reference to the aspect of national culture. Addressing this research desideratum, the present study is intended as a contribution towards enhancing the effectiveness of BL in the higher education context by identifying the influences of culture on students' perception of BL designs. Thus, it is guided by the following research question:



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- How does the Algerian national culture influence students' perception of blended learning?

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Sample of the Study**

The present cross-sectional study was carried out at the Department of English at the University of Bordj Bou Arreridj in the second term of the academic year 2021/2022. The study participants were a total of 33 students (7 males and 26 females, ranging in age from 20 to 42) enrolled in Master 1 program as well as four teachers (3 females and 1 male, ranging in age from 27 to 33). The participants selected at this department receive various BL instructional methods. They voluntarily decided to take part in the present study after the researcher stated the purpose and the academic significance of this research. Their privacy and confidentiality are ensured, for raw data is presented using numerical values. Therefore, it does not identify any specific individuals.

#### **3.2. Instrumentation**

To understand the cultural influences on students' perception of BL, a questionnaire is used as the main data collection instrument complemented by semi-structured interviews with the teachers. The questionnaire technique is common in research of students' attitudes and perspectives on online learning and F2F learning (cf. Wang, et al., 2021). The questionnaire employed in this study includes two main sections. The first section is intended to gather information on respondents' personal background. The second section includes 16 closed-ended items which address learners' perceptions of BL. These items were developed in accordance with Hofstede's (2001, 2010, 2011) statements on culture and learning. Items in the questionnaire were classified into four cultural domains as follows:

1. The items (1-4) identify power-distance cultural dimension.
2. The items (5-8) identify uncertainty avoidance cultural dimension.
3. The items (9-12) identify collectivism-individualism cultural dimension.
4. The items (13-16) identify masculinity-femininity cultural dimension.

The semi-structured interviews are intended to corroborate the questionnaire results by tapping into teachers' experiences with their students in BL programmes. By using this qualitative instrument, the



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principal investigator addressed teachers' perceived challenges of BL and thoughts on their students' performance in F2F and online sessions.

### **3.3. Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection was carried out by posting a link to an online questionnaire, hosted by Google Forms, to the students via a Facebook group. The gatekeeper, who posted the link, is a lecturer in the department of English at the University of Bordj Bou Arreridj. The questionnaire was posted to 100 students; only 33 responses were received. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 4 lecturers via Microsoft Teams and Zoom. The interviews lasted between 25 to 35 minutes.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

The present exploratory study subscribes to the mixed-method approach to obtain both quantitative and qualitative information on the interconnectedness of national culture with students' perceptions. The questionnaire includes a 5-point Likert scale to measure students' perception about each item. To complete the process of data interpretation, the scale scores were computed by the percentage of each item score for that scale. The semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded into themes.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. The Questionnaire Results**

The questionnaire results frames EAP students' perceptions of BL courses within the dimensions of Hofstede's cultural model. For analytical purposes, each cultural dimension of Hofstede's model is considered a category of interpretation to students' answers.

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**Table 2.** Power Distance Cultural Attributes in BL

Items	SD N	%	D N	%	N N	%	A N	%	SA N	%
1. In blended learning programmes, lecturers are the primary selectors of online platforms (Moodle; Google Teams/Meet; Zoom) and activities.	1	3%	5	15.20%	9	27.30%	14	42.40%	4	12.10%
2. In blended learning programmes, lecturers are the primary providers of information related to modules content.	1	3%	7	21.20%	5	15.20%	19	57.60%	1	3%
3. In blended learning programmes, students expect to be informed what to do by their module lecturers.	0	0%	2	6%	5	15.20%	19	57.60%	7	21.20%
4. In blended learning programmes, students can contradict and disagree with their lecturers during discussions.	1	3%	3	9.10%	7	21.20%	16	48.50%	6	18.20%

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With reference to the PDI, table 2 addresses the respondents' perceptions of teacher's role in BL. Among the responses of 33 students on item 1, around 42.40% reported agree, and 12.10% reported strongly agree. To a lesser extent, 15.20% of the respondents disagreed, and only one (3%) participant selected strongly disagree. The remaining participants (27.30%) were neutral. It is observed in statement 2 that more than half (57.60%) of the participants agreed that lecturers are the primary providers of information and educational resources in both online and F2F sessions.

While 15.20% of the participants chose to be neutral, fewer than 22% of the informants disagreed with the statement. This could be interpreted as learners in the Algerian higher education perceive lecturers as decision-makers and repositories of knowledge about how best to teach. Therefore, they expect from their lecturers to pass on their personal knowledge and experience regarding the module content.

In this respect, item 3 revealed that a considerable percentage (57.60%) of students showed agreement that they expect from their module lecturers to be informed what to do in-and-out class activities when around 21.20% of participants strongly agreed. Meanwhile, approximately 15.20% of participants were neutral, and around 6% of participants disagreed with the item. In Item 4, slightly under 50% of the participants agreed when 18.20% strongly agreed.

To a lesser degree, 9.10% disagreed and only one (3%) respondent who strongly disagreed with the item. Although the students grew up in a high PDI society, the diversity of the scores obtained on this item suggests that most students are not reluctant to hold disagreements as well as different views with their module lecturers.

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**Table 3.** Uncertainty Avoidance Cultural Attributes in BL

Items	SD N	(%)	D N	(%)	N N	(%)	A N	(%)	SA N	(%)
5. Blended learning programs can assist students in achieving their learning objectives more than face-to-face learning programs.	6	18.20%	6	18.20%	7	21.20%	8	24.20%	6	18.20%
6. Traditional face-to-face learning can be more effective than blended learning.	5	15.20%	2	6.10%	8	24.20%	7	21.20%	11	33.30%
7. Blended learning can create a learning community for students that is better than face-to-face learning community.	5	15.20%	7	21.20%	6	18.20%	9	27.30%	6	18.20%
8. In blended learning programs, lecturers should aim for structured and explicit learning goals: precise aims, detailed assignments, grading criteria, and a clear timeline.	0	0%	3	9.10%	3	9.10%	20	60.60%	7	21.20.%

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Table 3 presents the UAI in accordance with the respondent's perspective on the effectiveness of BL systems. In item 5, 6 participants representing a rate of 18.20% disagreed that BL can assist students in achieving their learning goals better than face-to-face classes when 18.20% strongly disagreed. Yet, 8 participants with a percentage of 24.20% agreed with the statement, besides 18.20% who strongly agreed.

Out of 33 students, 7 participants (21.20%) of the respondents were neutral. On this basis, it could be inferred that there is fluctuated certainty regarding the effectiveness of BL. Students with high UAI tend to be anxious about using technology related ambiguities in learning (Strother, 2019). Evidently, item 6 showed that the percentage of students' agreement jumped to 54.50% that F2F teaching may be more beneficial than BL. Still, 5 participants (21.30%) strongly disagreed, and 2 other (6.10%) reported disagreement with the statement, besides 8 of the respondents with a rate of 24.20% were neutral. It may be pertinent to consider that traditional F2F teaching represents the norm for them, in the sense that their uncertainty bundles the BL system.

Statement 7 received a low proportion of disagreements (7 participants, 21.20%, reported disagree and 5 participants, 15.20%, reported strongly disagree) that BL could create a better learning community for them. It can be observed that 9 participants (27.30%) agreed with the statement and 6 participants strongly agreed (18.20%), while 6 (18.20%) other participants selected neutral. Collectivistic with high UA students tend to be anxious about the ways in which their learning community will be affected in BL courses.

However, the scores obtained reveal that many participants demonstrated behaviour that is not linked to their high UA society. By examining students' choices to item 8, it can be observed that a high percentage of respondents (60.60%) agree that lecturers should maintain a structured learning environment in a BL program when 21.20% strongly agreed with the statement. While 3 (9.10%) participants were neutral, well under 10% who disagreed. This can indicate that most students feel comfortable working in a structured BL environment.

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As is noted, in high UAI cultures, learning environments are characterized by regulation and structure. Collectivistic students are accustomed to the attendance to formal rules and instruction in learning (Strother, 2019).

**Table 4.** Collectivistic Cultural Attributes in BL

Items	SD N	%	D N	%	N N	%	A N	%	SA N	%
9. Blended learning systems can hinder student group work activities.	3	9.10%	8	24.20%	3	9.10%	17	51.50%	2	6.10%
10. Face-to-face classroom sessions are more engaging than online learning sessions and activities (e-tivities).	1	3%	1	3%	5	15.20%	11	33.30%	15	45.50%
11. Blended learning environments may reduce students' collaboration opportunities.	1	3%	7	21.20%	6	18.20%	10	30.30%	9	27.30%
12. In online sessions, many students prefer to contribute to discussions and chats anonymously, because it feels safe.	0	0%	3	9.10%	3	9.10%	15	45.50%	12	36.40%

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Table 4 is concerned with the dimension of collectivism-individualism. Statement 9 showed that the respondents who opted for 'agree' and 'strongly agree' totalled 57.60%, while those who selected 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' totalled 33.30%. As for the remaining respondents, 9.10% chose neutral. Based on these scores, it can be interpreted that most of the participants hold preconceived ideas that BL environments can negatively influence group work activities.

As can be seen in statement 10, totalled data for 'agree' and 'strongly agree' categories show that 78.80% believe that face-to-face in-class sessions are more engaging than online learning sessions. Meanwhile, totalled data for 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' categories reveal that 6% disagree with the statement. In item 11, the scores obtained reflect how students feel about BL courses, as their cultural values involve in-group membership and stressing the significance of community in learning, as evidenced by a high agreement percentage (30.30% reported agree and 27.30% reported strongly agree).

To a lesser degree, around 21.20% of participants disagreed, and 3% participants strongly disagreed. On this basis, students in such a group are more satisfied in working for a collective aim instead of working for an individual aim. As can be seen in table 4, 12 (36.40%) respondents strongly agree with statement 12, and 15 (45.50%) agree with it. By contrast, 3 (9.10%) participants disagree with it. Only 3 participants (9.10%) selected neutral. Students in collectivistic societies tend to be afraid of breaking the power-distance or losing face in front of their peers.

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**Table 5.** Masculinity-Femineity Cultural Attributes in BL

Items	SD N	%	D N	%	N N	%	A N	%	SA N	%
13. Blended learning programs provide students with more cooperative learning experiences than face-to-face programs.	4	12.10%	12	36.40%	8	24.20%	4	12.10%	5	15.20%
14. In blended learning, collective achievement in accessing information is more important than individual achievement and competition.	2	6.10%	7	21.20%	13	39.40%	10	30.30%	1	3%
15. In blended learning, students' individual achievements are more important than students' academic cooperation.	2	6.10%	7	21.20%	12	36.40%	10	30.30%	2	6.10%
16. Lecturers' academic qualifications are more important than lecturers' friendliness and social skills.	7	21.20%	9	27.30%	4	12.20%	11	33.30%	2	6.10%



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Table 5 addresses the inter-influence of masculinity/femininity cultural dimension with students' perspectives on BL. The scores in table 4 indicate two distinct findings. Most of the respondents (36.40% reported disagree and 12.10% reported strongly disagree) disagreed with statement 13. Out of 33 participants, a relatively low percentage of 12.10% agreed; 5 participants (15.20%) who strongly agreed with it.

The remaining of participants (24.20%) remained neutral. As Algeria has a low masculinity score, the scores suggest that students may assume that BL programmes may reduce students' cooperation and encourage individual achievement in education settings. In item 14, diversified views exist regarding collective and individual achievement in BL environments. Around 33.30% show agreement that collaboration is more important than individual achievement in accessing information.

Whereas a notable result was from those participants (26.30%) who indicated that individual achievement was more important than collective achievement. This may reflect that the participants hold masculinity values of individual competition and success and endorse femininity values of cooperation and collective achievement.

This is in line with the scores indicated in statement 15 that most of the respondents (36.40%) agreed that students' individual achievements are more important than students' social cooperation, while the participants who disagreed totalled 27.30%. The remaining participants (36.40%) chose neutral. Likewise, item 16 represents that around 39.40% of informants agree with the statement, while slightly under 50% disagree with it.

These scores reflect areas of significant differences existing in students' perceptions. Although Algeria is a feminist society, many students exhibit a masculinity behaviour that is manifested in their preferences for lecturer's academic reputation and qualification at the expense of lecture's friendliness. Still, most students prefer to work with lecturers who have adequate social skills and friendly attitudes.

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### 4.2. The Interview Results

Based on the data elicited by the semi-structured interviews with the teachers (T1, T2, T3, and T4), the themes selected to answer the posed research question included: the challenges that they face in implementing the BL approach; thoughts on students' engagement and interaction in F2F and OL sessions; thoughts on students' collaboration in F2F and online sessions; and thoughts on the aspect of national culture in designing BL courses.

#### 4.2.1. Lecturers' Challenges in Implementing the BL Approach

Addressing this theme allowed teachers to express the challenges that impeded the process of applying BL approach. The interviewees identified several technical issues, such as the lack of the best equipment, like laptops, headsets, and network connection. Other challenges most mentioned by the interviewees included students' autonomy and independence. T3 felt that many students lacked the digital habits to carry out their own learning in online sessions. As a result, they adhere predominantly to the materials provided by the lecturers, especially when preparing for exams.

#### Extract 1

*Many students rely only on the content I provide them with [...].  
I always encourage my students to rely on themselves in  
searching for learning materials.*

#### 4.2.2. Students' Interaction in F2F and OL Sessions

When comparing students' interaction in F2F sessions and virtual sessions, the lecturers agreed that their students tend to be more interactive in F2F than online sessions. Three teachers (T2, T3, and T4) indicated that the absence of face-to-face communication cues prevented them from knowing the extent to which the students understood the lecturers, while T1 held that the lack of the linguistic knowledge caused some students shyness, thus preventing them from talking freely in online sessions.

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### Extract 2

*It's difficult to get a sense of what's going on in their minds in online sessions due to the lack of F2F communication cues [....] Email communication isn't enough. [....] I tried online classes on Zoom; all students' cameras were turned off.*

#### 4.2.3. Students' Collaboration in F2F and OL Sessions

The interviewees expressed many views regarding students' collaboration and cooperation in BL courses. The lecturers noticed that students' collaboration in F2F sessions take many forms, such as discussions, peer-feedback, and negotiation, as opposed to their collaboration in online sessions which include mainly posting content for each other on Facebook groups. T1 maintains that she encourages her students to collaborate in online sessions by means of creating chat groups on a social media platform that can work for all of them.

### Extract 3

*I created a Facebook group for my students so they can post any course-related questions and to discuss with one another [...]  
Online discussions are really infrequent.*

#### 4.2.4. The Aspect of Culture in Designing BL programs

All of the participants declared that they design culturally sensitive content to meet learners' cultural background. However, they indicated that the aspect of the Algerian classroom culture, i.e., PDI, COL, MAS/FEM, UAI, is not considered when designing BL courses. They justified their stance by pointing to time constraints and lack of formal training, which led them instead to focus only on searching for immediate practical solutions to achieve curricular objectives in due time. Referring to the UAI, T3 maintained that many of her students were not satisfied with their academic and professional progress during this educational shift, as they are not accustomed to the hybrid learning.

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### Extract 4

*Sometimes students express many concerns about integrating blended learning approach although they recognize its necessity... I always inform my students to trust the process.*

### 5. Discussion

The current section addresses the influence of culture on students' perceptions of BL approach and highlights the role of cultural values in supporting or inhibiting the incorporation of the BL programs in higher education. The online questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews provide us with valuable additional new information concerning Algerian EAP students' perceptions of BL.

The study results indicated two notable findings. Most of the participating students apparently agree with items 1-3 on PDI, reflecting their cultural predisposition in favour of relying on their lecturers in learning. In the view of the interviewees, most students rely heavily on the materials that they supply. This corroborates the findings for what Missoum's (2016) referred to as learners' autonomy.

In Missoum's (2016) study, when teachers were asked about whether the Algerian culture encourages students' autonomy, the majority of teachers who answered the survey (76%) disagreed. Missoum (2016) concluded that "cultures with a strong authoritarian tendency may be expected to inhibit autonomy as reflected in individuals making their own decisions without counsel from the people in authority or elders and choosing pathways other than those preferred by the community" (p. 75).

According to our findings, the PDI cultural dimension of the Algerian society can be linked to students' disinclination in taking control of their learning in BL programs, as BL requires self-directed, autonomous learners to construct knowledge.

The study also informs us that the students' uncertainty towards the effectiveness of BL relative to traditional face-to-face learning manifested itself in their choices, with more than half believing that F2F learning is more beneficial than BL.

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This can find resonance in the teachers' views, who noted that many students expressed concerns about the efficiency of BL. This attitude can be ascribed to their society's high UAI score. This cultural attribute is likely to impede students' cognitive and psychological engagements in BL. The study results are consistent with Boutlidja (2021) who found that considerably over than half of her study informants (62.1%) held that online learning was not feasible in the Algerian higher education context and did not meet their ambitions. Another example is Blizak et al.'s (2020) study, in which most students indicated dissatisfactions and negative perceptions towards OL.

With respect to Algeria's low individualism index score, many respondents assume that BL systems restrict their tendency towards collectivistic activities. This is reflected in the teachers' interviews who reported that students tend to take active collaborative roles in F2F sessions as opposed to online sessions. The results of the study lend support to Berezoug's (2021) findings, which was grounded on Hofstede's framework, that "the collectivist nature of the Algerian culture retards the progress of self-directed learning" (p. 216). In the meantime, Algeria's low MAS score also represented itself in the respondents' perceptions regarding the degree of competition and collective achievements in BL programmes. This demonstrates their FEM values that involve inclusion and equality in sharing and accessing information.

Nevertheless, the most striking data elicited by the questionnaire are indicated in items 4, 5, and 7. In item 4 on PDI, students exhibit a cultural behaviour that is related to a low-power distance society. Likewise, a large portion of students believe that BL could be more effective in a better learning community than F2F learning in item 5 and 7 despite belonging to a society with high UAI. This may refer to the fact that the students are willing to develop more cooperative and productive learning communities when they are integrated into a mixed learning approach. It can be inferred that the respondents have positive attitudes towards a technologically supported environment. This can be ascribed to their increased familiarity with online learning technologies (cf. Gómez-Rey et al., 2016).

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### **6. Conclusion**

The present paper has described how the students' socio-cultural background can contribute to or hinder the implementation of BL at the Algerian tertiary level. It has shown, via a mixed method approach, that the Algerian cultural attributes play a significant role in students' perception of the BL approach. By examining students' cultural values through the lens of Hofstede's cultural model, the study results call for shaping and reshaping the implementation of the BL based on Algerian students' cultural environment. The power-distance dimension revealed that the students are inclined to lend their lecturers the responsibility to guide them through their BL experiences. Students would be more comfortable carrying out their BL in highly structured environments, in terms of definite learning aims, assessment criteria, detailed onsite activities and online e-tivities. It is the role of lecturers to provide students with complete instruction to act against any potential resistance to BL caused by their high uncertainty avoidance. The students' collectivistic and femininity cultural values are illustrated in their preferences to collectivistic tasks and to lecturers with good social skills so they can maintain constant communication practice to ensure an effective learning experience in a BL environment.

Several pedagogical recommendations have been established based on the findings of the study to contribute to the existing knowledge on the effective implementation BL. It is imperative to design BL courses that are based on the critical factors of national culture. Algerian academic staff, material designers, and policy makers should develop BL systems that can cope with students' collectivistic, high-power distance, masculinity-femininity and high uncertainty avoidance characteristics.

For lecturers, an understanding of the socio-cultural organization of students is important in understanding students' perception as well as performance in BL environments. Another recommendation is to equip the Algerian universities with technical support services which will assist both students and lecturers to overcome any technical issues that may emerge during the implementation of BL, thereby reducing students' high uncertainty avoidance. It is essential to incorporate digital literacy to the previous non-tertiary levels to prepare students to undertake active as well as self-directed roles in higher education.

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As a way forward, Algerian universities should run support F2F and online workshops to offer students opportunities to explore BL.

However, the present exploratory research has several limitations. The findings of the study are based on a rather limited sample of students and teachers. Further research could replicate the study with a large sample of students and teachers to ensure generalizability. Future research could undertake cross-cultural research projects to identify variation between the Algerian culture and other national cultures regarding students and lecturers' perceptions and attitudes of the OL and F2F modes. Since several participants exhibited behaviour that is not associated with the attributes of their national culture, more research studies are needed to identify students' cultural 'values' and 'practices' in the Algerian higher education (cf. House et al., 2002).

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## **Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects**

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### **Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Utilization of Moodle Platforms for E-Learning Amid Corona Virus Pandemic: Djelfa University as a Case Study**

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#### **Abstract**

It is rather a truism that Covid-19 has affected all aspects of our lives. Even two years after its emergence and the availability of vaccines, the world is still disrupted, more importantly to this paper, the education sector. The latter has witnessed a drastic change often reflected on the dependence on distance learning which proved to be the only viable solution with the secession of universities worldwide. In Algeria, the first response to the pandemic was the use of the Moodle platform to allow students to have access to lectures. The current paper aims at investigating the effectiveness of the utilization of the platform. Through the qualitative approach, the study examines the platform from the perspectives of teachers, students, and tech support specialists. The work makes use of interviews to collect data with emphasis on cross-referencing answers between the different parties involved. The results indicate that the hasty implementation of Moodle in the first year of Covid-19 lowered its effectiveness. In the academic year 20-21, the efficiency of the platform increased from the perspective of usage. However, the adaptation of blended teaching has a negative impact on the usefulness of Moodle. The results divulge that the implementation of Moodle as a tool for distance learning encounters several technical difficulties that have not been amended. The latter has also a negative impact on the attitudes of both teachers and students towards the platform. The significance of the work lies in the recommendations which arise from the results.

**Keywords:** E-Learning; Pandemic; Moodle ; Evaluation

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**Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Utilization of Moodle  
Platforms for E-Learning Amid Corona Virus Pandemic:  
Djelfa University as a Case Study**

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## **1. Introduction**

There is no question that Covid-19 has shown that the world is woefully unprepared for a pandemic at such a scale. In December 2019, the talk about the disease was hardly serious, often deemed as a problem in a distant country with total neglect of how small the world actually is. However, the spread of the virus, the infection rate, and death tolls have led to a drastic escalation in the situation that in turn has had repercussions on all daily aspects, more importantly to this paper, the education sector. For instance, the Algerian government decided to close all schools and universities on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, a week prior to the official spring vacation. The decision was taken as a response to the number of cases found and to the recommendations of the World Health Organization (Takhar et al., 2020). Nevertheless, even at this point, most believed that the reopening of academic facilities is just a matter of weeks. Another gross underestimation that had serious ramifications.

With the increased awareness about the pathogen, the public started to realize the gravity of the condition. Hence, measures had to be taken in order to minimize the impact of the virus. Like most countries, Algeria has opted for the encouragement of distance learning. The move took a serious approach with universities as teachers were officially instructed to share lectures through online platforms Moodle dedicated to every university. With the academic year 2020-2021, the Algerian government decided to partially lift the lockdown allowing students to study for a short term of three weeks in class instead of a whole semester. To make up for the lost sessions, teaching was supposed to be carried on through online learning tools among which is the Moodle platforms since they are the official portals for all universities in Algeria.

While Moodle has been established way before the pandemic and newly recruited teachers from 2016 have received a year of training on how to use it, the prompt decision to implement the platform during the lockdown raises questions on its readiness to provide a full E-learning experience. Thus, the current paper attempts to evaluate the utilization of the Djelfa university platform as a case study by addressing the following questions :

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- 1- How effective is the implementation of the Djelfa Moodle Platform?
- 2- What are the perceptions of teachers and students about distance learning through the platform?
- 3- What are the challenges and opportunities in the employment of distance learning in Algeria?

The first question tackles technicalities more than the pedagogical aspects of the platform. The aim is to assess the accessibility of the online portal (<http://elearning.univ-djelfa.dz/>). Although the research seeks to provide a localized view about the utilization of Moodle, it also ponders on the recent review of literature about the advantages and disadvantages of the platform. The second question investigates teachers' and students' attitudes towards the implementation of E-learning. The significance of the paper lies in the answer to the third question which should yield recommendations to respond to challenges and further enhance the positive aspects in the implementation of E-learning.

The current study is conducted at the University of Zine Achour Djelfa Algeria. The latter comprises eight faculties with a total of 943 teachers and 38000 students. The timing of carrying out this research is also an important factor to be considered in the background of the study which comes two years after the outbreak of the Covid-19. A time that is sufficient to analyze the impact and the reactions of educational institutions to the disease.

The paper is divided into four parts. It reviews the recent literature on the topic of readiness of universities for the implementation of distance learning. The second part describes the research methodology opted to obtain data as well as data analysis techniques. Then, the findings are discussed and analyzed. Finally, the paper presents implications and directions for future research and a general conclusion.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Algerian Universities Response to Covid-19**

Algeria reported the first two cases of Covid-19 on March 2<sup>nd</sup> ( JHU CSSE COVID-19 Data, 2020 ). At the time the whole world got shocked by the numbers of infected and the death toll in Italy. Consequently, drastic health measures had to be taken worldwide to slow the spread of the disease including social distancing and mandatory quarantines. The latter has

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resulted in the immediate closure of all educational facilities. However, the lack of accurate data on the nature of the disease resulted in a serious underestimation of the situation leading to the belief that the lockdown will be brief. Additionally, being an unprecedented crisis in the modern era, it was hard for anyone to simply draw plans for the immediate future (IESALC, 2020).

With the growing realization that there is no apparent solution, there was a call to start accepting the reality that we need to live with the virus. While many social sectors can cope with such a move, schools and universities remained closed. The cessation of face-to-face classes made the implementation of distance learning the only feasible solution. Like many countries, the Algerian Ministry of higher education in March 2020 started encouraging university teachers to adopt distance learning mainly through the submission of their lessons in the online platforms Moodle. However, the crucial question which can be raised is how prepared is the system for the adaptation of distance learning.

## **2.2. The Educational System Readiness Distance Learning**

Instead of looking at the use of technology as just the inclusion of a certain tool in an educational system, in this paper, the very idea of a system needs to be investigated to arrive at a better understanding of what makes the latter ready. According to Tetlay et al. (2009), a system is said to be ready when it predicts and overcomes problems related to implementation, integration, performance, and other lifecycle problems as well as unexpected behavior. A well-established educational system is ready as all parties involved from stakeholders, administrations, families, teachers, and learners work in tandem and as an interconnected network for the effectiveness of the system. Thus, any slight alteration would result in repercussions.

## **2.3. Decision Makers**

Starting from the decision-makers, Hodges et al. (2020) see that the idea to resort to distance learning amid the Coronavirus is more of an emergency remote teaching to ensure the continuity of teaching rather than actual online learning. They add that the plan is simply to deliver the content that would have been taught with face-to-face teaching via online media.



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Therefore, the shift to distance learning is simply a change in the delivery method while other aspects remain intact such as syllabus objectives and even the assessment method. However, all elements in learning/ teaching are connected from the syllabus design, roles of learners and teachers, activities, and evaluation. Therefore, decisions to insure education continuity amid the pandemics are often ill-informed. In this regard, a brief policy on education from the United Nations in August 2020 showed that many solutions resulted in major issues notably related to equity. (IESALC, 2020)

An example is seen in the last-minute decision of Algerian universities to not include all the lessons delivered via online methods in the exams of the second semester in 2020. Simply there was no statistical analysis divulging the number of students who had access to online courses, thus, rendering the whole endeavor unsuccessful. Still, on the positive side, one has to acknowledge the fact that educational systems worldwide have adapted quickly to massive socio-economic disruptions and it was rather a priority for governments and decision-makers to push towards this direction to prevent a total shutdown of education.

#### **2.4. Administrations / Teachers**

A decision about how learning should take place needs to be translated into action, here comes the pivotal role of administrations to ensure quality learning and teaching. Linking this with the idea of the implantation of online learning, Yang (2010) sees that administrations in higher education have four major roles: planners, managers, motivators, and supporters. In other words, administrations not only ensure the transmission of knowledge but help in its construction by designing syllabi and online courses. More importantly, they need to plan for formative and summative assessment of not only the learning objectives but the whole system to guarantee effectiveness.

Even in ordinary and favorable circumstances what has been said about the role of administration in higher education remains a challenge. With the current pandemic, unfortunately, the choice of online methods is used as a panacea allocating the problems to teachers as simply administrations had little to offer to teachers who all of the sudden found themselves responsible

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for delivering online courses often without any proper training and with no sufficient materials. In fact, the situation is rather complex as the pandemic has ushered in a new era in education that is best described by the United Nations (2020): “The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted that both initial and in-service teacher education are in need of reform to better train teachers in new methods of education delivery the task delivering”.

### **2.5. Students’ Readiness**

A review of literature from 2016 to 2020 shows that there is extensive research on students’ readiness and perception towards online learning, often indicating a positive attitude. However, 2020 has its peculiarity as students are simply asked to stay at home and any study assessing their readiness is rather difficult to be carried out. For example, Neupane et al. (2020) acknowledge that their study on the readiness for online Classes during the COVID-19 Pandemic suffers from two limitations. First, the data collection deployed to assess readiness is a web survey which itself can not divulge much and its reliability is questionable. Second, they could not establish a link between readiness and the characteristics of the students. Neupane et al recommend future research that utilizes “a higher statistical analysis for a better understanding of factors that influence student readiness” (2020, p.318).

With the academic year 2020/2021, most universities tried to loosen the tight precautions by opting for blended learning, however, according to Liang et al. (2020) , students' motivation in regard to online learning was radically affected. The reasons, he adds, are related to external regulations and environmental conditions which have extrinsically disrupted students’ ambition and enjoyment in experiencing learning in general.

### **3. Methodology**

The current research attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of the utilization of Moodle platforms, thus, mainly investigating a tool. However, as stated earlier, the gist of the research is to look at the implementation of the platform Moodle as a system. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the different parties involved starting from the immediate users, teachers, and students, to the ones who are indirectly concerned such as administrators and tech support specialists. In this endeavor, the research deploys the

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qualitative approach, although, the initial plan was to use the mix-method approach. The original plan was to include numerical data associated with the platform, however, even with repeated efforts, such data were not accessible because of administrative constraints. The analysis was supposed to cover the number of users registered, daily logins, and lessons submitted. The qualitative section of the research deals with participants' experience dealing with Moodle. Furthermore, the platform itself will be the subject of analysis from a technical point of view in the attempt to divulge strengths and potential deficiencies.

### **3.1. Data Collection**

The research takes advantage of triangulation in research methodology through the implementation of two data gathering tools: semi-structured interviews and technical analysis of the online platform. The data collected from interviews will be put against the way the platform functions. The idea is to assess and evaluate the informants' experience with the platform. Furthermore, knowledge about how the Djelfa University Moodle platform works, its capabilities, design, ease of access, and other information will be the subject of the interviews. The data gathered will be scrutinized to arrive at conclusions that reveal the readiness of the platform as a system.

The time span of the work is also an aspect to be minded in the data collection. The starting point of this research is an internal memorandum by the director of Djelfa University on March 23th, 2020, in which an initiative is proposed. The latter stated that each teacher should submit a lesson in the online portal. The endpoint of the research is November 2021. The period covers three academic years 2019/2020, 2020/2021, and the current one 2021/2022. Although the last one is merely covered, information can give a valuable insight into the changes that have occurred.

### **3.2. Sample / Sampling Techniques**

The participants involved in the research are divided into four categories: students, teachers, administrators, and tech-support specialists. Those can be further divided into two minding the aspect of continuity with the research along the period of data collection. Teachers, administrators, and tech support are permanent employees that have not changed. However,

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not the same is said about students who either have passed to the next grade level or graduated. Thus, there will be three samples concerning students. Teachers were not selected randomly, the purpose was to involve two types of teachers. First, those who got their training in the use of online teaching ( 3 teachers), the rest are those who were admitted before 2016. Thus, they have not received formal training ( Table 1). Concerning the participants who represent the department administration, only two are selected. The reason behind this low number is due to the unwillingness to participate in the research ( Table 2). Two persons are in charge of the operation of the online portal at the level of the university ( table 3).

**Table 1. Teachers' Sample**

Male	Females	Total
3	3	6

**Table 2. Administrators ' Sample**

Male	Females	Total
1	1	2

**Table 3. Tech Support Specialists' Sample**

Male	Females	Total
2	0	2

Students' samples are complicated as there is not one single group, rather three. First, the students involved in the study from March 2020 to September 2020; the latter are selected from the researcher's class, 2<sup>nd</sup>-year LMD students ( License- Master- Doctorat), and these students have started their academic year taking regular classes. This group will be designated by 2019/2020 students ( Table 4)

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**Table 4. Students ( 2019/2020)**

Male	Females	Total
5	5	10

The next group of students started in the academic year 2020/2021 (1<sup>st</sup>-year LMD). A year that witnessed major changes mainly the adaptation of the shift system allowing only one or two levels to study at a time in the university. Therefore, one group will study in traditional classes the other group was supposed to receive online teaching. The decision was made to reduce the number of students, restricting movement to prevent the transmission of the disease. The repercussion of this system is that students' study time at the university was shrunk to two weeks per semester.

**Table 5. Students ( 2020/2021)**

Male	Females	Total
5	5	10

The third group starts with the current academic year 2021/2022 (3<sup>rd</sup>-year LMD). This particular group has witnessed the radical changes inflicted by the disease from the beginning. Collecting data from the participants of this group is crucial for the study as Covid-19 has been part of their university life. For this current year ( 2021/2022), the shift system is still employed, however, with major changes. The ministry has acknowledged the impact of the shift system on students as each group studied, last year, for one month in the entire academic year. Thus, the new system dictates that each one a group of students takes courses in class while others have online courses meanwhile.

**Table 6. Students ( 2021/2022)**

Male	Females	Total
5	5	10

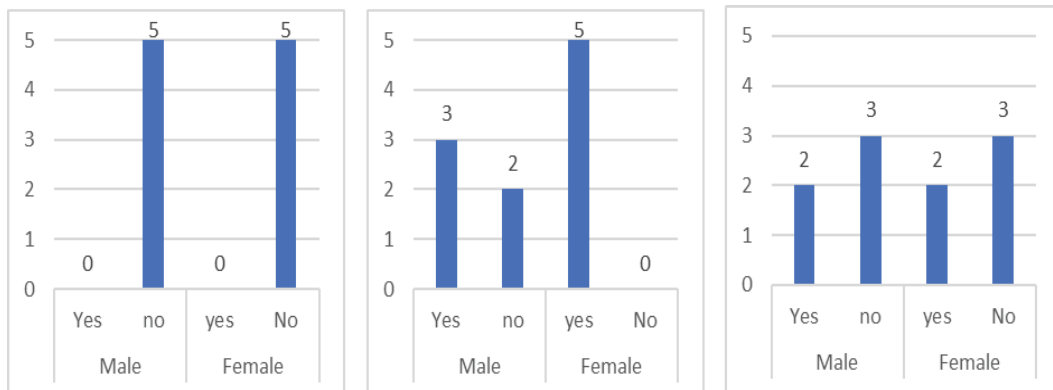
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#### **4. Results And Interpretation**

Instead of compartmentalizing the results of the interviews by categories, this research attempts to understand students' behavior and attitudes towards the Moodle platform by looking at the answers from a holistic point of view. The gist of the methodology is to deem all interviews as one continuum. However, the interest is always on students' answers and how the latter can be explained from the perspective of teachers and tech support views. The questions of the interviews were restricted to simple and direct ones.

**Figure 1. Students 2019-2020    Figure 2. Students 2020-2021    Figure 3. Students 2021-2022**



#### **Students' answers to question 1: Have you used the platform Moodle of Djelfa?**

Figure 1 indicates that all students interviewed did not log in to the portal. Their answers divulged that they did not know of the existence of a such website. The rate of the utilization of the portal changed with the second group of students. Figure 2 shows that eight students out of the ten in the interviews have used the Djelfa Moodle. In the current year, the usage of the portal dropped to four students while the rest stated that they did not need it.

The fluctuation in the figures reflects the impact of the ministry decisions on students' behavior. The disease hit the world without warning, although the platform has existed since 2012, its use was extremely limited. The talk about Moodle started seriously only with the academic year 2020-2021.

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The answers also revealed that students did not have sufficient knowledge even on how to use the website. The latter was confirmed by the answers of the tech support specialists, the interviewees stated that students in the academic year 2019-2020 did not possess the required credential to log in. The issue emanates from the fact that the Moodle platform is built on privacy in mind. In the same regard, the teachers interviewed also expressed the same difficulties when using the website for the first time. Informants stated that they had to ask repeatedly the administration for help to access the platform.

The situation improved in the academic years 20/21 and 21/22 as the information needed to log in was linked to students' university cards. Thus, every new student is able to use the university card number as the username while the date of birth is considered the password. Teachers also were given similar instructions by using their names and insurance number to create new accounts. According to the ones in charge, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of accounts as well as login rates to the portal after the employment of this method.

The second-year after the emergence of Covid-19, the Algerian government has loosened the restrictions by allowing more in-class sessions and adapting the blended teaching model in universities. This move had unseen consequences, both students and teachers attested that their utilization of the platform dropped significantly.

In the interviews, administrators confirmed that teachers are still legally asked to submit their courses on the platform. Yet, according to teachers, having direct contact with students helped them to just hand their lessons either printed or through other media such as emails or Facebook. On the latter, there was an agreement among teachers interviewed that Facebook provided an easier approach to contact students and publish lessons. Furthermore, a teacher declares that the use of the platform was mainly looked at as an administrative procedure. The teacher said, “ the platform is no more than a tool that is so hard to use and hardly students check it . . . I share my lectures using Facebook group, that seems to work so well as everyone has a Facebook account”.

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Looking at the answers of the interviewees through a holistic view indicates that the hasty implementation of Moodle as the only online teaching medium has reduced its effectiveness in terms of accessibility. Still, the latter has improved significantly in the previous academic year. Now, teachers, students, administrators, and tech-support specialists have a strong idea of how the platform functions. Despite the issues with the platform, the mere existence of an official website dedicated to distance learning contributes to the success of this medium.

**The answer to question 2: How was your experience using the Djelfa Moodle Platform?**

Evaluating the user experience of an application or a website can be an arduous task as it falls under subjective attitudes. In the interviews, the focus was on seven criteria: findability, accessibility, desirability, usefulness, and credibility. Although the starting question is kept simple, the interviewer tries to steer the conversations towards the criteria above. The answers of both teachers and students then are triangulated with the view of the tech-support specialists to come to a better understanding of the effectiveness of the platform.

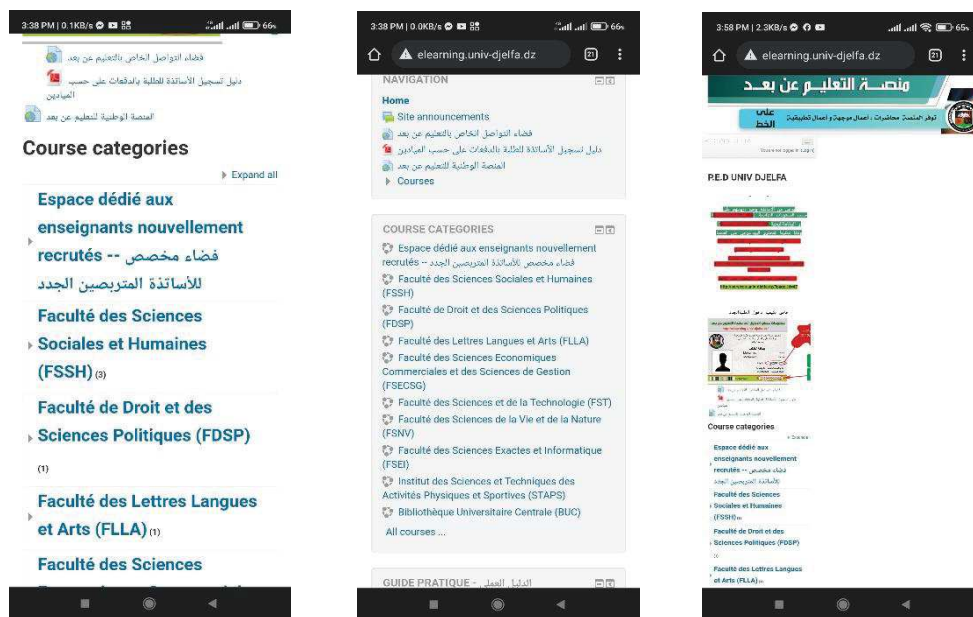
First, regarding the findability of the platform, there is an agreement among students and teachers that the portal is difficult to find. A simple search in Google is not enough, they had to visit the university website to be able to log in. Complicating the matter further, interviewees stated that even when using the university website as an intermediary, it was hard to locate the link to Moodle. Therefore, in terms of findability, it is very difficult for students who never accessed the portal to find it. One of the interviewees suggested that the link to the website should be printed as a QR code on the students' identity cards. The proposition was also welcomed by the tech specialists.

In the matter of accessibility, the portal needs to provide all users with an equivalent experience. Traditionally, this notion is linked to people with disabilities. However, in this context, it is more technical, it refers to the practice of providing a similar experience to all groups of people either using a computer, a mobile phone, fast or slow connection.



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In the interviews, there was a consensus that Djelfa Moodle was relatively slow, often took a long time for the page to be fully loaded in comparison to other websites. When asked, the tech specialists indicated that local servers that host the portal are not fast enough and their specifications are out of date. The problem is compounded with those who use their cell phones. In this vein, 25 students out of 30 interviewed stated that they use their phones.



**Picture 1.** Screenshots of Djelfa Moodle on a phone

The screenshots confirm students' and teachers' perspectives on the layout of the website. It is considered primitive by today's standards, offering very basic interactions, click and scroll. Students complained that the content is not engaging often the adjectives assigned are "boring and dull". Teachers also voiced similar concerns about the website stating that the portal does hardly offer an organized way to post lessons. Consequently, teachers often end up posting similar lessons again or simply losing track of the lectures they have posted.

Subsequently, the talk about accessibility and Djelfa Moodle shows that the latter is not producing the desired results. The conclusion is validated by the interviewed teachers and students alike. It should be noted

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that the website is unified across all the universities in Algeria since all implement the same template. According to the tech specialists, the attempt to amend the deficiencies of the platform requires a national and a large-scale endeavor.

The notion of credibility implies that students trust the lectures provided on the platform. In this regard, the ones in charge of the website ensured that it is rather impossible to post or modify lessons without the proper credential of teachers. Furthermore, there is no record of any hacking attempt made on the website. Therefore, in terms of credibility, the platform is very successful. Still, with the increasing usage, tech-specialists insist that tightened security measures should be placed. The idea is to prevent any breaches not to wait for them to happen.

The usefulness of the Djelfa Moodle platform is a debatable topic. All students who participated in this study stated that the website is no more than just an old forum-like website where teachers post lessons in the format of documents which some they have already. Hence, students deem the portal unsuccessful. Teachers, however, have conflicting views, four teachers' views were aligned with students considering the website as just files deposit that can be replaced by other services such as emails or cloud storage. Two teachers, on the other hand, believe that the platform is very successful in maintaining a link between teachers and students especially in the time of the high peak of Covid-19 infection.

Desirability is probably the most subjective factor among the ones stated above since it relates to taste and aesthetics. A product is said to be desirable when it is deemed attractive to users and helps to maintain their engagement throughout the whole time of use. Students and teachers alike showed no desire to visit the website as they insist that it is just out of necessity. Teachers look at the matter as an administrative procedure while students are compelled to get lessons to prepare for exams.

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**The answer to question 3: Have you been offered any help or training to use the platform?**

The third question in the interviews aims at gauging whether the parties involved with the platform have received help or training. First, students interviewed all avouched that they had no prior training on the use of the website. Moreover, there was no help offered by the administration. On the contrary, teachers, starting from 2016, have received training on the utilization of the website as a mandatory part of their in-service training. Still, they all stressed the need for proper hardware that would help them to create better content for their students. Tech-support specialists confirmed that the university provides all necessary equipment for the success of the platform. Still, their statement contradicts a previous answer on the nature of the state of the servers hosting the websites. Administrators interviewed, simply, had no relation with the platform.

**The answer to question 4: How were assessment and evaluation carried out through the platform?**

Assessment and evaluation are vital in the learning process without which learning would be aimless. A well-designed assessment and evaluation can drive and encourage active learning. In this regard, students assert that the platform is a tool to access lectures and there is no assessment carried out through the website. Teachers also confirmed that Djelfa Moodle is not attended to be used to evaluate students. However, teachers do confirm that there are ways to design interactive exercises for evaluation and assessment but no attempt is made on this. Teachers also affirm that online exams are never done through the platform. Consequently, there is no room to talk about effectiveness in relation to assessment and evaluation as the latter has not been part of the learning process in the platform.

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### **5. Evaluating The Effectiveness Of The Utilization Of Moodle Platforms**

The gist behind the questions asked to students, teachers, tech-support specialists, and administrators was to assess the effectiveness of the Moodle platform of Djelfa. Despite the diversity of the sample and the interviewees, the research took a holistic perspective in the interviews with the belief that the views on the effectiveness of the platform are interconnected and are explicable only by reference to the whole. Thus, the endeavor was to make all the interviews as one passing questions and answers thought the participants gauging their perceptions.

The platform has no doubt proved to be effective as a solution that was immediately available when the disease hit hard in 2020. Both teachers and tech specialists had prior training on its utilization, however, that can not be said about students who, most of them, did not have any idea about it. The situation indeed has improved but still, the lack of desirability towards the platform renders it ineffective and just “a glorified old forum-like website”. The lack of interactivity is the downfall of the website. Therefore, the utilization of the Moodle platform is driven only by the necessity to obtain documents, not for an effective learning process.

### **6. Recommendations For Future Action**

Dissecting the utilization of the platform methodically in order to study it is only one part of the study. However, the research is designed with another aim which is to yield recommendations to respond to challenges and further enhance the positive aspects in the implementation of E-learning. While generalization is not an attribute that is associated with the result of the current paper, the findings can have a valuable contribution to the literature as well as the recommendations. The latter are summarized in the following points:

- 1-** The portal access should be free to enable all students to use the portal easily.
- 2-** The platform has to be part of the registration process of newly admitted university students.
- 3-** Training has to be provided for new students to facilitate their utilization of the website.

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- 4- The link and the required credential have to be related and integrated with the students' university cards.
- 5- The content of the platform has to be vital to the learning process, not just a deposit of files that can be sent through other media.
- 6- The platform should be a free learning portal that contains up-to-date information that is not strictly related to lectures but all fields.
- 7- The website has to be re-designed with an interactive user interface that would increase students' engagement and retention and increase productivity. From a technical point of view, an interactive interface will reduce development costs.
- 8- There should be an active system of notification that will render the site a primary source of information related to students' university life.
- 9- The portal access should be free to enable all students to use the portal easily.
- 10- The portal should include missing services such as real-time chatting and video conferencing.
- 11- The platform has to integrate a system of evaluation and assessment that is part of the educational career of students.
- 12- The hardware that hosts the platform has to be up-to-date.
- 13- Administrators should be involved in the process of learning through the platform.

**7. Limitations Of The Study**

The current research suffers from a few limitations that need to be divulged. First, the result of the study can be deemed to be highly subjective since the adapted approach is only the qualitative one. However, the study does not claim to generalize the findings. Second, the sample size is a limitation, a larger sample would have yielded better results. Third, the inability to obtain factual data on the usage of the portal has reduced the value of the work significantly. Lastly, administrators did not provide any significant results since they seem to be unconcerned with the whole learning process through the portal.

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## Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects

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### Evaluating Blended English For Computing Learning At The University Of M'Sila

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#### Abstract

Blended Learning (BL) Has Taken Off In Recent Years, Especially During The COVID-19 Pandemic. The Technology-Driven World We Live In Fosters This Type Of Learning That Seems To Be Necessary To Cope With The Needs Of The Digital Generation. BL Offers A Twofold Aim. It Not Only Provides Students With Instruction On A Given Topic But Also Helps Them Master The Use Of Technology. But, Was The Introduction Of BL Successful In Our Algerian Universities? How Did BL Impact The Learning Of Students Compared To Face-To-Face (F2F) Learning? To Attempt To Answer These Questions, We Target The Computer Science Department Of The University Of M'Sila. The Focus Of This Research Is To Assess Blended English For Computing Learning Versus Face-To-Face Learning In An EFL Context. The Case Study Approach Was Used In The Cumulation Of Quantitative Data Regarding Three Different Specialties Of The First Year Of Master In Computer Science. The Study Examined The Scores In The English Course For Two Semesters. In The First Semester Of The Academic Year 2019-2020, The Students Received F2F Learning. In The Second Semester Of The Academic Year 2020-2021, The Students Experienced BL. The Results Of The Students' Performances In The English Course Varied. The Study Showed That It Is In F2F Learning That The Students Recorded The Best Scores. The Study Also Attempted To Investigate The Reasons Why BL Was Not As Efficient As F2F Learning.

**Keywords:** Blended Learning, English For Computing, Evaluation, Face-To-Face Learning, University Of M'Sila

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## **1. Introduction**

The approaches related to Blended Learning (BL) first evolved in the 1960s. Technology-based training appeared as a substitute for teacher-led training on mainframes and mini-computers. However, the official diction to characterize it did not take its present wording until the late 1990s. BL is defined as the combination of online and face-to-face (F2F) instruction (Graham, 2006, p. 4 ). As online education is on the rise, many universities have started to propose BL alternatives to their students. The Christensen Institute, which is committed to meliorating the world through disruptive innovation, delineates four types of BL. The first type: the rotation model in which students rotate between online learning and other learning modalities is exemplified by the flipped classroom. The second type is the flex model. In this case, students switch between learning strategies on a customized schedule that uses online learning and every class is divided into online and offline content. The third kind is an à la carte BL. Here, students may choose between online and offline courses at their ease. Under the fourth enriched virtual model, learning is divided between online and offline components, and students do not automatically come to the university every day.

The challenges imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic, made many universities combine online and offline courses. The university of M'Sila was no exception. A rotation BL pattern was used in the Computer Science Department. The current study assessed blended English for computing learning to better understand how it differed from F2F learning.

## **2. The Literature Review**

The evaluation of BL is becoming progressively necessary. The leading drive of evaluation is to improve the teaching and learning processes. We have a shed load of principles that provide a framework for the evaluation of learning. Some scholars delved into the evaluation of BL to reform and classify it according to the SCOPE (Self, Content, Others, and the Platform) framework (Wegmannn & Thompson, 2014). A progressive procedure was also developed by the INORMS (International Network of Research Management Societies) Research Evaluation Working Group for



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assessing responsibly (Himanen & Gadd, 2019). Some studies have been undertaken on the evaluation of BL (Dowling & Godfrey, 2003). They revealed that the learning outcomes of students, who received the two teaching models: BL and traditional F2F learning differed. Evidence showed that academic achievement was greater for students who studied under the BL pattern. Other researchers investigated the influence of instructional and learner variables on learning outcomes for a blended instruction course (Lim & Morris, 2009).

They found out that some learners' antecedents demarcated learning outcomes among groups of students. These investigations dealt with western countries in different fields of study. However, there has been no comparative research addressing students' outcomes fulfilled by the two types of learning in developing countries. Furthermore, there has been no analysis regarding the two aforementioned models of learning in the field of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) environment, to the best of our knowledge.

In an attempt to fill this gap, this study probed the scores of Master students of the University of M'Sila in three blended-format English for computing and F2F courses over two different semesters. Rotation blended learning pattern was applied to Master students in the following specialties respectively: BIO (Business Intelligence and Optimization), ISSE (Information Systems and Software Engineering), and NICT (Networks and Information and Communication Technologies). What was the impact of the choice of the rotation model on the learning process? How effective was BL compared to F2F learning?

Even though research showed that BL scored better results than traditional learning (Dowling & Godfrey, 2003), we predict that the outcome of BL in the ESP context and EFL environment would be distinct. This research intends to answer the following research questions: How did BL differ from F2F learning in ESP/EFL environments? In which type of learning did the students record the best scores? The results of this research could help to understand BL and its impact from a teacher's perspective. The findings could also help to adjust BL to the needs of worldwide ESP learners.

### **3. Method**

A quantitative method was used for this correlational research that investigated how BL differed from F2F learning in ESP/EFL environments. In our case, English as a foreign language was taught to computer users. Statistical analysis was used to answer the research questions.

#### **3.1 Participants**

Two hundred students (age range: 22-24 years) from three different specialties of Master's Degree at the Computer Science Department of the University of M'Sila took an exam in English for Computing at the end of the first semester of the academic year 2019-2020 after receiving F2F instruction. Three other groups from the same above-mentioned specialties took an English test at the end of the second semester of the year 2020-2021 after receiving BL. The participants completed a paper-based test of one hour and a half. It was a language-based task test.

#### **3.2 Measures**

##### **3.2.1 Activities**

During all courses and for the whole semester, students had activities, which consisted of small tests, in one of the four skills: Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. The time allotted to activities varied from 10 minutes to 30 minutes. Each activity was carried out in groups to favor teamwork and peer-tutoring. The group varied between 4 and 6 learners and was chosen by the students at their ease.

They were allowed to use references to apply the humanistic approach and contribute to a stress-free evaluation. The only restriction imposed on students during the activity was that of time. They had to finish their activity on time otherwise it would not be taken into consideration. This was mainly meant to gradually prepare

them for the pressure of time they get through whenever they take international exams like TOEFL or IELTS.

### **3.2.2 Comprehension**

The first part of the English test students took was comprehension. In this section, they had two exercises. The first one dealt with paraphrasing vocabulary from the text. The second exercise included comprehension questions the answer to which was provided in the text. They were asked to give it in their own words.

### **3.2.3 Computer Terminology**

In this exercise, students were asked to provide the sense of acronyms of computer terms they had already studied in their courses.

### **3.2.3 Computer Quiz**

It consisted in asking learners to give the meaning of computer words and concepts they examined in the texts and exercises of the different chapters of the semester.

### **3.2.4 Writing**

This exercise was meant to make students apply the grammatical rules and techniques of scientific writing they learned. Generally speaking, the topic dealt with one of the themes previously discussed in class.

The students took the English test individually. As they are in an EFL environment, they are often not very fluent in English. So, the evaluation of students resulted in the sum of the mark obtained in the activities of the whole semester and that achieved in the final test. The combination of continuous assessment with the score of the final exam provided the students with the opportunity to focus more on learning rather than on evaluation.

To pass the English exam, students must have a mark of at least 10/20.

#### **4. Procedure**

Data were collected from the students' scores in their final exam. Participants completed the test in the order described above. As for the assessment of participants, it combined formative and summative evaluations.

##### **4.1 Formative evaluation**

It was exemplified by the use of activities. It was meant to supervise and improve students' learning process. The conception of activities was to satisfy these aims. This is a continuous evaluation of the limited content area. The feedback we get from it allows us to check whether the instructional objectives have been met.

##### **4.2 Summative evaluation**

This evaluation was portrayed by the final test. It was used after the completion of the course. It assessed students' achievement. The test evaluated the whole content area. Besides, it allowed identifying the efficacy of the teaching procedure. It sought to assess the students' mastery of the course content as well.

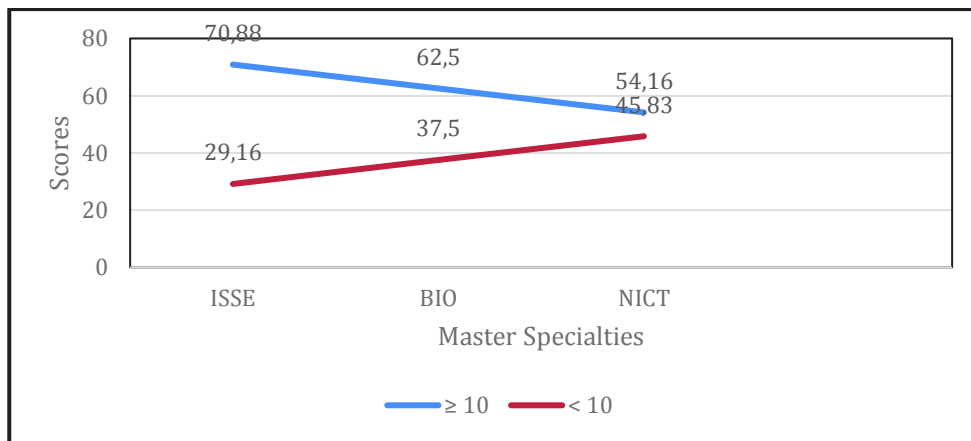
#### **5. RESULTS**

The assessment of the scores of Master students in the three specialties respectively, ISSE, NICT, and BIO in BL and F2F learning was made through statistical analysis. Students pass the test when they have at least 10/20.

In the first semester of the academic year 2019-2020, the students received F2F learning. Master students in the ISSE specialty passed the test with a score of 70,83%, while 29,16% of students

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failed. Those in the BIO specialty scored 62,50% on success and 37,50% on failure. Fifty-four point sixteen percent of the students in the NICT specialty passed the test. By contrast, 45,83% of the remaining others failed. The scores of Master students in the three specialties are summarized in the figure below:

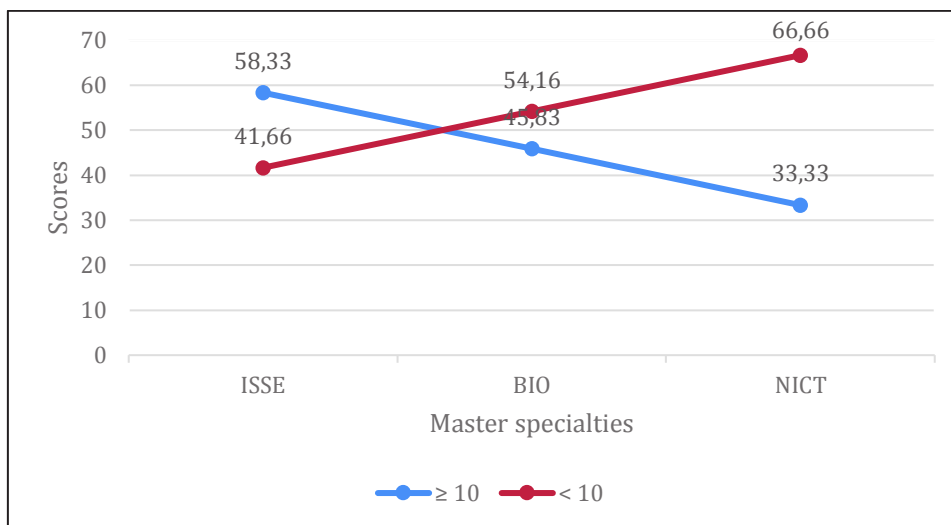


**Fig.1** Scores of the English for Computing Test/First-year Master: ISSE, BIO, NICT F2F Learning: 1st semester 2019-2020.

(drawn from collected data)

BL instruction in English for computing for Master students in the three above-mentioned specialties recorded different scores in the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021. Those of ISSE passed with a score of 58,33% but the remaining 41,66% failed. Master students in BIO passed the exam with 45,83% and 54,16% did not succeed. NICT students, however, totalized 33,33% of success and 66,66% of failure. These scores are summed up in the following figure:

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**Fig.2** Scores of the English for Computing Test/First-year Master: ISSE, BIO, NICT BL: 2<sup>nd</sup> semester 2020-2021

(drawn from collected data)

An examination of the two charts shows a correlation between the type of learning students received and the scores they recorded in their exams.

## 6. Discussion

As predicted, the scores recorded by participants, who received BL, in an EFL context differed from those of participants who benefited from F2F instruction. The latter recorded higher results than those who experienced BL in their learning process.

Some studies advocated the use of BL as the best choice in teaching English in an EFL context (Al Obaydi, 2019). Our data supported the findings of studies according to which students' learning outcomes in BL and F2F learning varied (Dowling & Godfrey, 2003). Interestingly, our figures suggested that the use of BL decreased the scores of participants compared to those who were under the F2F learning pattern. This finding, compared to previous research, may be

attributed to the teaching of ESP in an EFL context. In fact, F2F learning may seem more adequate in an EFL context, where students need to directly interact with their peers. Teamwork is important, peer-tutoring heavily contributes to the acquisition of knowledge, especially in foreign languages. When learners are too shy to participate or ask questions, they turn to their classmates who provide them with the needed information. Eye contact, which is sometimes missing in online courses, can inform the teacher about the learner's doubt or misunderstanding. In such a case, he provides more examples and explanations.

Furthermore, earlier studies revealed that some learners' antecedents differentiated learning results among students (Lim & Morris, 2009). Similarly, the data of our study suggest that even though ISSE Master participants recorded a lower performance in BL compared to F2F learning, their grades remained better than those documented by their BIO and NICT Master fellow participants. This may be due to the fact that students who chose the ISSE specialty were those who had shown higher academic accomplishment.

Besides, the majority of previous studies on BL dealt with western universities. This study offered an assessment of BL and F2F learning in a developing country, where the use of BL did not really take off until during the Covid 19 pandemic. The lower grades that participants' performance revealed in BL may be caused by several reasons. The lack of assiduity in online courses might have led to students' failure. In fact, digital devices are not affordable for all students. Furthermore, even when computers are available, very often students do not have an adequate environment to attend online courses. Whether on campus or at home, most students share their rooms with several individuals which makes it hard to concentrate and even to participate. In addition to the lack of electronic devices and a suitable environment for study, a slow or non-existent internet connection, due to financial reasons, often worsens the problem.

One limitation of the current study is that it does not quantitatively analyze all the reasons behind participants' lower achievement in BL patterns. Further statistical investigation in this matter could bring a better insight to address the issue. Studying the effect of BL on the students' performance in relation to their social status could be very interesting and may reveal unexpected results. Furthermore, increasing the digital literacy of both teachers and learners through courses powered by technology and accessible electronic devices can also contribute to the improvement of learning and teaching.

## **7. Conclusion**

The University of M'Sila, like manifold universities across the world, experienced the combination of online and F2F courses to counteract the effects dictated by the Covid 19 pandemic. The rotation BL pattern was used in the Computer Science Department for Master students. The current study evaluated blended English for computing learning to better grasp how it varied from F2F learning. It also sought to analyze the scores of learners to identify the most adequate learning method that suits the study of ESP in an EFL context.

The study suggested that the teaching of English for computing in an EFL context under the F2F pattern was more effective than that under BL. Apart from the social status component that might have impacted the results of learners, this finding showed that students of ESP under F2F learning, at least as far as the sample of the study is concerned, recorded higher scores than those who had BL. Such a result may hint future researchers should consider how BL affects the scores of students studying ESP in an EFL context by exploring a range of other reasons that may have led to their difficulty in learning. The data of this research may also inspire further investigation for a more appropriate application of BL in ESP courses in the EFL environment on a worldwide scale.



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## Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects

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### The Influence of Students' Learning Styles on their Perceptions of Blended Learning

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#### Abstract

The shift towards a new learning environment where the instructional materials are delivered using web-based technologies through blended learning has been adopted as an urgent solution in Algerian higher education regardless the consideration of major issues from among is the consideration of students' different learning styles. The purpose of this study is thus to investigate students' learning styles and their influence on their perceptions of blended learning in Algerian EFL context. To realize this aim, an exploratory research design was carried out. 80 Master's students at the Department of English at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Setif 2 University volunteered to take part in this investigation. First, a VARK Learning Styles Model is used in order to identify students' learning styles, then a questionnaire is administered to investigate their perceptions on the implementation of blended learning in the Algerian higher education context on the basis of the already determined learning styles. The obtained results from students' questionnaire revealed that students' views on blended learning process, content and materials differ according to their learning styles. Therefore, it is recommended to investigate students' learning preferences before the implementation of BL.

**Keywords:** Blended learning; learning styles; perceptions; VARK Model.

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### **1. Introduction**

Recent advances in science and technology invade almost every aspect of life and are incorporated into many fields and disciplines; the field of education being no exception. The outbreak of the global Covid19 pandemic urged the shift in the delivery of teaching into Blended Learning (Ahmed and Opoku, 2022). Blended Learning (BL) has thus been adopted in universities around the world including Algerian Universities. BL becomes widely adopted in Algerian Higher Education and the concept of blended learning has largely been discussed in the literature as part of mainstream education (Mozelius and Rydell, 2017).

This transition from traditional face-to-face learning into BL aims at creating a richer learning process through combining two modes of learning in a single teaching/ learning environment (Neumeier, 2005). Nonetheless, the designing and implementation of BL require a systematic and principled investigation of elements shaping BL. In this regard, Singh, et al., (2017) posit that BL is likely to achieve improvements in students learning and to positively impact the teaching process when students are open and satisfied with this experience and when teaching practitioners hold the opportunities and integrate their approaches to best meet the learning outcomes of their courses. Significantly, assessing both students' and practitioners' experiences with BL constitutes a major source of feedback as higher education institutions evaluate the usefulness and impact of this pedagogical practice.

In the Algerian context, the adoption of BL engages all types of learners regardless of their differences in terms of abilities, needs, interests, learning strategies and styles. Therefore, the implementation of BL needs to be investigated to cater for these differences in order to motivate learners to respond effectively to the materials provided through BL. For learners, the process of learning is a challenging and complex endeavour. As much as the successful implementation of BL learning requires highly motivated teachers and learners, students learning styles need to be considered before. To this end, this paper therefore tends to examine students' perceptions of BL on the basis of their different learning styles in the Algerian EFL context. By the same token, it seeks to answer the following questions: To what extent does BL cater students' different learning styles; and how do EFL students perceive the currently accredited BL?

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### **2. 2. Literature Review**

The innovative practice of BL is built upon the combination of the benefits of both traditional teaching in classroom settings and ICT supported learning to encompass both online and offline learning. Its main scope is collaborative learning; constructive learning and computer assisted learning (Lalima and Dangwal, 2017). BL is based on the assumption that both traditional face-to-face teaching/learning and technology-supported teaching/learning have merits and demerits. Therefore, BL as an integrated approach blends the main features of both modes. The first framework of parameters on how to design BL is attributed to Neumeier (2005) who defined BL as “a combination of face to face (F2F) and computer assisted learning (CAL) in a single teaching and learning environment” (p. 176). Bãnados (2006) provides a similar definition in which he states that BL is a combination of technology and classroom instruction in a flexible approach to learning that recognizes the benefits of delivering some training and assessment online but also uses other modes to make up a complete training program which can improve learning outcomes and/ or save costs.

The rationale for implementing BL is to rely upon the advantages of each teaching/ learning mode to achieve improvements in the students' learning. Correspondingly, BL tends to enhance learning opportunities, offer effective learning experiences, facilitate learners' access to the resources, and motivate learners through communication, collaboration and interaction (Kurt and Yildirim, 2018; Eshreth and Siaj, 2017 & Singh and Reed, 2011).

BL thus gains the attention of scholars all over the world as being the dominant model of teaching in the current era. Moreover, the use of blended-based instruction is likely to allow more engagement and increase students' participation (Abel and Alvarez, 2020).

Yet, the picture has not always been that clear. Implementing BL is challenged in various ways. It is thought to be time consuming in terms of preparation of lectures, teaching materials design, and development of web-based platforms. What is more, the successful use of BL requires awareness of students' needs and interests to ensure better learning.

The appropriateness of BL courses, therefore, ensures better learning outcomes (Abel and Alvarez, 2020). That is, BL must not be only a matter of delivery of course content or learning activities, there should be a concern

### **The Influence of Students' Learning Styles on their Perceptions of Blended Learning**

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regarding students' social and emotional needs (Graham, 2006 as cited in Mozelius and Rydell, 2017).

In this regard, Shamsuddin and Kaur (2020) consider that students' achievement is largely influenced by their learning styles and therefore they need to be mediated in BL environment to better achieve the teaching/learning goals. For them, BL still requires some improvements and students will better achieve their learning outcomes when pedagogical procedures are adopted and accommodated to their individual differences namely learning styles.

According to Smith and Dalton (2005), "learning style is a distinctive and habitual manner of acquiring knowledge, skills, or attitudes through study or experience" (p. 6). That is, a learning style is a typical way through which the individual learner approaches learning. Reid (1955) refers to learning styles as "individuals' natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills." (qtd in Dornyei, 2005). Thus, a learning style represents a profile of one's approach to learning and the preferred way by which the individual perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment. So, it is induced that learning styles denote the differences that exist between individuals and this issue has long been investigated in literature in terms of perception creation and information processing (Fleming and Baume, 2006 as cited in Othman and Amiruddin, 2010).

Prior research studies indicated the intricate relation that exists between individuals' learning styles with teaching and learning process including BL (Azawei, et al., 2017; Ora, et al, 2018; Tambunan, et al, 2020; Wang and Han, 2021). In exploring the relationship between students' learning styles and BL, Asuka (2017) asserts that research in this field will potentially benefit not only BL practitioners, but extends to instructors seeking to adopt this learning mode. Asuka (2017) applies the VARK Inventory to assess individual students' learning styles and correlated this with their respective performances in the course. Likewise, another research study was conducted by Ora, et al., (2018) in which VAK (Fleming, 1995) model was employed in order to determine learning styles by claiming that the identification of learning styles would assist professors in developing compatible learning which directly and positively impacts students' engagement and outcomes.

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Recently, Shamsuddin and Kaur (2020) investigate students' LS and their relationship with perceptions of BL. The learning style of the students was determined by using Kolb's Learning Style Inventory, while perceptions of BL were assessed by a one way ANOVA to determine the correlation with the learning styles of the students. The findings of the study indicated the clear distinctions between students' learning styles and their perceptions towards BL. These findings, they argue, are likely to avail academicians in designing a more suitable learning mode according to students' differed styles and according to their preferred mode of learning.

In an attempt to enhance students' performance and engagement as well, the differences amongst students ought to be considered in designing and implementing teaching models. So, if the accredited teaching model matches students' preferred learning style, learning is likely to be better, faster, and easier, and students' achievement will eventually be fostered (Alzain, et al., 2017).

A number of well known learning style models and instruments have been designed and applied in order to determine the preferred learning style of the students. Learning styles instruments are built upon the premise that there is no one teaching style that fits all learners because learners show different needs, preferences and abilities and hence each individual has his unique learning style (Alzain, et al., 2017). The most popular learning style models that are mostly being used to assess the learning preference are: Kolb Learning Style Inventory, Felder and Silverman, and VARK Model (Shamsuddine and Kaur, 2020). According to Ismail (2010) as cited in Othman and Amiruddin (2010), dividing students on the basis of mode is crucial in that the effectiveness of each lesson to different VARK learning modes is likely to be noticed. Accordingly, VARK provides better thought about information processing preferences (Al-Sabagh, 2021).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Methodology Design**

The ultimate aim of the current paper is to investigate students' perceptions of BL on the basis of their different learning styles. Accordingly, the study falls into the exploratory research design which aims at filling the gaps about a new or an under-researched topic, or approaching the topic from a different angle to understand the phenomenon in depth (Leavy, 2017).

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### **3.2 Participants**

The participants who took part in this study were 80 Master's students at the department of English at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine, Setif 2 University. The participants experienced both BL and traditional face-to-face learning during the course of their higher education. Blended Learning has been experienced for about two academic years (2020/2021; 2021/2022).

### **3.3 Data Collection Instruments**

As far as data collection instruments are considered, the VARK questionnaire (Fleming, 2006) was first used to determine the students' different learning styles. Students are then made aware of their learning styles. Within this scope, The VARK learning style questionnaire allows students to accomplish sixteen (16) sets of questions composing the Fleming's VARK Model (2006). For each question, there are four alternative answers which typically correspond to the tendencies in VARK model. The participant has to select the answer which seemingly translates his/ her perception. Conceptually, VARK is a sensory model which focuses on the way students prefer in receiving and delivering new knowledge (Othman and Amiruddine, 2010; Alzain et al., 2017). In this model, students are classified into four different modes namely; Visual, Aural, Read/ Write, and Kinesthetic respectively (Fleming, 2006 as cited in Othman and Amiruddin, 2010).

- **Visual ( V):** This learning preference instantiates the assimilation of information in charts, graphs, flow charts, and all the symbolic arrows, circles, hierarchies and other devices used by teachers to represent what have been stated in words.
- **Aural (A):** This perceptual mode describes a preference of spoken or heard information. Students with this learning modality report that they learn best from discussion, oral feedback, discussion boards, oral presentations, classes, tutorials, and talking with other students and teachers.
- **Read/Write (R):** This learning preference is for information presented as words either read or written. Typically, read/write learners are keen on textbooks. These students place heavy emphasis on precision in language as they are inclined to use quotes, lists, texts, books and manuals. They have a strong reverence for words.

## The Influence of Students' Learning Styles on their Perceptions of Blended Learning

➤ **Kinesthetic (K):** Conceptually, this modality tends to refer to learning by doing where the learner is more connected to reality either through experience, example, practice, or simulation.

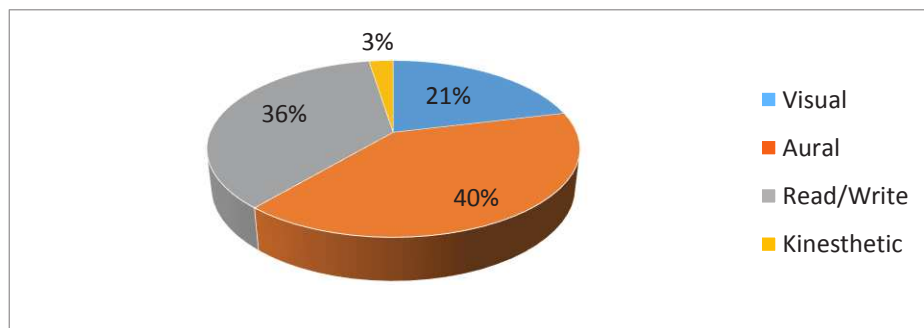
The second step in this study involves investigating students' perceptions towards BL mode in relation to the formerly determined learning styles. The perceptions questionnaire is composed of two sections: The first section is devoted to students' profiles whereas the second section considers students' perceptions on BL.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1 Results of the VARK Questionnaire

**Table 1.** Results of the VARK Questionnaire

Learning Styles	N° of Students	Percentage (%)
Visual	17	21.25%
Aural	32	40%
Read/Write	29	36.25%
Kinesthetic	02	2.5%



**Fig. 1.** Students' Learning Styles According to VARK Questionnaire

The VARK questionnaire tended to examine students' learning styles. The results of the classification of 80 master's students learning styles according to the VARK questionnaire contribute to determining the different styles of learners. Table 01, and figure 01 above show the distribution of participants' preferred learning styles in each dimension based on VARK questionnaire. By looking at the number of students in each



### The Influence of Students' Learning Styles on their Perceptions of Blended Learning

dimension, it can be clearly observed that the dominant learning style among students is A (Aural) represented by thirty two (40%) students, then R (Read/ Write) represented by (36.25%) students, followed by V (Visual) by (21.25%) students, and finally (2.5%) students represent the K (Kinesthetic) learning style.

This preliminary step was intended for the sake of sorting students on the basis of their learning styles in order to accomplish the second phase of the study which tended to investigate students' perceptions regarding the implementation of BL based upon their differed learning styles.

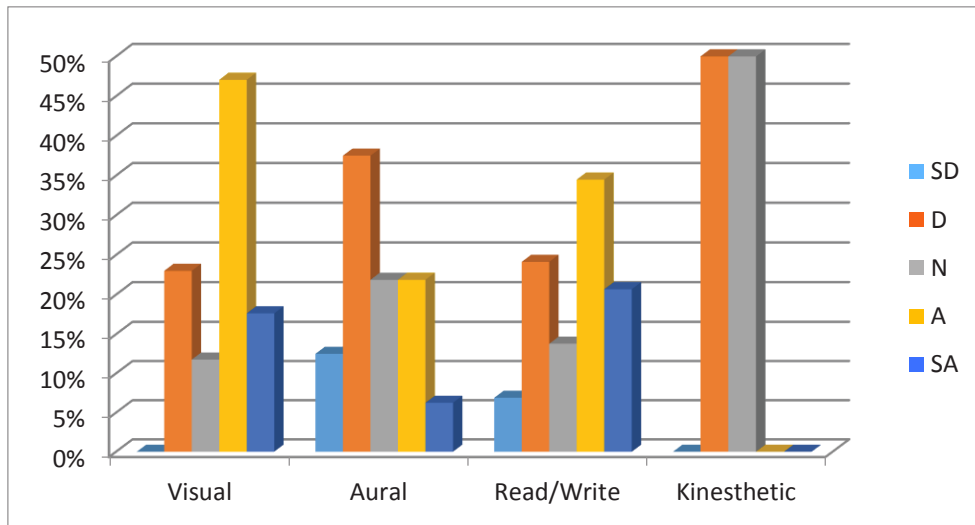
#### 4. 2 Results of Students' Perceptions Questionnaire

Attempting to probe master's students perceptions, this section displays findings of students' perceptions towards the recently and currently accredited BL with regard to the formerly determined learning styles. Respondents' answers were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging in the following way: strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and strongly agree (SA) in order to yield the required data.

**Table 02.** Students' Achievements in BL

Learning Styles	SD		D		N		A		SA		N°
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
Visual	00	00	04	23.52	02	11.76	08	47.05	03	17.6	17
Aural	04	12.5	12	37.5	07	21.87	07	21.87	02	6.25	32
Read/Write	02	6.89	07	24.13	04	13.79	10	34.48	06	20.6	29
Kinesthetic	00	00	01	50	01	50	00	00	00	00	02

### The Influence of Students' Learning Styles on their Perceptions of Blended Learning



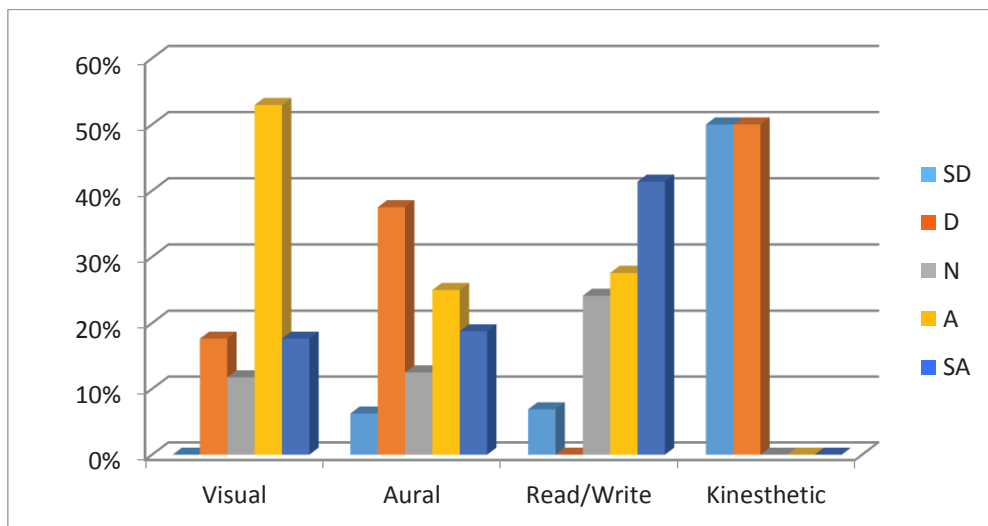
**Fig.02.** Students Views about their Achievements in BL

The results displayed on the table and the figure above pertained to the students' views regarding their academic achievement during the implementation of BL in comparison to traditional face-to-face learning. These views have been stated in accordance with students' learning styles. For visual students, represented by 17 students, (47.05%) responded by agree and (17.64%) by strongly agree. None of the visual students responded by strongly disagree, while (23.52%) disagreed with the statement. Two students (11.76%) remained neutral. For aural students, the highest percentage (37.5%) reflects respondents' disagreement on the statement. (12.5%) responded by strongly disagree. (21.87%) rated agree while (6.25%) rated strongly agree. Seemingly, aural students are not satisfied with their learning achievement in BL. Among read/ write students, (34.48%) responded by agree and (20.68%) by strongly agree. That is the majority of read/ write students are satisfied with their achievements in BL. For kinesthetic students, one student responded by disagree while the other student remained neutral.

### The Influence of Students' Learning Styles on their Perceptions of Blended Learning

**Table 03.** Students' Perceptions on BL Content and Materials

Learning Styles	SD		D		N		A		SA		N°
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
<b>Visual</b>	00	00	03	17.64	02	11.76	09	52.94	03	17.64	17
<b>Aural</b>	02	6.25	12	37.5	04	12.5	08	25	06	18.75	32
<b>Read/Write</b>	02	6.89	00	00	07	24.13	08	27.58	12	41.37	29
<b>Kinesthetic</b>	01	50	01	50	00	00	00	00	00	00	02



**Fig.03.** Students' Perceptions on BL Content and Materials

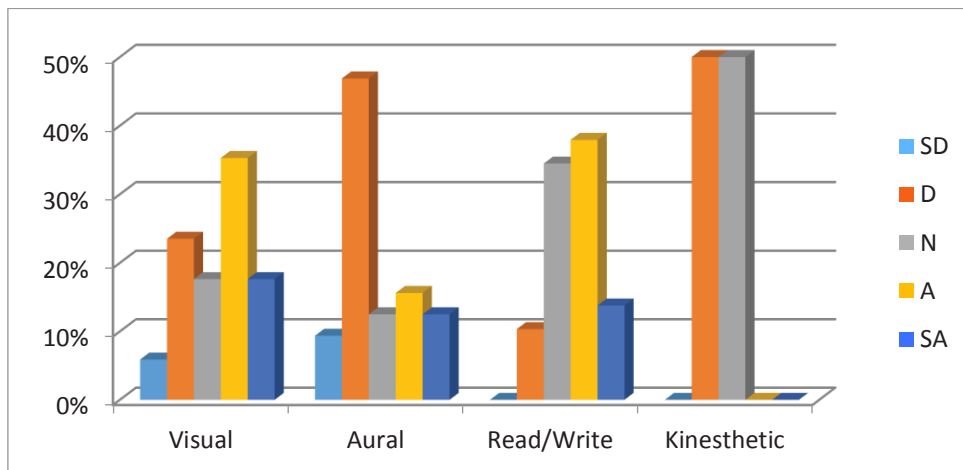
When students have different learning styles, they respond to the materials in different ways. Accordingly, the above table demonstrates participants' views as far as BL content and materials are concerned and the extent to which they match their diverged learning styles. Among visual respondents, (52.94%) answered with agree and (17.64%) with strongly agree. However (17.64%) disagreed with the statement while none responded by strongly disagree. For the aural, (37.5%) responded by disagree and (6.25%) by strongly disagree. (25%) answered with agree and (18.75%) with strongly agree. As for read/ write students (41.37%) strongly agreed with the suitability of BL content and materials to their learning style preferences. Likewise, (27.58%) reacted with agree.

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(24.13%) remained neutral while (6.89%) demonstrated their disagreement. Apparently, Students hold disaccorded views concerning the content delivered in BL environment.

**Table 04.** BL Platforms Adequacy with Students' Learning Styles

Learning Styles	SD		D		N		A		SA		N°
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
Visual	01	5.88	04	23.52	03	17.64	06	35.29	03	17.64	17
Aural	03	9.37	15	46.87	04	12.5	5	15.62	04	12.5	32
Read/Write	00	00	03	10.34	10	34.48	11	37.93	04	13.79	29
Kinesthetic	00	00	01	50	01	50	00	00	00	00	02



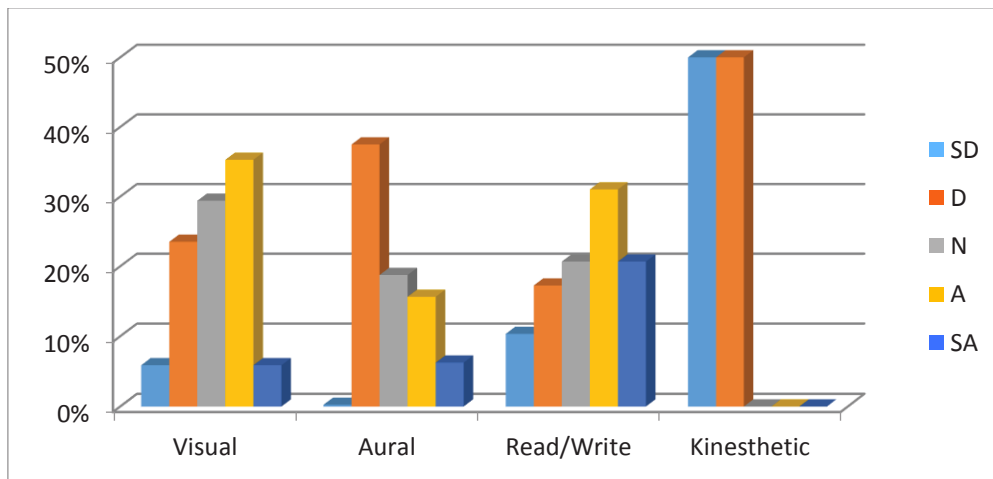
**Fig.04.** BL Platforms Adequacy with Students' Learning Styles

The data displayed above reported how students perceive the adopted platforms in BL and their adequacy to students' differed learning styles. So, as it is shown in the table above, for visual learners, the highest rate (35.29%) reflects students' agreement with the statement claiming that the selected platforms match their learning styles. Similarly, read/ write students agreed on the adequacy of BL platforms to their learning styles with the highest percentage of (37.29%). On the contrary, aural students highly showed their disagreement when (46.87%) responded by disagree and (9.37%) by strongly disagree. In this regard, the diversity in the obtained results highly reflects varied materials with which students with different learning styles can successfully react.

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**Table 05.** BL Effect on Students' Motivation and Engagement

Learning Styles	SD		D		N		A		SA		N°
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
Visual	01	5.88	04	23.52	05	29.41	06	35.29	01	5.88	17
Aural	06	18.75	12	37.5	06	18.75	05	15.62	02	6.25	32
Read/Write	03	10.34	05	17.24	06	20.68	09	31.03	06	20.68	29
Kinesthetic	01	50	01	50	00	00	00	00	00	00	02



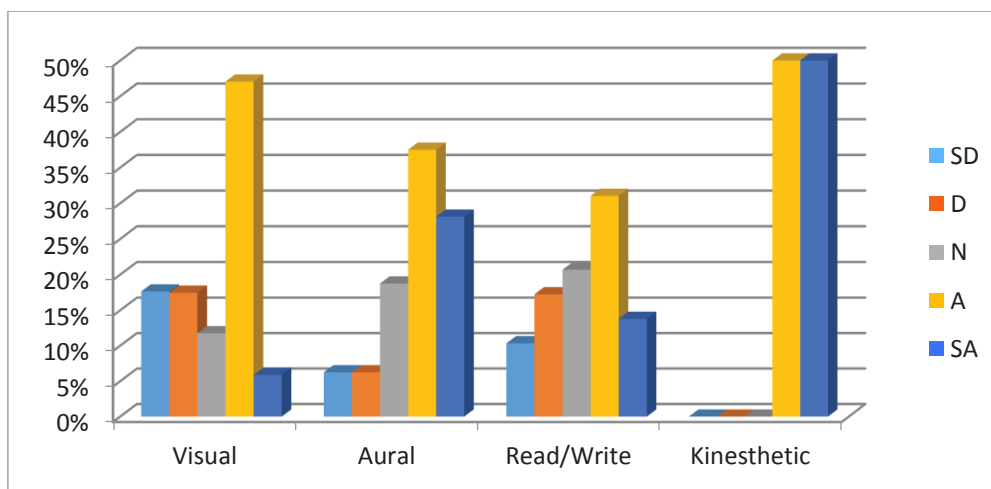
**Fig.05.** BL Effect on Students' Motivation and Engagement

Concerning the influence of BL on students' motivation and engagement, (5.88%) of visual students' answer with strongly disagree, (23.52%) agree, (29.41%) neutral, (35.29%) agree, and (5.88%) strongly agree. It is clearly observed that the majority of visual students confirmed the positive effect of BL on their motivation and engagement. Aural students on the other hand held an opposite view when the majority among them (37.5%) responded by disagree and (18.75%) by strongly disagree. Read/ write students' responses demonstrated their agreements with the statement by (31.03%) agree and (20.68%) strongly agree. Kinesthetic students, however, disagreed with the statement.

### The Influence of Students' Learning Styles on their Perceptions of Blended Learning

**Table 06.** The Examination of students' Learning Styles

Learning Styles	SD		D		N		A		SA		N°
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
Visual	03	17.64	03	17.64	02	11.76	08	47.05	01	5.88	17
Aural	02	6.25	02	6.25	06	18.75	12	37.5	09	28.12	32
Read/Write	03	10.34	04	13.79	06	20.68	09	31.03	05	17.24	29
Kinesthetic	00	00	00	00	00	00	01	50	01	50	02



**Fig.06.** the Examination of students' Learning Styles

Concerning students' reaction to the statement which stated to what extent they agree with the necessity of investigating their learning styles before the implementation of any instructional method, most of the students from each category expressed their agreement. The findings indicated that (47.05%) of visual students chose agree, and so did (37.5%) from aural students and (31.03%) from read/ write category. Similarly, kinesthetic students agreed that it is of big importance that the investigation of learning styles should be done before the selection of any learning mode. Based upon these results, it is evidently noticed that master's students are highly aware of their learning preferences modes and are also conscious about the differences which exist between them. In this regard, it can be inferred that students are cognizant of the fact that if they are taught according to their learning styles, their learning outcomes will improve.

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### **5. Discussion**

Based on the results of the study, it is evident that students hold different learning styles. The application of the VARK Learning Style Model (Fleming, 2006) which is essentially based on Neuro-Linguistic Programming Research assists in sorting students into visual, aural, read/written, and kinesthetic learners. Typically, sorting students according to their learning preferences is significant in that it assists instructors in the planning as well as evaluation of teaching/ learning environment (Kemp, Morrison & Ross, 1998 as cited in Akkoyunlu & Soylu, 2008).

The divergence in students' learning styles has ultimately resulted in divergent views on teaching and learning including BL. Various factors have affected students' views towards BL notably students' achievements, the adequacy of the teaching materials and content, the suitability of the adopted platforms, and the attainment of the learning objectives. The obtained results clearly indicated that BL has affected students' achievements. However, the effect varied among the students according to their learning styles. Having high-level educational achievement indicates more agreeable perceptions towards BL (Eshreth & Siaj, 2007). In this regard, aural students' responses clearly revealed their dissatisfaction regarding their achievements in BL. This fact has set a problem as BL relatively reduces the amount of students' interaction.

Results also showed that significant differences in students' views on BL were noticed regarding the acceptance of teaching materials, content, and selected platforms. In this regard, results clearly indicated that there were no systematic procedures to deal with students' different learning styles. Typically, different learning modes entail different instructional materials and techniques. The highest agreement percentage was marked among visual and read/write students. This fact is likely to confirm the reality that BL practice actually minimizes the amount of interaction among students and between students and teachers alike. For this reason, aural students showed their disagreement as far as the suitability and adequacy of the materials and content being delivered in BL with their learning preferences.

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Conversely, students' views regarding the necessity of investigating and determining their learning styles before the implementation of any teaching/ learning practice including BL were almost similar as the highest percentage within each category held positive views towards the statement. Respondents' views clearly indicated that students are highly aware of the fact that being taught according to one's preferred learning style, effectively impacts students' achievements.

### **6. Conclusion**

The current paper endeavoured to investigate students' perceptions towards the recently implemented BL. This exploratory study has been carried out among Algerian EFL students at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Setif 2 University. This exploration has shown that students are different in the way they approach learning. In this context, students have been classified on the basis of the VARK Learning Style Model into four categories namely, visual, aural, read/write and Kinesthetic.

This divergence in students' learning styles has resulted in students' divergent views regarding the implementation of BL. As far as students' achievements, teaching materials and adopted teaching platforms are concerned, visual, aural, read/write and kinesthetic students' responded differently to demonstrate that their learning styles indeed influence their perceptions towards BL.

Significantly, the study strikingly showed that teaching and learning by considering the learning style of the learners affect their learning achievements. That is, achieving effective teaching/ learning outcomes depends on students learning styles (Gulnaz, 2020).

In this regard, By overlooking the influence of students' learning styles on their academic achievements, it is highly recommended that a diagnosis of students' learning styles is crucial before the designing and implementation of BL courses which, seemingly, are thought to address one learning style over the others. Typically, Algerian higher education practitioners and instructors are recommended to vary in the materials as well as the platforms designed for the delivery of teaching. Significantly, addressing different types of learners will efficiently result in better learning outcomes as it will result in students' positive views and acceptance of BL practice during and even in post pandemic era.



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## Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects

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### The Blended Learning Environment in Higher Education: A Case Study of How Teachers in the college of Alexandria Engage Students and Design Courses

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#### Abstract

In the context of higher education, blended learning has become an important component in the delivery of course content. Research on blended learning has found that motivation and the process of course design are two factors that impact the overall effectiveness of the blended course as well as the quality of students' engagement. The present qualitative study aims to probe into teachers' strategies to engage students and design courses in the blended contexts. Interviews were used in the study to analyze how four university teachers motivated their students and how they designed courses in their blended approach at the university. The results show that the teachers did take into consideration motivation and course design to varying degrees.

**Keywords:** Blended Learning; Course Design; Higher Education; Motivation

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## **1. Introduction**

Over the past decade, technology has become an important component of the educational operation. Many tools have been introduced to classrooms, some of which include computers, digital cameras, Smart Boards, and even iPods. These means of technology have permitted higher education institutions to shift to blended learning. Woodfield and Harrison (2013) define blended learning as the combination of traditional face-to-face and online/virtual instruction in one setting. This pedagogical approach allows the learning operation to be independent of time and space. Thurmaier (2006) adds that blended learning is increasingly becoming an important method of course delivery in institutions of higher education for it offers a flexibility of scheduling and satisfies students' needs and styles. Additionally, Neumeier (2005) mentions that "the most important aim of a Blended Learning design is to find the most effective and efficient combination of the two modes of learning for the individual learning subjects, contexts and objectives." (p. 164). In this regard, Rhem (2012) states that one of the significant characteristics of this pedagogical approach is that it permits teachers to promote a stronger sense of student engagement and offers them more learning opportunities which encourage them to actively engage in the learning operation in and out of the classroom.

While finding an environment that suits all learners is not an easy task, the blended learning pedagogy comes to offer an "accessible, flexible, active, interactive, encouraging, and inspiring" teaching and learning environment (Zhang and Zhu, 2018, p. 268). Additionally, Graham, Allen, and Ure (2003, 2005) introduce three reasons to explain why teachers and learners might use blended learning over other teaching approaches. These include improving teaching and learning methods and increasing access, flexibility and engagement. In so doing, teachers and instructors need to take into account several key elements when designing their blended learning environment (Neumeir 2005). These elements include model of integration, distribution of learning content and objectives, teaching methods, and involvement of learners. Each element of these parameters is significant for instructors when designing their courses.

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Research on blended learning has indicated several academic and social benefits of implementing this teaching model. For instance, Osguthorpe and Graham (2003, p.228) summarized the benefits in the following statement:

Those who use blended approaches base their pedagogy on the assumption that there are inherent benefits in face-to-face interaction (both among learners and between learner and instructor) as well as the understanding that there are some inherent advantages to using online methods in their teaching. These benefits include developing learners' autonomy, providing more individualized support, promoting collaborative learning, increasing students' interaction and engagement, providing opportunities to practice beyond the class settings, and improving the motivation of learners. (228).

For these benefits to be achieved, several factors affect the uptake of a blended learning model in higher education courses. Sharma and Barrett (2007) provided the most comprehensive list of these factors that includes teachers' readiness toward technology use, teachers' training, teachers' and students' accessibility to technology, and learners' motivation. Each factor plays a significant role in decisions regarding adopting a blended learning model in higher education classrooms.

In fact, students' motivation, satisfaction and engagement are one of the most identified benefits of blended learning in the higher education context. To illustrate, Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour (2017) examined the effectiveness of blended learning in promoting the motivation of higher education learners. Specifically, the study's aim was to determine whether blended learning can be implemented to raise the motivation of sixty Iranian learners.

The sample was randomly assigned to two categories: an experimental category, that received blended learning courses, and a control category, that received a more traditional approach to teaching. Both categories were tested before and after the study to measure the learners' motivation level. After comparing the two categories using a t-test, Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour found that the implementation of blended learning created a

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statistically notable positive effect on the motivation of the learners. That is, the use of blended learning in higher education has a direct impact on enhancing the motivation of learners. Based on these results, the researchers summarize that blended learning is a powerful pedagogy that facilitates the learning operation and can be successfully implemented in higher education classes.

However, student motivation can be challenged by trouble with technology (Vaughan, 2007), access to resources (Ho et al., 2006), and time management (Holenko & Hoić-Božić, 2008). Significantly, student motivation in a blended learning environment can be enhanced when teachers use the best practices in course design and preparation. This is why; teachers of higher education institutions are required to be prepared for the different factors involved in preparing a blended course (Ho et al., 2006).

Literature on the blended learning best practices reveal that teachers of higher education should determine best practices that engage learners and encourage them to be active members in the course. When preparing to use a blended course, these teachers need to take some elements into consideration. To begin with, Holenko & Hoić-Božić (2008); Precel et al. (2009); Slevin (2008) believe that teachers need to create online learning milieus which provide opportunities for collaborative and interactive learning. This environment can be developed by using online discussions and workshops. Second, Archambault (2008) suggests that teachers should possess a strong command of technological applications and platforms, as well as the ability to design and present content in an online format. A fourth consideration, as stated by Slevin (2008), is to adapt assessments in a way that meets the expectations of online learning. Picciano (2009, p.16) mentions that traditional assessments need to be evaluated to decide whether they encounter the needs of the e-assignments for the course.

A further consideration is linked to Garrison's and Vaughan's idea of generating a community of inquiry (2008). Generating a community of inquiry permits students to connect and cooperate with their fellows and to develop "a learning environment that integrates social, cognitive, and

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teaching elements in a way that will precipitate and sustain critical reflection and discourse” (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, p. 8).

Moreover, the two researchers (2008) state that blended classes open “the possibility of creating and sustaining a community of inquiry beyond the classroom” (p. 8).

A community of inquiry permits learners to assert, build, and analyze knowledge, that paves the way to “deep and meaningful educational experiences” (p. 9). Teachers of blended classes need to take these elements into account when preparing and designing courses if they wish the learning experience to be meaningful.

As suggested by the review of literature, deciding whether a given blended learning course was successful or not depends on two main factors: teachers’ strategies to engage students and keep them motivated, and course design; the two of which are the focus of this paper. Course design refers to the actual organization of the lesson. Motivation encompasses extrinsic factors like teacher appreciation and encouragement in addition to intrinsic motivation. This paper adds to the field of online education by investigating how higher education teachers take into account these two factors when developing a blended learning course.

## **2. Purpose of Study and Research Questions**

The need to cope with a rapidly changing world has played a major role in the popularity of blended learning in higher education. Although the quality and quantity of blended learning courses offered has drastically increased, research on teachers’ use of best practices when delivering blended courses is still limited. While they are continuously and increasingly being asked to design and deliver blended courses, teachers in higher education may not take into consideration certain factors that might affect the quality of instruction and learning in a blended context. This paper seeks to provide an in-depth analysis of how teachers of higher education consider course design and students’ motivation when planning and offering blended courses. Using a collective case study approach, this paper tempts to answer the following research question: How do higher education



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teachers take into consideration course design and students' motivation, two major factors, when planning their blended courses?

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research adopts a qualitative, collective case study design to investigate how four teachers of higher education who teach in a blended learning environment consider course design and motivation when planning and implementing their courses. Despite the fact that all courses followed blended methods, each teacher was considered a case or a unit of analysis (Yin, 2009). Participants come from faculty in a college of foreign languages at a large research university in Alexandria, Egypt. Exemption from Institutional Review Board was accepted in January 2022. Data were elicited between January and February 2022.

#### **3.2 Case Selection**

Since the type of courses taught by teachers in the college is not easily identifiable, about 30 teachers of foreign languages faculty were handed an invitation to participate in the study. The invitation stated the purpose of the research and informed the teachers that they must teach a blended learning course to participate. So as to guarantee that the participants of the survey met this inclusion condition, the first question of the survey asked if the teacher implemented a traditional, blended, or fully online course. Participants who did not implement the blended approach were not included in the final sample.

An additional four close-ended questions were introduced to the four blended approach teachers to collect demographic data that can help describe the research cases. These teachers were, then, asked 13 open-ended questions to obtain in-depth responses about how they take into account course design and motivation (See Appendix A). As a last step, the teachers were invited to engage in a follow-up face-to-face interview so as to get a deep look into their strategies and methods when considering course design and motivation in their blended courses.



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#### **4. Profiles of the Participants**

Based on data collected from the demographic questions, this section provides a brief description of each teacher. In order to protect the confidentiality of the respondents, their real names were replaced by pseudonyms. Table 1 presents information about the participants, their experience in teaching and the duration of each interview. Professor Hanan has been teaching Grammar courses in higher education for 15 years. She has taught four different blended courses. To her, blended learning occurs when “the teacher delivers one part of the course on-line and the other part in-class as usual.”

Professor Frank has been teaching literary criticism courses for 21 years. He has taught five different blended courses. The two blended courses are on reader response theory and postcolonial literary theory. To him, blended learning meant a mix of face-to-face and online classes which usually alternate along the academic year. His objective was to make “learners use technology as a means to learn as well as to communicate in and out of class.”

Doctor Leila has been teaching civilization studies for about ten years in higher education. The blended course she taught is a workshop for pre-service teachers, which covered introduction to the civilizations of East Asia, gender and sexuality in world civilizations, and introduction to African civilizations. In her workshop, she incorporated online components. Like Hanan and Frank, Leila defines blended learning as “a blend of the traditional classroom and online learning”.

Professor Francisca has been teaching in higher education for more than 20 years. Leila and Francisca work together on the civilization studies course and are sharing resources and ideas with each other. Francisca believes that blended learning takes place when “part of the lesson is delivered in face-to-face meetings, and part of it is delivered via online activities.”

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## **5. Data Collection**

In this research, a brief introductory survey was used together with follow-up interviews to generate an in-depth, rich analysis of the data obtained. Developed from the two themes discussed in the literature review, the semi-structured interviews provided a thorough analysis of how the teachers consider course design and motivation when planning their blended courses. Table 1 gives the length of each interview.

**Table1.** Summary of the Participants

Teacher	Discipline	Years teaching in Higher Education	Number of Blended Courses Taught	Length of Interview (min.)
Hanan	Grammar	15	4	20
Frank	Literary Criticism	21	5	25
Leila	Civilization	10	1	34
Francisca	Civilization	+20	3	27

## **6. Data Analysis**

In this research, interviews were indexed before proceeding to data analysis. Based on the two research variables (motivation and course design) believed to be important in the literature on blended learning, the responses from teachers were coded using an a priori coding method. In the table below, a detailed description of the coding method is presented. Throughout the coding process, motivation was observed to encompass two distinct, but interdependent, processes: “motivation” and “communication.” While motivation reflected the teachers’ strategies to engage students and promote them to be active partners in the class, communication involved techniques related to student-teacher and student-student interaction inside and outside the classroom. These techniques incorporated in-class discussions, discussion board or blog posts, and correspondence via Teams and emails.

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After completing the coding process, the codes were grouped into themes using a thematic analysis of the interview responses (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this regard, more focus was shed on the recoding of motivation and communication. Thematic analysis of the teachers' responses was conducted for the purpose of identifying common methods used in planning and implementing blended courses.

## **7. Results and Discussion**

Course design, communication and motivation along with other variables which arose while analyzing data are discussed. In this research, all of the teachers used a Course Management System (CMS) for the online part.

**Table2. Coding Scheme**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Operationalization</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Course Design</b>	1. Actions taken by the teacher to learn about best practices to teaching a blended course.	1. Participating in workshops, collaborating with colleagues and IT experts, and searching.
	2. Organization and inclusion of elements of blended courses.	2. assignments, assessments, use of CMS features, use of other apps and platforms (Teams, Emails), students' groups.
<b>Motivation</b>	1. Teacher appreciation and support, following up with students.	1. Degree of comfort with technology, teachers' feedback, frequency of meetings (online and in-class).
<b>Communication</b>	1. Teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction (presentations, group works).	1. Frequency and quality of discussion, students' responses and feedback to an assignment.

### **7.1 Preparing Blended Courses**

The teachers who contributed to this study prepared their blended lessons differently. While only Hanan gathered information on best online teaching strategies from outside resources, all the other teachers sought resources by contacting the tech support stuff in the department or consulted the colleagues who employed blended methods before. Not surprisingly, the

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teachers who spent time on searching best strategies related to online and blended learning before designing their lessons got more guidance on what and how to integrate some components.

Two of the teachers under study joined some technology workshops. Both teachers exalted the quality of the training they participated in. Once qualified, these two teachers became referees to their colleagues within their departments. Leila became a CMS “proficient” in her department where many other teachers approached her for guidance. Frank has since published three articles telling his experiences with the blended model courses and how to effectively integrate technology in class. Leila and Frank did not stop at the level of guiding and advising colleagues; rather, both have collaborated to design many blended courses and shared them on CMS.

Despite of her lack of expertise in using the technology, Francisca believed that the blended model was effective. She insisted that improving the class for students was the motive that led her to integrate technology, and that she “would not have shifted to a blended model if it were not for the good of the students”. She added that the blended course requires more preparation time as one needs to be aware of the various issues that arise, including issues related to the different platforms and apps, communication, connectivity, and the modes of delivery.

## **7.2 Elements of Course Design**

According to Carman (2005), any blended learning course should include five key elements. These include e-content, live presentations, collaboration, assessments, and reference resources. While live presentations varied, each teacher of this study presented a somewhat different design incorporating most or all of Carman’s key elements. Hanan replaced some of her classes by live presentations and met with students once per week to give students the opportunity to complete their online assignments. Hanan noted that this schedule was more flexible for her students who were more comfortable with this model as most of them had commitments which prevented them from attending face-to-face classes the whole week. On the other side, Francisca, Leila and Frank based their courses on face-to-face tutoring with one online session held once a week.

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The three teachers considered the online session to be an extension of content taught in class. Francisca stated that her students' responses to this schedule were positive.

Concerning the online content and reference material provided on the CMS, the four teachers posted course documents and files using the "content" feature. They also had the students complete many online assignments, including Shark Tank activities, Creative storytelling, problem solving, podcasts, student presentations, and digital graphic organizers. Frank's courses often came as a combination of several chapters where, at the end of each chapter, students had to present a PowerPoint project that aimed to keep students active and focused. The students' presentations were graded as part of the term's evaluation.

Despite using the news and grading features similarly, the four teachers used the discussion board differently. Leila used the discussion board for teacher-student correspondence on projects and assignments. Francisca and Frank used it to require the students to post their feedback, thoughts and suggestions. It was also a space provided for students to ask questions and discuss opinions. Hanan used the discussion board for student-student communication on projects and group activities.

All of the teachers grouped students for projects and presentations. Francisca shared her first experiences when she had required the whole section to engage in a topic, "it was so overwhelming and hard to control." After spending some time reflecting on the matter, she could reach this idea of grouping students and rotating them for discussion. This method allowed the students to receive various perspectives and have a large online interaction. Group work, the four teachers agreed, promotes a sense of community between students and leads to student satisfaction.

The teachers in this study indicated that they used the "news" and "content" sections in the CMS to keep learners linked to the course. Also, the "news" feature was used by Hanan to post conference calls and students' contributions and articles. While all did their best to keep the content and information posted organized, they all were unsatisfied with the linear layout the CMS of the university provided. "The format is bulky and badly

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organized,” Leila said. Each teacher tried to overcome this issue in his or her way. Francisca, for example, set elements to be time released in order to enable a constant succession of content based on the actual assignments.

One other significant component of course design was assessment. Frank, Leila and Francisca graded discussion board posts while Hanan did not. The in-class discussion was also not graded by Hanan as she considers the discussions to be compulsory for the completion of the other class activities. All tasks in Leila’s course were transformed to online to be assessed whereas Frank and Francisca collected both online and in-class activities. The use of different assessment plans reflects the wide range of options for collecting and assessing activities within the blended approach.

### **7.3 Communicating Creatively and Effectively**

In the blended courses under study, communication appeared to be a key element. The way teachers organized their courses enabled students to construct communities through their online as well as their in-class interactions and activities. Because students do not meet face-to-face on a regular basis as they used to do in traditional learning, constructing communities proved to be astonishingly effective in blended learning (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). All of the teachers found online sessions interesting and substantive as learners got more time to reflect on and analyze content. Most of the teachers agreed that the students shared deep and more fruitful ideas compared to their performance in in-class discussions. Francisca noted that her students felt confident to share and discuss ideas, an element that was missing in a traditional setting. Because online discussions were a key component of Leila’s course, she remarked that their use helped her students “to produce meaningful and deep ideas with their mates in class”. Discussion, she still believed, allowed the students to search and read even after the class ends.

Many other forms of communication with the students were also used by the teachers. To keep students connected to and engaged with the course, most of the teachers posted timely information through the section of “news” on the CMS. Additionally, the students along with the teachers were provided with a space in most of the courses where they could

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respond. Frank even created a “talk with Frank” section on his site to give the students a space where they could share information other than studies such as topics related to their week-end plans or trips they would organize.

Communicating regularly with students is extremely important and appeared to be consistent with the findings of blended learning research (Ho et al., 2006). All of the teachers of this study communicated regularly with students via email and Teams to discuss topics and answer queries.

### **Consideration for Student Motivation**

With regard to student motivation, the teachers demonstrated different levels of concern. Frank and Hanan revealed that students’ participation during the online sessions was graded. The two teachers adopted this strategy to encourage students to fully participate throughout the semester.

On the other hand, Francisca revealed that “choosing interesting and high-quality topics” for her students to read was “important to make them motivated”. Leila responded on her survey that she set up her course by asking students to read about the intended topic and to prepare work before coming to class. This way helped students engage in significant discussions when they meet. All of the strategies used by the teachers proved to be proportionate with findings in the literature of student motivation in blended learning courses (Ho et al., 2006; Holenko & Hoić-Božić, 2008; Slevin, 2008).

All the teachers in this study agreed that graduate students were already motivated throughout the blended learning courses. Hanan noticed that her graduate students, in particular, did the reading before they came to class. Both Francisca and Laila noted that graduate students were significantly more motivated to do more work than undergraduate students. Additionally, Frank found that “despite their busy lives, students were intrinsically motivated to study and participate in the blended learning course.” Research by Ponton et al. (2007) indicates that intrinsic motivation proved to be higher in graduate students compared to undergraduate schoolis. However, the research did not explain why graduate students

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tended to be more intrinsically motivated. Unexpectedly, the results of this paper indicate that the teachers did not take motivation into account when planning and implementing their blended courses. Instead, motivation appeared to be a result of good course design and communication. “In fact, students were motivated without me planning for it,” Leila said.

## **8. Implications**

For teachers to offer effective and successful blended courses, this research sets clear that teachers need abundant opportunities for professional development. Nearly all of the teachers who participated in the present study relied on resources outside of the college, participated in workshops, and contacted educational organizations on their own. Besides, the teachers revealed that technical support, technology training, preparation, and recognition were important components to the success of their blended courses.

Communication, in this study, appeared to be a key factor in the success of blended learning courses. The teachers relied on two types of communication in order to keep students engaged. The first type of communication occurs between the teacher and the learners via news postings, email, and Teams. The other type of communication comes in the form of the discussion boards created for the learners. Based on the results of this study, it is imperious that the CMS sets up a good system for communicating.

In the end, it seems compulsory that teachers plan effectively for course design prior to implementing the course. Effective methods of the teachers in this research included: participating in professional trainings, collaborating with others, and searching resources related to online teaching and learning.



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## **9. Suggestions for Future Research and Concluding Thoughts**

This research studied four higher education teachers and their blended courses. It is unclear whether the experiences of the faculty in our study would differ from those at other institutions. In order to obtain a more comprehensive image as well as a deeper understanding of blended learning in the higher education context, this research needs to be expanded to other universities and colleges.

Blended learning continues to be more common in higher education. This study aimed to investigate how higher education teachers consider course design and motivation when implementing their blended courses. The results obtained from interviews with the teachers revealed that each teacher sought to collaborate with others in the faculty to learn from each other's expertise. Each teacher indicated explicitly that they considered course design and motivation while communication appeared to be the medium through which teachers keep students engaged. Thus, designing the course with effective activities and meaningful communication will positively impact the students' motivation towards learning in a blended learning context.

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## **11. Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Survey Questions**

Before you start, please provide some information to help describe the sample of this study.

1. What is your gender?
2. How many years have you been teaching in higher education?
3. In a typical year, how many blended learning courses do you teach?
4. What is the title of the blended course(s) you currently teach?

Thank you for completing the first part of the survey. The remaining 14 questions are open- ended and seek to explore how you design and teach your blended learning course(s). Please provide as much detail as possible when answering the following questions.

1. What does the term blended learning mean to you?
2. Describe what blended learning looks like in your course?
3. How do you prepare for a blended learning course? For instance, do you use any resources to inform the development of the course?
4. How do you integrate the online portion of the course with the in-class portion of the course?
5. How do you take student motivation into account when planning the course?
6. Describe how opportunities for discussion in blended courses differ from the traditional (on-site) courses you teach.
7. What types of activities are completed online?

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8. What types of activities are completed in-class?
9. How do you communicate with your students in this blended learning course?
10. What is your response policy on student work (assignments and questions)?
11. What are the challenges you face with the blended course or have faced in the past?
12. What will you do differently the next time you offer this blended course?
13. What advice would you give to other faculty members who are thinking about implementing a blended learning course?

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Protocol**

1. Why did you decide to teach this course as a blended format?
2. What type of support did you receive from your department to teach this course using a blended format?
3. How do you feel about the support, or lack of support, provided?
4. How do you prepare for teaching a blended model course?
5. How is this different from your preparation for a traditional lecture course?
6. How much time upfront do you feel you invest in teaching a blended course? Traditional course?
7. How much time each week during the semester do you feel you invest in teaching a blended course? Traditional course?

## Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects

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### Investigating the Implementation of the Flipped Classroom in a Blended Learning Environment: the Case of Second Year English Students

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#### Abstract

The present research tackles one of the interesting themes in FL teaching contexts. It aims to identify English students attitudes and experiences in an EFL flipped classroom at M'sila University, Algeria. The data were collected from a questionnaire and the sample of the study was composed of 72 volunteer students at the department of English, Mouhamed Boudiaf M'sila university during the academic year 2021-2022. The questionnaire was sent via emails and was posted in different educational groups (telegram and facebook) as well. Findings designated that students engaged in the EFL flipped classroom environment through hands-on activities work benefited and were satisfied. The flipped classroom approach successfully enhanced students' enthusiasm for learning the content before coming to the class, provided more opportunities for interaction among peers who came to class. All in all, findings reveal that the majority of students perceived the flipped classroom highly positive. Interestingly, the study concludes with some crucial recommendations including taking into consideration different factors when thinking to flip the classroom (students needs and preferences, style, level, adequacy of time).

**Keywords:** blended learning; face to face learning; FCM; the flipped classroom model; pre-class assignments

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## **Investigating the Implementation of the Flipped Classroom in a Blended Learning Environment: the Case of Second Year English Students**

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### **1. Introduction**

One can observe the great shift in today's world. It shifted from being 'virtual' to 'real'. Digitization enabled it to sell, purchase brands and provide services from distant areas around the borders. At this level one worth asking question is: can digitalization have impacts on education? The answer might be positive especially with the introduction of several effective engines including Google in addition to the different applications that were recently created to facilitate blended learning.

Covid 19 and some other factors led educators to realize that learning may not always be possible in the classroom. Accordingly, there was an urgent call to shift from 'Face to face' learning to online learning and to substitute textbooks, papers and pens by technological devices.

Our constantly developing globalized world has witnessed a huge changes at various levels. Hence, it requires updating strategies and practical measures to cope with the shift. Educationally speaking, the researcher aimed to investigate the implementation of the recently introduced approaches in Higher Education contexts: "active learning", "online learning", "blended learning" and "flipped classroom"; they are sometimes used exchangeably. It seems worth exploring students' awareness of the effectiveness of these new approaches and the impacts of such approaches on the learning teaching processes.

### **2. Definition of Blended Learning**

Willis et. al 2017, there is no sufficient amount of literature discussing blended learning. However, they expressed their satisfaction and hopefulness regarding blended learning future research.

A definition of blended learning is provided by Boelens, Van Laer, De Wever & Elen (2015) who maintain that "learning that happens in an instructional context which is characterized by a deliberate combination of online and classroom-based interventions to instigate and support learning. Learning happening in purely online or purely classroom-based instructional settings is excluded".

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One of the features of the blended learning in general and the flipped classroom model in particular is implementing technology. Numerous technological devices are used including recorded video lectures, or short video clips.

According to some scholars (Graham, 2006; Watson, 2008, etc.), blended learning is a combination or integration of the strengths of face-to-face instruction and computer-mediated instruction or online teaching.

Recently, as one of the innovative approaches, blended learning gained a considerable amount of attention. Hence, Poon (2014) concluded that it is likely to be developed as the leading teaching approach for the future as one of the top ten educational trends to occur in the twenty-first century.

### **3. Flipped classroom Model**

As previously explained regarding the blended learning, ICTs are invading the classroom and bringing significant changes in the content and approaches of teaching and learning. Flipping the classroom was one of the features and reflections of the ICT integration. Hence, "In the new digitalized model, we are witnessing ICT replacing the hard copy text book and the pen as essential tools. (Willis et. al 2017, p.10)

It is worth highlighting here that proving one definition for the concept of "Flipped classroom" is neither possible nor easy. The reason is that "there is no unified understanding/definition of the concept of Flipped Classrooms (and the connected concept of 'blended learning')" Wolff, & Chan, 2016, p.13).

One simple definition is suggested by Roehling (2018, p.2). He states that the "flipped learning occurs when information that was traditionally delivered directly to the entire classroom, via lecture, is delivered outside of the classroom space, typically online, in digital or video format".

Similarly, Berrett's (2012, cited in Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015, p. 4) clarifies that:



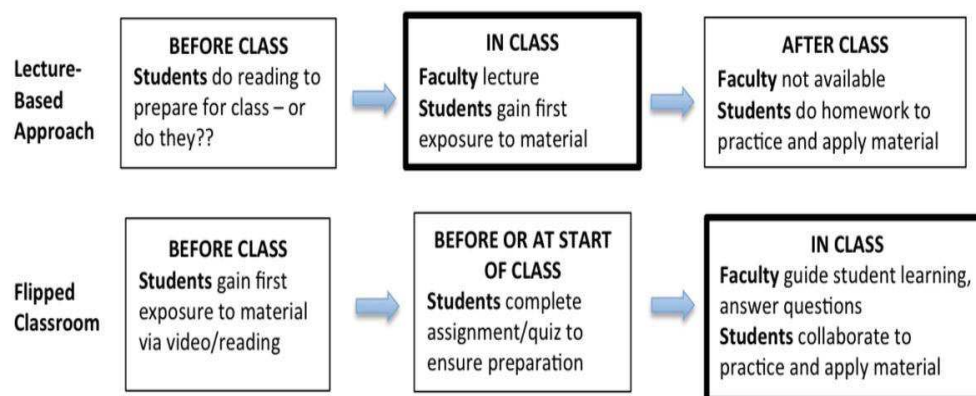
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‘flipping’ implies the inversion of expectations in the traditional lecture. That is, through the use of computer technology and the Internet (e.g. video recorded lecture available online or on a CD/DVD), the information-transmission component of a traditional lecture is moved out of class time and replaced by a range of interactive activities designed to entice active learning.

In an attempt to account for the flipped classroom method, Zhai , Liu, Liang, & Tsai, (2017) point out that " Distinct from the traditional lecture-plus-homework formula, in the FCM context, the externalization of knowledge is previously carried out through online courses, information searching and online discussion at the learners’ own pace, rather than passively receiving information".

**Figure 1:** below highlights the main features of the two teaching/learning approaches: lecture-based approach and the flipped classroom approach.



**Fig.1.** Flipped Classroom Introduction, U Michigan CRLT

There are "some similarities between a flipped classroom and other educational models such as blended learning, reverse instruction, inverted classroom, and 24/7 classroom. All of these models have similar features and could possibly be interchangeable in certain contexts" (Bergmann & Sams, 2012, p.7).

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#### **4. Features of Flipped Classroom**

According to Bergmann & Sams (2012) the flipped classroom had various characteristics experienced when used in the classroom. These are listed as follows :

**4.1 Reproducibility:** if a teacher succeeded in integrating the flipped classroom , then any other teacher is likely to reproduce the modal and implement it in their classes

**4.2 Scalability:** the capability of extension and growth is another feature in the flipped classroom. Accordingly, its use can be expanded to cover different areas and subjects.

**4.3 Customizability:** the positive thing about employing the flipped classroom is that teachers can modify the flipped content or build it according to individual specifications or preference.

**4.4 Simplicity:** this educational model of teaching and learning neither requires a demanding staff nor does it contain complicated ways to implement. All they need is posting material for students and setting assignments to prepare them for the coming lecture.

**4.5 Easiness for teachers to wrap their minds around:** Teachers will find it an easy task to integrate the flipped classroom in the class. The process is accessible to every teacher be it novice or an experienced one.

**4.6 Attractiveness:** Herreid & Schiller (2013) rightfully claim that the availability of the internet is a one positive feature that made the flipped classroom model an attractive approach.

#### **5. Recipe for an Ideal Flipped Classroom**

Flipping the classroom is an effective approach if implemented efficiently in the classroom. One crucial fact about the flipped classroom which seems worth stressing here is that there is no one typical method for flipping the classroom, that is to say, every teacher may use his own strategy and may create his own flipped classroom model based on several factors which were stressed by many researchers. Herreid & Schiller (2013), for

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instance, highlight two main elements that do control the nature of the flipped classroom. These are: teachers' personalities as well as their individual teaching styles. Within this regard, Bergmann & Sams (2012) point out:

There is no single way to flip your classroom—there is no such thing as the flipped classroom. There is no specific methodology to be replicated, no checklist to follow that leads to guaranteed results. Flipping the classroom is more about a mindset: redirecting attention away from the teacher and putting attention on the learner and the learning. Every teacher who has chosen to flip does so differently.

Bergmann & Sams (2012, p.11).

## **6. Differences Between Traditional class and flipped classroom**

Compared to the Traditional method of teaching, FCM seems totally different in terms of a variety of aspects including : time, content, strategy, etc. Table 1 below displays some differences.

**Table 1.** Comparison of Class Time in Traditional versus Flipped Classrooms

<b>Traditional Classroom</b>		<b>Flipped Classroom</b>	
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time</b>
Warm-up activity	5 min	Warm-up activity	5 min
Go over previous night's homework	20 min	Q&A time on video 10	10 min
Lecture new content	30–45 min	Guided and independent practice and/or lab activity	75 min
Guided and independent practice and/or lab activity	20–35min.		

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## **7. Positive Aspects of the Flipped Classroom**

According to Bergmann & Sams (2012), flipping the classroom is a significant approach that has several advantages. One of the great benefits of flipping the classroom is the fact that busy and struggling students will be helped; Logially, "the more time and effort a student puts into their learning experience, the greater their cognitive and personal development" (Roehling, 2018 , p.3).

Motivation is one of the affective factors helping students to learn successfully. More importantly, one of the good things about the flipped classroom is that it boosts students desire to learn. In this regard, Bergmann & Sams state (2012, p.17): "Because a solution guide is available, students are motivated to learn, not just to complete the assignments in a rote manner".

Unlike the some of the previously introduced methods, the flipped classroom is studend-centric rather than teacher-centric. Thus it promotes learner centredness. Accordingly, "The class is centered around the students and not the teacher. Students are responsible for viewing the videos and asking appropriate questions. The teacher is simply there to provide expert feedback. The students are responsible for completing and sharing their work" Bergmann & Sams (2012, p.17).

Similarly, a further related positive aspect for the flipped classroom is increasing students' autonomy and responsibility. More support to this idea comes from Loucky & Ware (2017) who claim that the implementation of the flipped classroom would make learners more autonomous and more responsible thus they would take part in the process of learning instead of being lazily dependent on the teacher.

More advantages are summarized by Roehling (2018, p. 9) who sees that recorded lectures within the flipped classroom model can be reviewed at convenient times and places. Hence, learners will be granted enough time to consult and do the pre-class activities.

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Equally important is the fact that after being engaged with pre-class tasks and after receiving material from the teacher related to the coming lectures, class time will be purely devoted for more effective active learning activities.

For Roehling (2018, p. 9), "instructors can work directly with students when they encounter difficulties. Instructors can have more direct contact with students, facilitating and deepening relationships".

Not only does it the flipped classroom improve the student teacher relationship but it enhances student-student relationship. In a study, Lag & Sle (2019) found that one interesting contribution to the flipped classroom model together with the different active teaching methods is that they "tend to further student-to-student social interaction".

Despite the fact that the flipped classroom is an effective strategy, it does not escape criticism. Some educators believe that it has negative aspects. Roehling (2018, p. 9) some of the flipped classroom drawbacks:

- a. Recorded lectures can be less engaging than live lectures
- b. Compliance with watching videos is difficult to monitor
- c. The instructor is not available to answer questions while viewing vod
- d. casts. Hence, the inability to ask immediate questions may reduce its practicality as an educational approach.
- e. Flipped classes often require a greater time commitment and workload for the student. Accordingly, Students may express their dissatisfaction with workload especially that they are not familiar with the flipped classroom model.
- f. Technical problems may interfere with learning

**8. Hypothesis, Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The flipped classroom approach is implemented in various educational institutions worldwide; universities are no exception. Students are always using ICT especially their personal laptops and smartphones. Accordingly, if teachers reasonably employ the flipped classroom model in teaching speaking, the learning teaching process will be enhanced.

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The researcher intends in this paper to provide more contribution on essential aspects to be considered when implementing the flipped classroom approach in educational settings.

This paper seeks to identify students attitudes and perceptions towards the flipped classroom model, impacts of students' learning, and the actual use of the approach. This study addresses the following research questions: 1. What are the students attitudes towards the implementation of in flipped classroom model? 2. What are the impacts of the flipped classroom on students language skills and English ? 3. Is technology effective in implementing the flipped classroom? 4. Is the environments supporting students to use the flipped classroom? 5. What obstacles may students face when working in a flipped classroom?

### **9. Methodology of the Research**

#### **9.1. Research Method and procedure**

A quantitative method was adopted. A questionnaire is the tool of research used to investigate students' perceptions of the flipped classroom as well as to know the actual practices of the flipped classroom model and its positive impacts on students learning. The survey was conducted online.

#### **9.2. Sample**

Seventy-two (72) students belonging to the department of English at M'sila university responded participated in the study . They responded to the questionnaire that was available online. A link was provided in different educational groups (facebook and telegram) of second year English students inviting them to take part in research.

#### **9.3. Questionnaire Analysis**

**Statement 1.** : Please indicate your Gender

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**Table 2. Students Gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Male</b>	18	25%
<b>Female</b>	54	75%

Table 2 above shows that the students who responded to the questionnaire were of both genders, but as the findings display females total number (54 students making 75% of the total percentage) outrates males number as only 18 male student responded.

**Statement 2:**

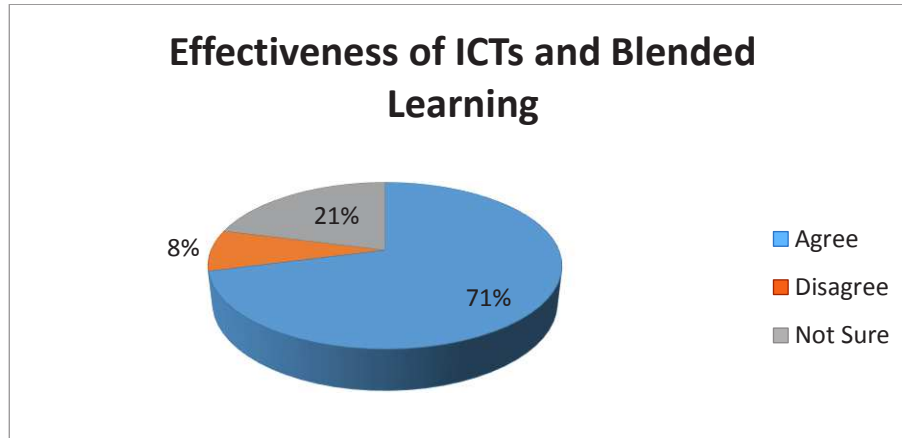
*I think that using ICTs and blended online learning media (telegram, facebook, moodle) makes learning more effective?*

- a)** Agree
- b)** Disagree
- c)** Not sure

**Table 3. Students' views on the effectiveness of ICT's and BL**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Agree</b>	51	71%
<b>Disagree</b>	15	8%
<b>Not sure</b>	6	21%

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**Fig.2.** Students' views on the effectiveness of ICT's and Blended Learning

Table 3 above displays students' responses to statement (2) which tackles their views on the effectiveness of ICT's and Blended Learning. The findings reveal that the majority of respondents 51 (74%) have positive attitudes towards ICT and blended learning integration. Hence, these students think that adopting blended learning would increase learning effectiveness. Nevertheless, 6 students (8%) think that integrating ICT and blended learning does not make the learning process effective. The third category of informants 15 (21%) seem to be undecided about the idea.

**Statement N. 3**

*I like the idea when the teacher posts a video of the lecture, as a homework, then he uses the entire class period to help students with the concepts they don't understand?*

- a) Agree
- b) Disagree

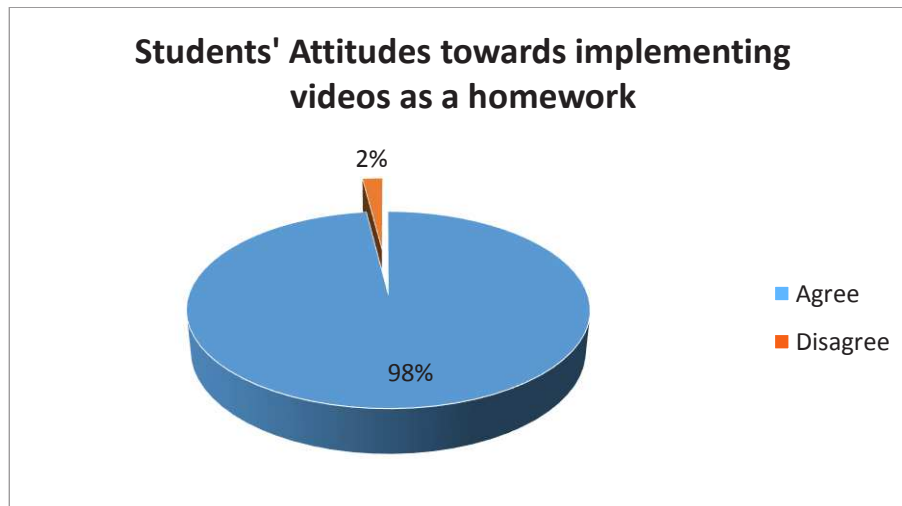
**Table 4 :** Students' Attitudes towards implementing videos as a homework

Options	Freq	%
c) Agree	70	98%
d) Disagree	2	2%



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**Fig. 3** Students' Attitudes towards implementing videos as homework

Table 5 above reflects students' views on the teacher using a video of the lecture, as homework and devoting the entire class period to help students with the concepts they don't understand. Interestingly, findings show that almost all students (but two) 98% show a positive attitude towards using videos which is already one strategy for the flipped classroom approach. Surprisingly, only 2 students expressed a negative attitude towards the flipped classroom model and using videos as a part of pre-class assignments.

**Statement N.4:**

*Is your environment encouraging you to learn and benefit from blended learning modal and flipped classroom?*

- a) *Yes*
- b) *No*

**Table 5.** Environment support for students

Options	Freq	%
Yes	40	56%
No	32	44%

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According to table 5 findings, more than half (56%) of the respondents clarify that the environment is encouraging them to integrate and benefit from the flipped classroom model. On the other hand, 32 (44%) claim that they face many problems which do prohibit them from fully benefitting from such a learning approach.

**Statement 5:**

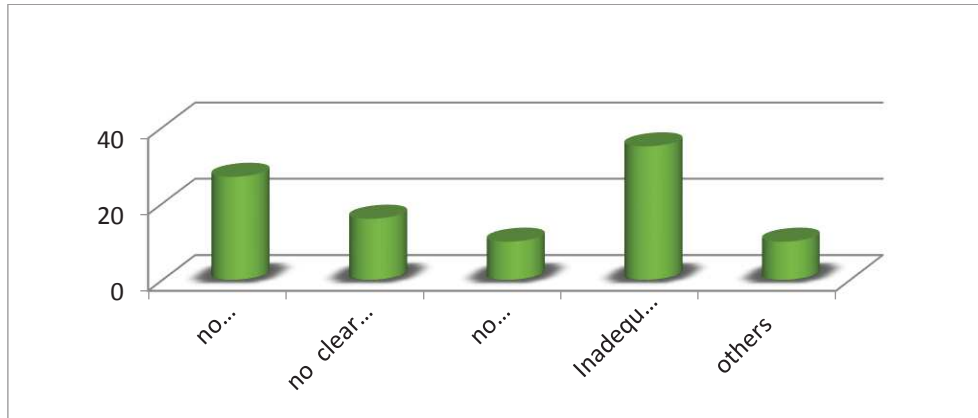
If your answer is 'No' is it because

- a) You have no access to the internet
- b) Your teachers are not providing clear and sufficient material ( videos, assignments)
- c) You have no digital resources (no PC, no smart phones)
- d) Inadequacy of time
- e) Others

**Table 6.** Student's reasons for not effectively making use of the FCM

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
You have no access to the internet	10	27%
Your teachers are not providing clear and sufficient material ( videos, assignments)	6	16%
You have no digital resources (no PC, no smart phones)	4	10%
Inadequacy of time	13	35%
Others	4	10%

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**Fig.4.** Student's reasons for not effectively making use of the FCM

#### Statement 6

The flipped classroom and online learning enhance students' autonomy and make students more responsible

Findings of table 6 reveal that the greatest challenge facing students and preventing them from effectively using the flipped classroom model is "time inadequacy" with a percentage of 35%. The factor that scored somehow high (27%) as well is "having no access to the internet" followed by option '2' (insufficiency of material) that scored 16%. Interestingly, the two other reasons: possessing no digital devices and the last option (other: unspecified factors) both scored equally low (10%).

#### Statement 7

The Flipped Classroom gives me more time to practise:

- a) Speaking
- b) Reading
- c) Writing
- d) Listening
- e) All the skills

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**Table.8.** Students' views on the role of the flipped classroom in enhancing the four language skills

Options	Freq	%
Speaking	18	25%
Reading	20	28%
Writing	8	11%
Listening	23	31%
All the skills	39	54%

Table.8. above displays the students' responses to statement (7) which is designed to reveal their views on the role of the flipped classroom in enhancing the four language skills. Findings of Table show that more than half of the informants (54%) confirm that the flipped classroom model has a great role in improving the four skills with no exception. Some informants however, think that this approach helps students to master some skills at the expense of some others. Hence, 31% (23 students) report that 'listening' is the most positively affected skill by the flipped classroom approach, followed by reading (28%) and speaking (25%). Surprisingly, among all the options 'writing' scored low; only 8 students (11%) think that flipping the classroom may boost their writing skill.

**Statement 8**

Preparing the lesson at home (the flipped classroom model) provides me with more time which I spend in improving my level and competence in the English language.

a) Yes

b) No

**Table. 9** The role of lesson preparation in providing time and improving level and competency

Options	Freq	%
Yes	50	70%
No	22	30%
Total	27	100%

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Table 9. reveals that 70% (50 informants) confirm that the preparation of the lecture resulting during the flipped classroom model does provide them with time. That time is spent in improving their level in the English language. On the other hand, almost one third of the total sample (30%) denies that fact and do not see any significance in having time to prepare their lectures at home.

## **10. Summary and Discussion of the Findings**

The respondents of the study consisted of 75% females and only 25% males. A possible explanation to that difference in number might be the fact that the majority of students who carry on their studies in English stream are females. Males tend to opt for exact sciences rather than foreign languages.

Findings of the study show that students of English at M'sila university have positive attitude towards the integration of ICT in the classroom. Hence, more than half of the sample 51% assured that ICT is effective in teaching and learning and only 8% of the students deny this face. This can refer to the fact that these few people have been taught through the traditional way and prefer no ICT integration. Additionally, the students who showed no interest in technology might be facing some obstacles in using ICT or accessing to it.

The present study shows that many students (44%) of English at M'sila university do not find the environment supporting for the flipped classroom model. Hence, they encounter various barriers including lack of access to the internet. Such view is confirmed by Burgo (2017) who clarifies that a common obstacle generally facing students in the flipped classroom is having no access to the internet at home.

Students (10%) who responded with 'other' could be referring to what Lo & Hew (2017) highlighted: the "substantial amount of pre-class preparation efforts had caused students to be dissatisfied with the flipped classroom approach.

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English students at M'sila university (98%) seem to have a positive attitude towards implementing videos as a homework. Accordingly, the flipped classroom is a favoured approach for them and can probably be a better alternative for the traditional class. This might be explained by the fact that learners are accustomed with classroom flipping and that they find it beneficial for them. This finding corroborates the ideas of Butt (2012) 's who "found that the students' perceptions were far more positive towards the FCM than the traditional approach"

Regarding students' views on the role of the flipped classroom in enhancing the four language skills, this study's findings reveal that students of M'sila University deal more with listening and speaking. This might be explained by the fact that the teacher is posting good amount of listening, speaking and reading materials including videos, novels, texts. Unexpectedly, writing seems to be ignored; the teacher probably places more attention on the different skills at the expense of writing. This view seems to contradict with Llorente et. al (2016, p. 1049)'s study which concluded that the flipped classroom model enhanced students' writing.

As findings show, the vast majority of students 70% (50 informants) think that the flipped classroom model and the pre-class tasks enable students to improve their level due to the period of time they are provided with. An explanation for that can be the fact that there are some students who are reflective and like to have longer time to think, ask and search or do any learning process. On the other hand, 30% of the learners consider that the flipped classroom does not enhance their level this is because they probably do not reasonably make use of the time given to them. Another possible explanation is that they prefer instructors' presence and face to face learning. This idea is confirmed by Young & Moran (2017) who found that time provided when implementing the flipped classroom model is beneficial in improving students learning process.

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### **11. Limitation of the Study**

The study has some limitations as it involves small group of learners. The number of respondents is just 72 students which probably indicates that the sample is rather small compared to the whole population of the university students at Mohamed Boudiaf, M'sila. Covid 19 circumstances and students' engagement in the exams preparation were among the factors that led to the limited number of informants. The themes highlighted and sections of the questionnaire were also restricted. Accordingly, future research may investigate other crucial areas of research related to the flipped classroom and blended learning such as: teachers' perceptions and roles in flipped classroom methodology, current practices of the flipped classroom modal, etc.

### **12. Conclusion**

Researchers have always been seeking solutions to classroom language problems and suggesting ideal ways of teaching foreign languages.

Interestingly, some teachers and educators may feel safe and satisfied with their "traditional" teaching approaches, ignoring that flipping their classes might be of great value for them and their students.

Like any good educational idea, the flipped classroom approach can bring satisfying results and can turn the educational environment into a fruitful learning context. However, the misuse of such a teaching modal may bring some harm to students instead of helping them. Hence, the judicious integration of the flipped classroom approach is what really guarantees students' benefitting from the approach. To conclude the article, it seems of a great significance to highlight some of the recommendations related to the flipped classroom modal.

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- ✓ Encouraging teachers to adopt the flipped classroom modal as an innovative strategy for teaching.
- ✓ When flipping their classrooms, teachers should take into account students' level, quality of topics (interesting topics, motivating ones) and more importantly factors related to their economical situation as not all students have access to the internet or do have smart phones. Accordingly, giving them sufficient time to do the pre-class assignments would help them to seek alternatives (help from colleagues and family members, public cyber net) and would be much better than setting regular daily activities.
- ✓ Teachers and students should be sensitized about the significance of this new approach of teaching. Additionally, they need some training on ICT use, the thing that would make the teaching /learning process more effective.
- ✓ It is essential to vary the quality of content provided when flipping.
- ✓ The quality of the questions asked and of the tasks devised is often what determines the quality of the learning that occurs. Bloom's Taxonomy
- ✓ Using ICT to engage in activities which are challenging, difficult and

On close analysis, integrating the flipped classroom model and encouraging the use of ICT's in the classroom is a golden piece of advice that can be given nowadays to teachers, educators and syllabus designers especially in this digital era and with such digital learners. So all this can be summarized in a critical question raised by Bergmann & Sams (2012, p.21) , "Isn't it about time we embraced digital learning and used it to help our students learn, instead of telling them they can't learn with today's tools? It seems preposterous to us that schools have not embraced this change".



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## **Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects**

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### **Exploring EFL Teachers' and Learners' Attitudes towards the Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Learner' Autonomy in the Flipped Classroom during Covid-19 Pandemic.**

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#### **Abstract**

Since technology has entered humans' life, it has influenced their educational system. Moreover, the spread of Covid-19 has imposed exceptional practices in the teaching-learning field like opting for blended learning and flipped classrooms for the sake of enhancing learning and decreasing the dangers of the pandemic. Blended Learning (BL) is viewed as a pedagogical approach that combines the effectiveness and socialization opportunities of the classroom with the technologically enhanced active online environment. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) has changed from teacher-centered to learner-centered which results the need of Learner' Autonomy (LA) in the learning process. Thus, cultivating LA becomes one of the main objectives of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. The Flipped Classroom (FC), via BL offers multiple opportunities to allow part time and distance learning as It gives learners freedom how, when, where, and how long they work on the material. This research paper aimed at exploring EFL teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the role of BL in fostering LA in the FC during Covid-19 pandemic. Data were collected through two questionnaires administrated to 50 EFL teachers, and 100 EFL learners in Algerian universities. The results have revealed the positive attitudes of both EFL teachers and learners towards the role of BL in fostering LA in the FC during Covid-19 pandemic.

**Key words:** EFL, blended learning; flipped classroom; learner autonomy; Covid-19.

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## **1. Introduction**

The Covid-19 pandemic situation affected massive and substantial transitions in the field of education. The widely applied health protocols required learning processes and activities to shift online, which required advancements in learning technologies to provide environments in which students feel comfortable with the idea of technology-based learning (Warren et al., 2020). The continued crisis raised the need to revitalize virtual learning opportunities.

UNESCO recommended distance learning and training programs and open-access platforms to reduce learning process disruption (Tabatabai, 2020). Thus, online learning methods were introduced as appropriate educational strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic (Basilaia & Kavadze, 2020). The online FC model, a pedagogical approach (Stohret et al., 2020) is among the most popular educational methods during the Covid-19 epidemic and a promising alternative for teaching theoretical courses. (Guraya, 2020).

BL has become widely popular in TEFL in recent days due to its positive attributes of blending on offline environments, multimedia and Information and Technology Communication (ICT) tools, and teaching methods and methodologies ( Lee & Lee, 2012; Yoon & Lee, 2010). The effect of FC as an active blended educational method on promoting self-directed learning and metacognition has been approved in several studies ( Fan et al., 2020; Zainuddine & Perera, 2018).

The FCs increase the flexibility of teaching and change the role of teachers and learners (Kozikoglu, 2019). Learner's role is shifted from inactive to active, and instructors' role changes from leader to supporter and mentor (Arroyo, 2011). As a matter of fact, the pandemic has caused pedagogical transformations as all educational components have had to shift to online contexts, via BL and FCs.

This reality imposed new challenges for both teachers and learners. This study comes to investigate EFL teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the role of BL in fostering LA in the FC during Covid-19 pandemic.

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## **2. Literature Review**

The trend of TEFL in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has changed from teacher-centered to student-centered paradigm which requests students' readiness to be the agents in the learning process (Ardi, 2017). The potentials which technology offers have made researchers and educators re-examine the traditional teacher-dominated pedagogical model, and move from instruction and knowledge delivered classes towards a new educational paradigm dominated by learner-centered approach. This new paradigm involves the change of roles of both teachers and learners, and is aimed at providing the context where in learning takes place through active students' engagement and with the teacher's coaching guidance.

Strayer (2012) suggests that the regular and structured use of technology in the student-centered approach is what distinguishes a FC from a regular classroom, where additional, supplementary resources are used. The FC is student-centered model aimed at increasing students' engagement, understanding and retention by reversing the traditional classroom teaching approach. Cole (2009) argues that that this model is more efficient use of class time, by focusing on the practical application of knowledge during class.

The FC is ultimately more student-centered approach to learning whereby students receive lecture materials before class, generally in some digital format, and spend the actual class time undertaking more active, collaborative activities. This approach allows students to learn about the topic outside of class, at their own pace, and come to class informed and more prepared to engage in discussions on the topic and apply their knowledge through active learning (Musallam, 2011; McKnight, 2013).

In a flipped learning environment, as homework, learners typically prepare and acquire content and knowledge via pre-recorded lectures, prescribed texts or readings, videos, simulations, and case studies prior to attending class. Students nowadays can access pre-recorded multimedia lectures at their own pace (Roehl et al., 2013; Lage et al., 2000), they may access the content through a learning management system such as Moodle, Black board or Canvas. Then, students attend class for interactive engagement, just-in-time teaching and peer collaboration. In this way, students build upon their previously acquired knowledge through various in-class interactive elements such as presentations, discussions, role play, and

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debates (Lage et al., 2000; Sohrabi & Iraj, 2016; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015).

Flipped learning further divides learning into lower and higher order learning objectives. Lower order learning such as remembering and understanding can be achieved through preparation before class. Higher order learning such as analysis and evaluation can be better accomplished with interaction with others in the classroom, with peers and the teacher (Fisher et al., 2018). In this vein, Garrison and Kanuka (2004) mention that the educational experience of BL requires teaching social and cognitive presence rooted in dialogue for critical thinking and higher order learning. In this stream of thoughts, students need to be able to assimilate the knowledge gained, construct meaning and confirm their understanding.

Today, with the Covid-19 outbreaks causing schools and universities closure, it is impossible to predict what part of teaching and learning activities will be computer-mediated. If prior to the pandemic, BL was rather considered as a choice, today it has become a necessity in order to ensure continuity and to build up resilience in education. BL is defined as a combination of two parts: asynchronous internet technology outside of the classroom and synchronous face-to-face facilitated in-class group learning activities (Borba et al., 2016; Quim & Aarao, 2020). According to Graham et al (2019), BL is a combination of online and in-person instruction.

Boelens et al (2015) define BL as "learning that happens in an instructional context which is characterizes by a deliberate combination of classroom-based interventions to instigate and support learning" (p.5). in addition, Driscoll (2002) states that BL denotes both concepts of combining a web-based technology with a pedagogical approach or mixing a form of instructional technology with a guided instruction. Furthermore, Sharma and Barrett (2007) argue that BL refers to a language course which combines a face-to-face classroom component with an appropriate use of technology.

In the literature, there is an evidence, provided by numerous researchers which prove the benefits of BL for both students in their language learning and their instructors as well. Suo (2018) affirms that BL offers access to resources and materials, which are convenient to students' level of language. Besides, it helps teachers to improve their ways of teaching and gives them more opportunities for collaboration. BL also motivates them to go through different professional development and

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training; thus, being more efficient. Moreover, BL makes students more interested in their learning process, and be able to learn at their ease and pace. Likewise, it helps them to acquire a multitude skills like: computer literacy, self-learning and self-engagement skills, and a sense of responsibility that they can translate into real life situations.

Finding the right mix or integration for BL arrangements and delivery modes can be a challenge and requires a reconceptualization and reorganization of the teaching and learning dynamic (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Kerres & Witt, 2003).

The incorporation of digital technologies into teaching and learning resides in a continuum between fully online and fully face to face. The use of technology in teaching and learning can be said to enrich the connections between knowledge and process, learners, their peers, and the teacher, and makes learning more flexible and reusable (Margaryan et al, 2004.; Collis & Margaryan, 2015). It is also implied that face to face that accompanies internet-based teaching and learning ensures the quality of learning, and reduces dropouts that might occur when teaching and learning are conducted in the online space (Kerres & Witt, 2003).

Digital technologies today fit well with the attributes of social constructivist active learning, provided they optimize on being interactive, communicative and user-centric (Laurillard, 2013). Flipped learning expects a higher level of learner autonomy and self regulation. One of the challenges of flipping a class is the expectation that students are able to complete the preparatory work before class time. This is an increasingly acknowledged problem (Fisher et al., 2018, 2020), as the reality is that not all students are able to cope with or embrace this type of learning environment without scaffolding (Fisher at al., 2020).

Despite physical distancing as a consequence of the epidemic's threat to humanity (Poon & Peiris, 2020), the fundamental and undeniable aspects of the learning process remain the students' existence and role as learners. Schleicher (2020) states that learning out of school has undoubtedly placed greater demands on students' autonomy. Students from universities and all other school levels are perceived as autonomous learners who are responsible for deciding their own learning techniques and monitoring their learning success (AlGhazali, 2020).



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The pandemic period emphasizes the need for educators to make decisions about how to encourage students to continue their learning at a distance (Bakker& Wagner, 2020). The researchers found evidence of the efforts of educators to foster motivation, self-regulated learning, and self-efficacy. Moreover, fostering students independence and autonomy should be achieved (AlGhazali, 2020).

Education today focuses more on personalized and self-driven learning or as Holec (1981, p.3) observes, being able to “take control of one’s own learning”. In order to be successful learners, students are not asked just to follow a schedule prepared by the teacher, but they are expected to understand the objectives of the curriculum, set their own learning goals, plan and organize their learning, and evaluate their progress.

Holec (1981) defines learner autonomy (LA) as the ability to take charge of one’s learning, and in detail, “to hold the responsibility for all decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i.e., determining the objectives, defining the contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques to be used, and monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, tie, place, etc), evaluating what has been acquired” (p.3). Another definition of LA is provided by Little (1994, p.81), who defines LA as “ a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action”. The capacity of autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned. Dickinson (1987) declares that autonomy is a state of learning where the concerned is responsible for all decisions he/she makes for his/her learning, and how to implement them.

In conclusion, Covid-19 pandemic imposed new challenges and practices in the field of teaching and learning and fostered the spread of BL and FCs in order to reserve the continuum of learning. As a result, LA became a necessity for learners to cope with the new teaching and learning dynamics.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Questions**

Two main research questions were posed:

- a) What are EFL teachers’ attitudes towards the role of BL in fostering LA in the FC during Covid-19 pandemic?

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b) What are EFL learners' attitudes towards the role of BL in fostering LA in the FC during Covid-19 pandemic?

### **3.2. Participants**

The study was conducted with 50 EFL teachers and 100 EFL learners at the Algerian universities.

### **3.3. Data Collection Tools**

The quantitative approach was utilized to collect data. Two questionnaires, investigating the opinions of the participants about BL and LA, were designed, pilot-tested then administrated online in order to collect data (See Appendices A, B).

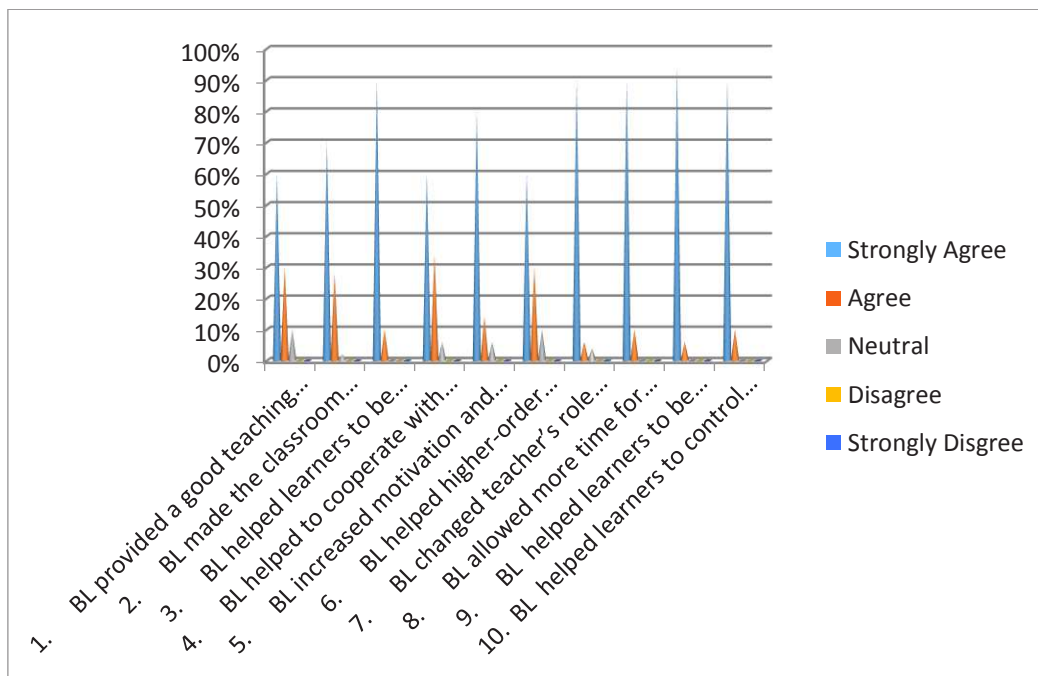
## **4. Data Analysis**

### **4.1. Efl Teachers' Questionnaire Analysis**

**Table 01: EFL Teachers' Questionnaire Results**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>1.</b> BL provided a good teaching experience.	60%	30%	10%	00	00
<b>2.</b> BL made the classroom learner-centered.	70%	28%	02%	00	00
<b>3.</b> BL helped learners to be active learners.	90%	10%	00	00	00
<b>4.</b> BL helped to cooperate with one another.	60%	34%	06%	00	00
<b>5.</b> BL increased motivation and engagement.	80%	14%	06%	00	00
<b>6.</b> BL helped higher-order thinking skills.	60%	30%	10%	00	00
<b>7.</b> BL changed teacher's role from controller to guide.	90%	06%	04%	00	00
<b>8.</b> BL allowed more time for class discussion and interaction	90%	10%	00	00	00
<b>9.</b> BL helped learners to be more autonomous.	94%	06%	00	00	00
<b>10.</b> BL helped learners to control their own learning.	90%	10%	00	00	00

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**Figure 01: EFL Teachers' Questionnaire Results.**

As illustrated in table 01, **60 %** of the EFL teachers strongly agreed, and **30%** agreed that BL has provided a good teaching experience. For the second item dealing with classroom centeredness, **70%** of the participants strongly agreed that BL made the language classroom more learner-centered, **28 %** agreed, and **02 %** were neutral. For the third item, **90 %** of the participants postulated that BL helped the learners to be active learners .Then, Concerning the fourth item dealing with cooperation, **60 %** of the participants strongly agreed and **34 %** agreed that BL learning promoted learners' cooperation. Only **06%** were neutral.

For the fifth item, **80%** of the participants strongly agreed that learners' motivation and engagement were increased due to BL. Next, concerning the sixth item dealing with higher order thinking skills, **60%** of the participants strongly agreed, and **30%** agreed that BL has developed higher order thinking skills in the learners. After that, for item 07, **90%** of the participants strongly agreed that BL has changed their role from a controller to a guide in the classroom.

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Concerning the eighth item, **90%** of the participants assured that BL allowed more time for class discussion and interaction. For item 09, which deals with LA, **94 %** of the EFL teachers strongly agreed that BL helped the learners to be more autonomous.

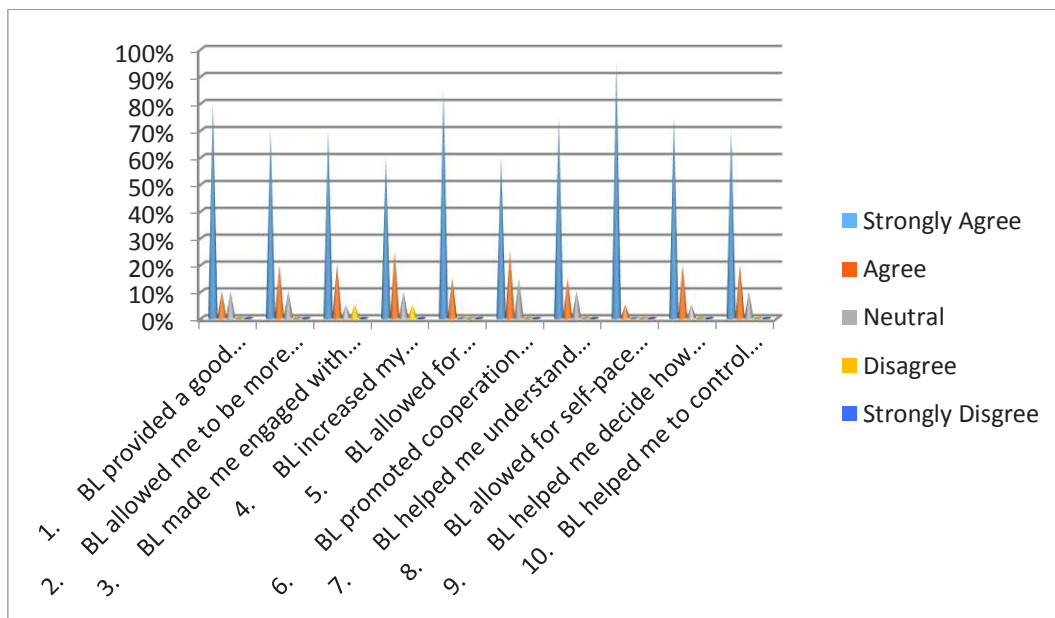
Finally, for the tenth item, **90%** of the participants stated that BL helped the learners to control their own learning.

#### **4.2. EFL Learners' Questionnaire Analysis**

**Table 02: EFL Learners' Questionnaire Results**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>1.</b> BL provided a good learning experience.	80%	10%	10%	00	00
<b>2.</b> BL allowed me to be more responsible in learning.	70%	20%	10%	00	00
<b>3.</b> BL made me engaged with the activities.	70%	20%	05%	05%	00
<b>4.</b> BL increased my motivation to learn English.	60%	25%	10%	05%	00
<b>5.</b> BL allowed for communication and interaction.	85%	15%	00	00	00
<b>6.</b> BL promoted cooperation among students.	60%	25%	15%	00	00
<b>7.</b> BL helped me understand contents easily.	75%	15%	10%	00	00
<b>8.</b> BL allowed for self-pace learning.	95%	05%	00	00	00
<b>9.</b> BL helped me decide how much I can learn.	75%	20%	05%	00	00
<b>10.</b> BL helped me to control my own learning.	70%	20%	10%	00	00

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**Figure 02: EFL Learners' Questionnaire Analysis**

Table 02 shows that **80%** of the EFL learners strongly agreed that , and **10 %** agreed that BL has provided a good learning experience. Then, for the second item dealing with responsibility in learning, **70%** of the participants strongly agreed that BL allowed them to be more responsible in learning. Concerning the third item, **70 %** of the participants confirmed that BL made them engaged with the activities, **05 %** were neutral and **05 %** disagreed. After that, item 4 dealing with motivation, **60 %** shown that BL increased their motivation to learn English, **25 %** agreed, **10%** were neutral, and **5 %** disagreed. For the fifth item, **85%** of the participants strongly agreed that BL allowed for communication and interaction.

Next, for the sixth item, **60 %** of the participants strongly agreed and **25%** agreed that BL promoted cooperation among learners, **15%** were neutral. Concerning item 07, **75%** of the participants indicated that BL helped them to understand the content easily. Then, for the eighth item, **85%** of the learners strongly agreed , and **25 %** agreed that BL allowed for self-paced learning. For the ninth item, **75%** of the participants strongly agreed, and **20%** agreed that that BL helped them decide how much they

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can learn. Finally, for item 10, **70%** of the participants strongly agreed and **20%** agreed that BL helped them to control their own learning.

## **5. Discussion and Interpretation**

The obtained results yield significant data about the attitudes of EFL teachers and learners towards the role of BL in fostering LA in the FC during Covid-19 pandemic.

First, EFL teachers see BL as a good teaching experience which reflects their positive attitudes towards BL. In this sense, Suo (2018) proves that BL helps teachers to improve their ways of teaching and gives them more opportunities for collaboration. Moreover, BL motivates them to go through different personal development and training; thus, being more efficient. Next, the teachers indicated that the BL made the classroom more learner-centered and helped the learners to be active learners.

The FC is ultimately more student-centered approach to learning whereby students receive lecture materials before class, generally in some digital format, and spend the actual class time undertaking more active collaborative activities. This approach allows students to learn about topic outside of class, at their own pace, and come to class informed and more prepared to engage in discussions on the topic and apply their knowledge through active learning (Musallam, 2011; Hamdan & McNight, 2013).

Also, EFL teachers affirmed that BL promoted learners' cooperation and increased their motivation and engagement. Besides, BL developed learners' higher order thinking skills. Fisher et al. (2018) state that flipped learning divides learning into lower order and higher order learning. Lower order learning such as remembering and understanding can be achieved through preparation before class. Higher order thinking such as analysis and evaluation can be better accomplished with interaction with others in the classroom with peers, and the teacher. This end can be reached as far as time is considered since BL allowed more in-class time for interaction and discussion, where the teacher is no more a controller, rather acts as a guide and facilitator.

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Second, EFL learners demonstrated that BL represented a good learning experience for them. They assumed that they became more responsible for learning, and more engaged with activities. In addition, they declared that they could understand contents easily and decide how much they can learn in their own pace. Education today focuses more on personalized and self-driven learning, or as Holec (1981) observes, being able “to take control of one’s own learning”. In order to be successful learners, students today are not asked just to follow a schedule prepared by the teacher, but they are asked to understand the objectives of the curriculum, set their own learning goals, plan and organize their learning, and evaluate their progress.

In this vein, Suo (2018) postulates that BL makes students more interested in their learning process, and be able to learn at their ease and pace. Likewise, it helps them to acquire many skills like, computer-literacy, self-learning, self engagement skills, and a sense of responsibility that they can translate into real life situations.

## **6. Conclusion**

The Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions introduced around the world have impacted the field of education tremendously, accelerating the transition to blended and flipped learning. Digital technologies today fit well with the attributes of social constructivist active learning, provided they optimize on being interactive, communicative and user-centric (Laurillard, 2013).

The pandemic period emphasizes the need for educators to make decisions about how to encourage students to continue their learning at a distance (Bakker & Wagner, 2020). The researchers found evidence of the efforts of educators to foster motivation, self-regulated learning, and self-efficacy. Moreover, fostering students’ independence and autonomy should be achieved (AlGhazali, 2020).

This paper was targeted to explore EFL teachers’ and learners’ attitudes towards the role of BL in fostering LA in the FC during Covid-19 pandemic. Two main research questions, inquiring about EFL teachers’ and learners’ attitudes , were raised. The analysis of the data obtained through

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the administrated online questionnaires to the participants, namely 50 EFL teachers and 100 EFL learners in different Algerian universities, has revealed that both EFL teachers and learners have positive attitudes towards the role of BL in fostering LA in the FC during Covid-19 pandemic.

In brief, BL fosters LA as it makes learning more learner-centered where the learner takes responsibility of his own learning through prior class preparation. Then, he reflects on what he acquired with his teacher and peers in class, where more time is allowed for discussion, interaction, communication and collaboration. In this context, the learner is motivated and engaged as he takes part in the learning process as an active part who decides about the pace and the steps and the amount of the content.



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## **8. Appendices**

### **Appendix A: EFL Teachers' Questionnaire**

Dear teacher,

You are kindly requested to answer this questionnaire, which is a part of a research work that aims to explore EFL teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the impact of BL on LA in the FC during Covid-19 pandemic.

Please, put a (  $\sqrt{\quad}$  ) in the appropriate column.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>1.</b> BL provided a good teaching experience.					
<b>2.</b> BL made the classroom learner-centered.					
<b>3.</b> BL helped learners to be active learners.					
<b>4.</b> BL helped to cooperate with one another.					
<b>5.</b> BL increased motivation and engagement.					
<b>6.</b> BL helped higher-order thinking skills.					
<b>7.</b> BL changed teacher's role from controller to guide.					
<b>8.</b> BL allowed more time for class discussion and interaction					
<b>9.</b> BL helped learners to be more autonomous.					
<b>10.</b> BL helped learners to control their own learning.					

*Thank you for your cooperation!*

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**Appendix B: EFL Learners' Questionnaire**

Dear learner,

You are kindly requested to answer this questionnaire, which is a part of a research work that aims to explore EFL teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the impact of BL on LA in the FC during Covid-19 pandemic.

Please, put a ( √ ) in the appropriate column.

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. BL provided a good learning experience.					
2. BL allowed me to be more responsible in learning.					
3. BL made me engaged with the activities.					
4. BL increased my motivation to learn English.					
5. BL allowed for communication and interaction.					
6. BL promoted cooperation among students.					
7. BL helped me understand contents easily.					
8. BL allowed for self-pace learning.					
9. BL helped me decide how much I can learn.					
10. BL helped me to control my own learning.					

## Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects

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### The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy

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#### Abstract

Doubtlessly, education has known a massive shift during Covid-19 era, wherein the teaching/ learning processes are reshaped with new updated technologies. Due to, Algerian educational system switched to be digital thus teachers and learners ought to go digital too. therefore, syllabus designers, policy makers and educational leaders should incorporate technology in modern education via electronic learning as well as blended learning. The aim of the current paper is to investigate the role of blended learning in enhancing learners' digital literacy and to check whether EFL teachers were/are trained to foster learners' digital skills and competencies, questioning to what extent and in what ways blended learning fosters learners' digital literacy, taking the case study of Algerian higher education in khenchela. The significance of this descriptive study is that it mirrors the reality of educational practices in Algeria and it carefully highlights the challenges of EFL teachers and learners encountered towards a digital shift in education shaping modern pedagogy.

**Key words:** Blended learning. Electronic learning, Digital literacy, Covid 19, Higher education.

## **The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy**

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### **1. Introduction**

The use of modern technologies in education became one of the interesting debatable issues. Consequently, it is doubly important to highlight the issue of effective digital education by all. Worthy noted that digital education differs from electronic education, blended education and distance education. Interestingly, this study highlights the effectiveness of Blended learning in enhancing learners' digital literacy.

Taking the case study of Algerian Higher Education in Khenchela. The covid 19 pandemic demonstrated the incredible effectiveness of modern digital technologies in different domains mainly education. Worthy noted that researchers use the term digital to mean an ever-evolving range of recent technologies such as (internet, mobile technologies, online tools and platforms, artificial intelligence, Digital machine, blockchain, and robotics) that impact the world. Consequently, digital literacy proves to be a fundamental revolutionary force for holistic change in current century.

Covid 19 has drawn urgent attention to the vital significance of equipping learners with digital skills to face up real world challenges. Chun and Lee (2016) found that digital literacy is in fact a prerequisite for student success in a blended learning environment. "It is quite clear that to be digitally literate, a very basic requirement is possessing the skills to use digital technology" (Chun & Lee, 2016, p. 62). Technology reshapes education daily, it provides learners with different authentic materials in various forms to meet all learners' needs, interests and learning styles. Thus, it is high time educators rethink about up-to-date education for 21<sup>st</sup> century global citizens.

The impetus behind the study was massive radical change in education especially in post Covid19 era wherein a remarkable shift towards digital education appeared. thus, the research aimed at investigating the role of Blended Learning in enhancing learner' digital literacy, this paper will accomplish this aim by meeting the following objective:

 To explore the role that Blended Learning plays in enhancing EFL student's digital literacy.



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- ✚ To explore high quality Blended Learning environment and pedagogy.
- ✚ To check whether the expectations attached to Blended learning are realistic or not.
- ✚ To find recommendations to make Blended Learning an effective instructional approach in Algerian universities.

Questions have been raised concerning the impact of Blended Learning in fostering learners' digital literacy. Therefore, the study attempts to successfully address a host of educational pedagogical issues relevant to the reliability and validity of Blended Learning via addressing the following research questions:

1. To what extent are Algerian learners and teachers of English language in universities aware of the impact of Blended Learning in enhancing learners' digital literacy?
2. Does Blended learning enhance learners' digital literacy?

Based upon the previously mentioned studies, the researchers hypothesized that Blended Learning plays a vital valuable role in enhancing learners' digital literacy in Higher education. Thus, it is hypothesized that the implementation of Blended learning is extremely effective in enhancing learners' digital literacy. Actually, this study was conducted with the objective of investigating the impact of Blended Learning on enhancing learners 21<sup>st</sup> century skills mainly digital literacy at the level of Higher education. To achieve the aforementioned objective, educators believed that blended learning is the solution since it fosters learner's 21<sup>st</sup> century pedagogical outcomes and achievements. (Bibi & Nawaz, 2020). However, little is known about this.

### **1. Part One: Review Literature**

Recently, blended learning gains popularity and credence in Didactics and educational sciences as a vital model of teaching and learning. Blended learning is a rapidly emerging form of education. It is the combination of traditional classroom instructional methods and electronic learning for the same learners learning the same course. Colis and Moonen (2001) declared that blended learning is a model that offers continuous learning that is not limited to time and space, learners can learn whenever they want, wherever they want.

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Garrison & Vaughan (2008) defined it as: “thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences” another definition is that: Blended learning “is part of the ongoing convergence of two archetypal learning environments” (Bonk & Graham, 2006, p. 2).

Consequently, blended learning combines the two forms of education, face to face education and virtual form. According to Graham (2006), it is the system that combines face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated instruction. Graham (2003) stated clearly that :

“Blended-learning combines face-to-face with distance delivery systems. ... the internet is involved, but it's more than showing a page from a website on the classroom screen. And it all comes back to teaching methodologies— pedagogies that change according to the unique needs of learners. Those who use blended learning environments are trying to maximize the benefits of both face-to-face and online methods— using the web for what it does best, and using class time for what it does best » (p. 227).

Several researchers agreed that blended learning combines efficiently the field of education with the field of educational technology. (Chew, Jones and Turner, 2008). Worthy noted that the majority of learners today have smart phones, tablets and accessibility to the internet, that is to say that educators can integrate web-based learning easily to class-based learning, the integration of both is the exact incorporation of blended learning in education. In short blended learning combines face-to-face learning with computer-based learning (both online and offline).

Learners can learn inside and outside the classroom. Remarkably, blended learning is an educational model that integrates electronic learning with its technological growth and developments with traditional learning to maximize learners' skills and competencies. (Thorne, 2003)

Blended learning has many advantages. First, it fosters learners' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and competencies mainly: self-motivation, self-direction, flexibility, critical thinking, creative thinking, accountability, autonomy, interdependency and others, it offers learners various online digital

## **The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy**

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platforms to accelerate their interactivity together, to share contents, and discuss issues, it shapes the profile of learners, preparing them to be lifelong learners, it offers learners opportunities to work virtually, individually or in collaborative conducive environment.

Not only learners are in need of blended education, teachers too are in an urgent need of professional developmental workshops on the appropriate implementation of blended education in recent era. According to So & Brush (2008) Blended education enhances learners' cooperation and collaboration, via online learning through website, online application, and social networking.

it suits all learning styles since materials are varied, learners can visualize, listen, feel, and interact with various interesting materials. Thus, blended learning moves them creatively from theory into practice wherein they gain deeper understanding and became longlife learners. Furthermore, "Teaching in Blended Learning Environments is a well-structured and informative book that will empower many readers to change and re-conceptualize the pedagogical tools and practices they employ when teaching college and university students" (French, 2015, p. 519).

Education has been seriously challenged within Covid 19 pandemic. an urgent rethinking pedagogy works towards a digital education, wherein learners ought to develop their digital skills as well as digital literacy. This later is defined as the ability to use digital means to access, manage, integrate, analyze, and synthesize digital information (Kaeophanuek et al., 2018).

In this regard, it is the capacity and competence of using technology confidently, creatively and critically to face-up real-life challenges rationally, learning and work in a digital society Digital literacy is very essential to face-up the competitive challenges of this era (Phuapan, Viriyavejakul, & Pimdee, 2016; Sharp, 2018).

## **The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy**

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Several studies highlight the effectiveness of equipping learners with digital skills and digital literacy. Furthermore, Digital literacy is different from digital skills. To have a digital skill does not necessary means that you are a digital literate.

As a good illustration is that a learner may know how to use the mobile as a tool, this mirrors his/her digital skills, but a learner who knows how to share contents via Google Meet, Zoom, or Kahoot is a digital literate. Digital skills focus on “knowing”, however digital literacy focus on “understanding the ‘how’”. Educators nowadays have to create a culture of digitalization inside their classrooms, Bali said: “We can only begin to put the seeds of this critical literacy in our classes and hope students will transfer this beyond the classroom and into their increasingly digital identities and lives” (Bali, 2016, p. 4).

Digitalization era has made digital literacy a major concern of educational scientists. Digital Literacy is the ability to use digital media and ICT's (Information and Communication Technologies) effectively, critically, safely and rationally thus it goes beyond computer literacy. Mainly via the critical use of the internet, computers, smart phones...Payton and Hague (2010) declared that teachers ought to think about their digital literacy professional development to meet the needs and interest of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. Therefore, digitalization is highly demanded in all aspects of modern life. It necessitates learners to critically use digital devices or systems; and appropriately adapt to new technologies to develop skills and competencies.

By implementing blended learnig effectively in today's educational institutions, learners turn to be digital generation learners or as Prensky called them “digital natives”, since they had been exposed to these digital Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's), consequently they will be able to improve their digital literacy skills and mitigate the deficiencies encountered towards a digital shift in education. Moreover, building an online conductive virtual environment becomes an urgent necessity. Interestingly, learners would be able to foster their technical, cognitive and social- emotional abilities while being actively engaged in a digital learning environment. (Chelghoum, 2017). With the declaration of

## **The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy**

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covid19 a global public health emergency of international concern, it becomes doubly important to foster learners' digital literacy skills after the university's lockdown. (Cucinotta, Vanelli, 2020).

### **2. Part Two:**

After reviewing the literature linked to Blended learning and learners' digital literacy, the second part is devoted to explore the field work. It consists of the research tool employed for data collection purposes followed by the analysis of the findings and recommendations.

Worthy mentioned that a questionnaire is set of relevant questions designed purposefully to generate the statistical information from a target population to accomplish the research objectives.

Importantly mentioned, the research employed a quantitative methodology for gathering and analysing data. Wherein the tool which was used for the collection of data was a questionnaire that was administers via a private Facebook group in order to accomplish the research aims and obtain the information for the subjects, a questionnaire for EFL teachers is administered in the forms of scientific text to be analyzed carefully.

The questionnaire consisted different forms of questions mainly a closed ended questions (multiple response and Likert scale) and open-ended questions. Interestingly, it was reviewed by 6 external researchers. The appropriate modifications were made before the questionnaire was administered to the participants. The study follows a case study design, with in depth analysis of the findings. This work takes the form of a case study of Algerian Higher education in general, and Abbes Laghrour university in khenchela specifically. wherein the researchers will randomly choose a sample of Algerian EFL teachers via a private Facebook group, collect data about their attitudes, opinion, and experiences of the effectiveness of Blended learning to foster learners' digital literacy.

Doubtlessly, the population of this study consists of Algerian EFL teachers in Higher education, in Abbes Laghrour university in Khenchela, wherein the researchers will randomly choose a sample of 20 teachers of English language, collect data about their opinion about the effectiveness of blended learning on fostering learners' digital literacy.

## **The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy**

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Actually, the questionnaire starts with a brief introduction that justifies clearly the main aim of the study. it contains 11 questions in different forms. Most questions are of multiple-choice type where EFL teachers are asked to tick (✓) in the corresponding choice. Some questions are open-ended questions requiring teachers to give their personal answers and justify them where necessary.

Concerning the order of questions, it is linked with the sections, this questionnaire is made in the form of four sections, each one aims to provide specific set of information purposefully. Section one is about Teachers' Background Information. Section two is dealing with the implementation of blended learning in Algerian Higher Education. while, section three is entitled blended learning and fostering Learners' digital literacy, and section four is about recommendations to make blended learning more effective approach. The teachers' questionnaire was distributed to all teachers. The Data obtained from the questionnaire will be treated in tables and graphs. Information will be presented and analyzed according to the order of the items in the questionnaire. (Below is the analysis of some major questions).

Significantly, Importantly, Google classroom is a digital platform and a Learning Management System (LMS) designed by Google services for educators, teachers, and learners. (Zhang, 2016). This outstanding google application enables teachers to communicate easily with learners, comment, share courses, ask questions, make assignments, and assess learners. It facilitates online learning for digital natives' learners. teachers in the faculty of Letters and Foreign languages, in the Department of English language adopted Google classroom digital platform in their teaching, learners at all levels learn effectively via Google Classroom (See photo n°1 in the Appendices), wherein all teachers share all lessons, assignments and assessment tasks; and learners comment, discuss and download files (See photo°2), contents are downloaded to Google Classroom in various forms such as: photos, Pdfs, word document, videos, power point presentations. Etc (See Photo n°3). In addition to the use of Google Classroom, Teachers use various methods to implement blended learning mainly Gmail services, Facebook groups and messenger. (See photo n°4)

## The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy

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### 3. Analysis And Interpretation Of The Questionnaire

#### Section One: Teachers' Background Information

Section one deals with the Teachers' background information. For example, concerning the gender of the participants, a random selection strategy was used here. In The sampling of 20 EFL teachers, the majority of the participants were female teachers, representing about 75% of the whole participants (a total number of 15 female teachers), while a minority of 05 teachers representing 25%. (05 male teachers).

#### Section Two: The Implementation of Blended Learning in Algerian HE

Q n°3: Could you access Google Classroom easily?

-Yes

-No

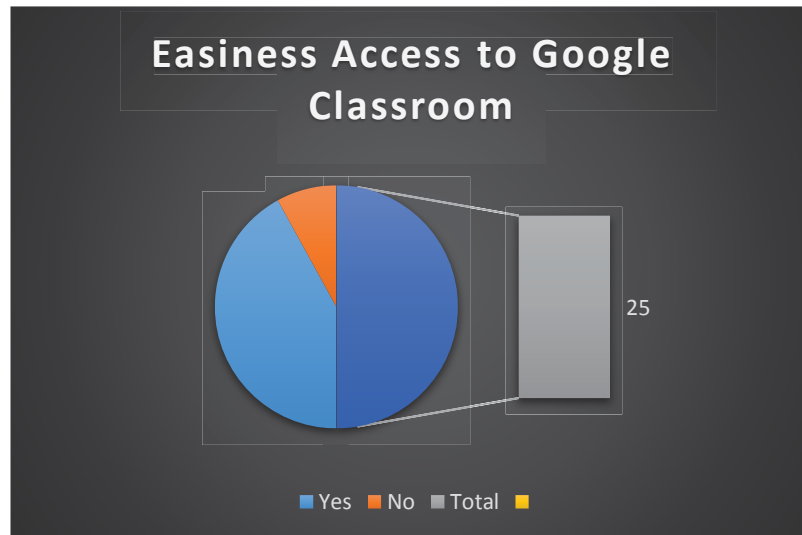
Generally, Teachers declared that access to Google Classroom is easy. After asking the whole population of the study, the majority of teachers representing 84% declared that the use of Google Classroom is an extremely easy. While only a minority of 16% said that they encountered problems to access it. A digital platform that offers optimal education should be easy to be accessed by all. The findings of this question prove a positive attitudes and satisfaction concerning the access of GC.

**Table n°3:** Easiness Access to Google Classroom

Options	Yes	No
Answers	21	04
Percentage	84%	16%

## The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy

**Figure n°3: Easiness Access to Google Classroom**



Q n° 4: Do you like using Google Classroom?

-Yes

-No

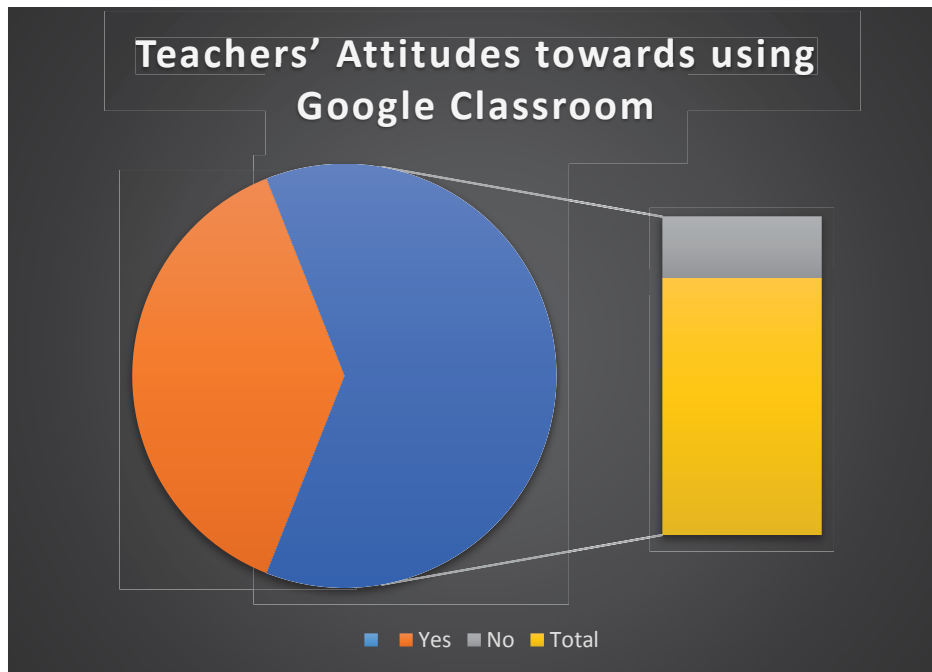
**Table n°4: Teacherse' Attitudes towards using Google Classroom**

Options	Yes	No
Answers	19	06
Percentage	76%	24%



## The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy

**Figure n°4: Teachers' Attitudes towards using Google Classroom**



Remarkably, teachers in the department of English language at Abbes Laghrour University of Khenchela perceive Google Classroom platform positively, due to the fact that it fosters active learning, cooperative learning and inductive learning. Teachers declared that it enhances learners' skills and competencies mainly digital literacy and digital skills.

### Section Three Blended Learning And Fostering Learners' Digital Literacy

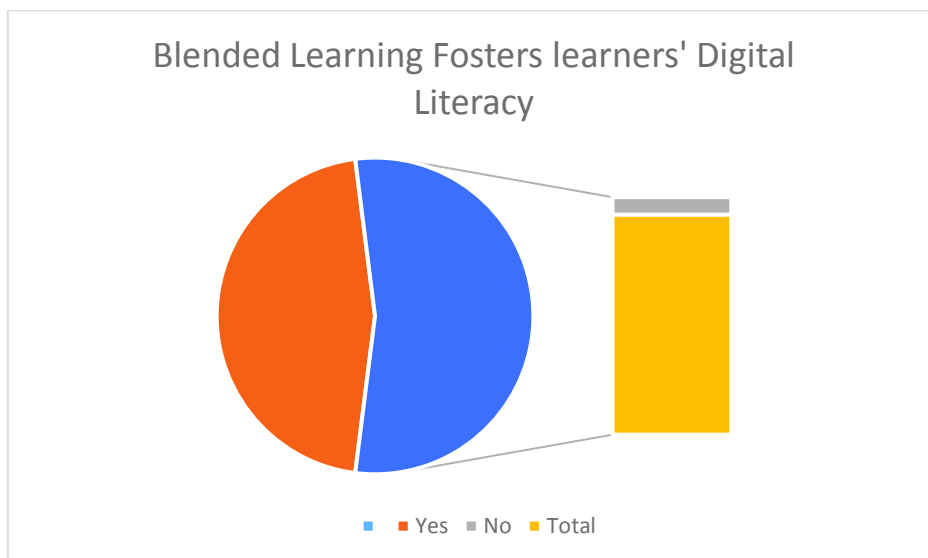
Q n°7: Do you think Blended learning fosters learners' Digital Literacy?

-Yes

-No

## The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy

**Table n°7: Teachers' Perspectives towards whether Blended Learning Fosters Learners' Digital Literacy**



**Figure n°7: Teachers' Perspectives towards whether Blended Learning Fosters Learners' Digital Literacy**

Doubtlessly, most of EFL teachers in the department of English language viewed that Blended learning polishes learners' digital literacy. The more or the less EFL learners are familiar with Blended learning, the more or the less they will be able to maximize their digital literacy. The question is directly related to the primary concern of this research study.

### Section Four: Recommendations for more effective Blended Learning

Q n°11: What do you recommend to make Blended Learning more effective?

EFL teachers in the department of English language suggested different tips to incorporate Blended learning effectively, here is a summary of the main recommendations proposed:

### **The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy**

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- A.** Learners are encouraged to create a personal digital space where they create all their preferences.
- B.** Learners had better share their digital space with peers for collaboration and cooperative learning.
- C.** Learners are advised to take professional development courses on how to use digital platforms and applications rationally and professionally.
- D.** EFL teachers may guide EFL learners about the top beneficial applications to foster their digital literacy, media literacy and digital skills.
- E.** EFL learners should be encouraged to be flexible and join online meeting to maximize their skills and competencies such as: discussion, debates, critical thinking, communication...
- F.** EFL teachers have to provide formative ongoing feedback to their EFL learners to go digital.
- G.** EFL learners should create their own personal blogs.
- H.** EFL teachers may provide checklist concerning the difficulties encountered while going digital.
- I.** EFL teachers and learners should not use fancy tools, they are encouraged to regard time appropriately.
- J.** The digital users had better make sure to use electronic means safely and rationally.
- K.** EFL teachers must encourage learners' self-assessment, peer assessment as well as teacher's support.
- L.** EFL teachers must encourage learners 'presentations of tasks in various formats mainly virtual ones or the ones that incorporate the use of technologies (ICT's).
- M.** Educational staff must build conducive digital educational environment.
- N.** Encourage virtual group communication, comments and discussion chats.
- O.** Encourage EFL learners to take control using ICTs, and act as monitor.

## **The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy**

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### **Findings and Discussions**

Actually, After the administration of the questionnaire the responses of teachers were transformed to an Excel worksheet to be analysed carefully. Nonetheless, the responses can be summed up by saying that: Algerian EFL teachers are completely aware of the impact of blended learning in enhancing learners' digital literacy. Through the use of Google Classroom digital platform, learners would be able to maximize their digital literacy, media literacy as well as their 21<sup>st</sup> century soft skills and competencies. The Positive results that the researchers revealed in the research have confirmed the hypothesis that states: blended learning enhances learners' digital literacy. the responses can be summed up by saying that:

- The reactions of learners towards blended learning are very favourable.
- Google classroom, the online digital platform facilitates learning.
- Learners are highly motivated by learning via blended learning, face to face learning in addition to learn electronically via web based modern technologies.
- The majority of learners prefer studying via blended education.
- Learners are highly connected to recent technologies.
- Blended learning fosters learners' skills and competencies such as: critical thinking, time management, collaboration, creative thinking, soft skills, motivation, team work, and others.
- Google classroom is an extremely useful web-based technology.
- Digital platforms are easy to be used, and accessible. The online platforms fulfilled learners' expectations linked to eLearning.

Based on the result it is generally recommended to use various web-based technologies such as Google classroom, it proves to be useful and accessible. It is highly recommended to keep up to date with the new technologies and to test their effectiveness from time to time.

## **The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy**

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### **4. Conclusion**

All in all, blended education proves to be efficient process. in a digital era, education also must go digital. Learners turned to be digital natives and teachers had better spread a culture of digitalization. Whereby Up to date digital literacies are becoming extremely essential to be polished by 21<sup>st</sup> century learners (i.e., creating blogs, record live videos, animations, web sites...etc).

consequently, educational staff and teachers must consider how learning technologies work effectively, and Technology leaders too ought to coordinate with educators to create efficient opportunities to successfully engage 21<sup>st</sup> century learners in 21<sup>st</sup> century world. to sum up, Learner's ought to master how they use professionally the different resources for electronic learning and blended learning, such as: digital notebooks, online platforms, digital journals, digital dictionaries ...etc as teachers should encourage the use of applications mainly: Kahoot, Academia, Google meet, Edu creations, Socratic, Google Classroom, Schoology, Seesaw, and others.

In short, the study quantitatively investigated the effectiveness of blended learning in fostering learners' skills and competencies, as well as the perceptions of EFL learners towards blended learning via Google classroom. Remarkably, Covid 19 pandemic proves that blended becomes a necessity. All in all, educators need a completely rethinking pedagogy where in blended learning would be inseparable aspect from education and an integral part of recent teaching/learning processes, thus, modern technologies optimise learning and provide opportunities for richer and deeper education. In this context, Algerian universities are being encouraged to implement blended education via various online platform. Still, it is not an easy task for novice educators. Academics ought to find new ways to make blended more effective process and up to date. To sum up, the paper investigates the effectiveness of blended education in fostering learners' skills and competencies mainly digital literacy.

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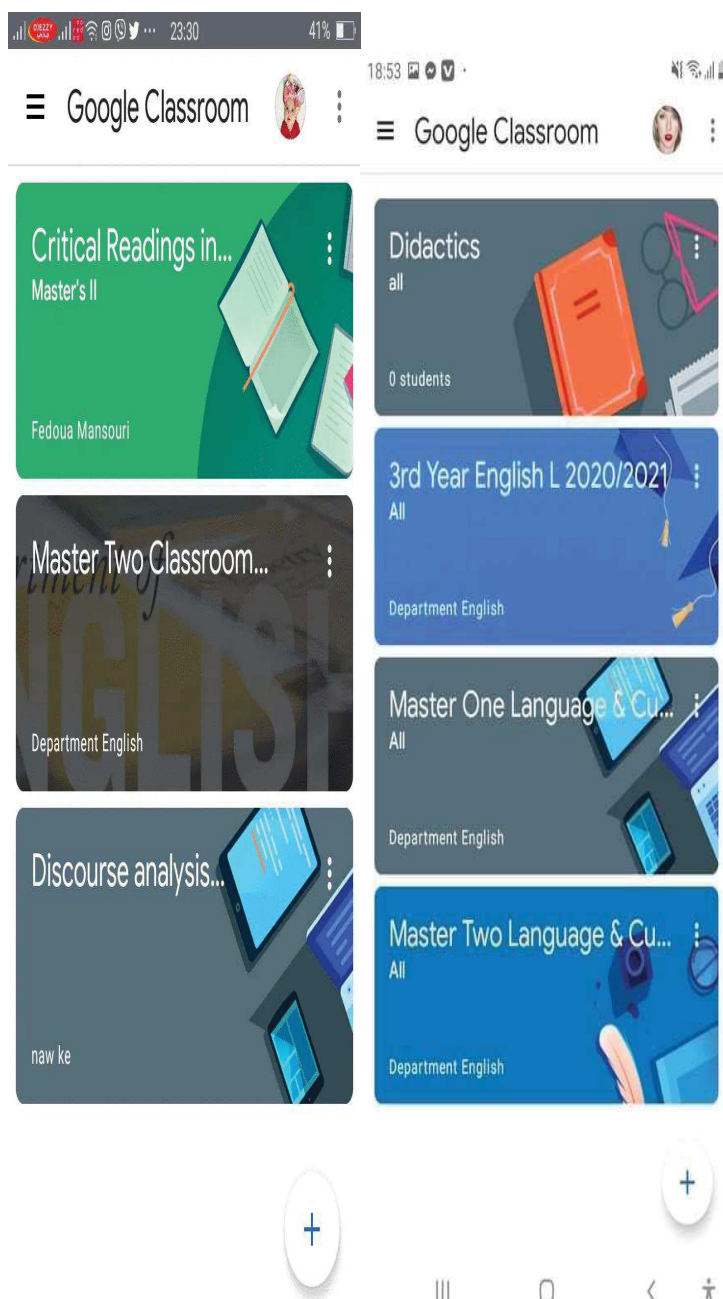
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### 6. Appendices

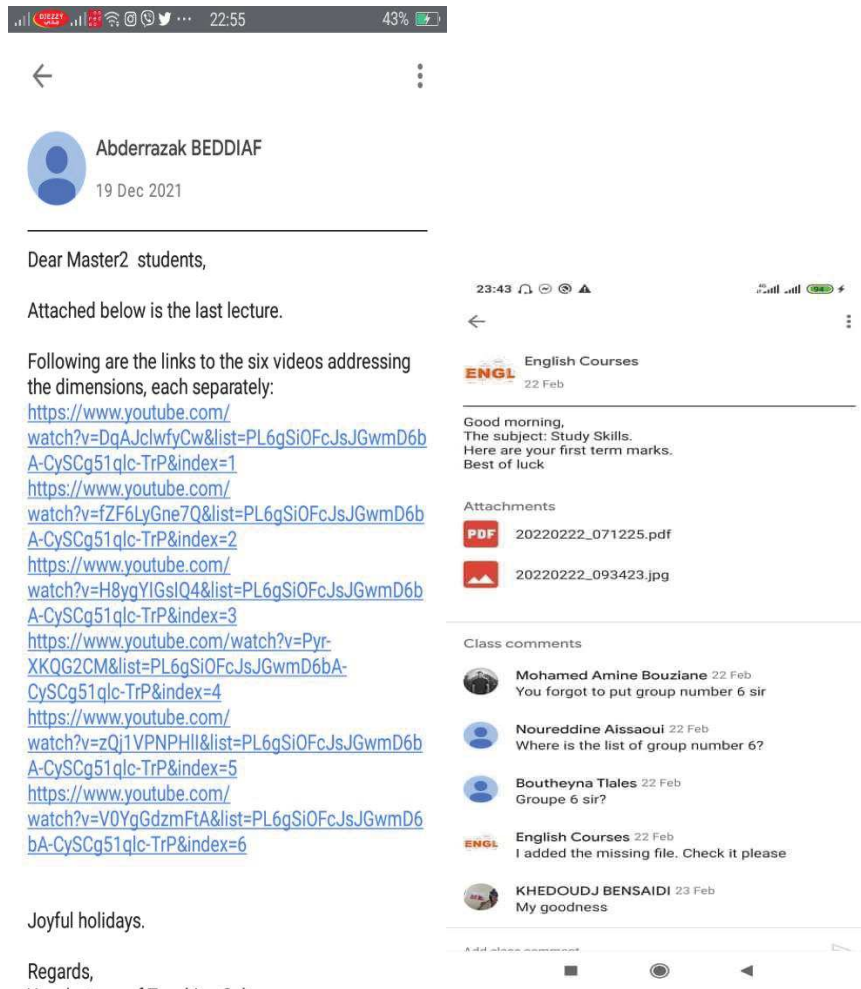
**Photo 1:** Blended Learning in all Levels at Abbas Laghrour University /English Language Department





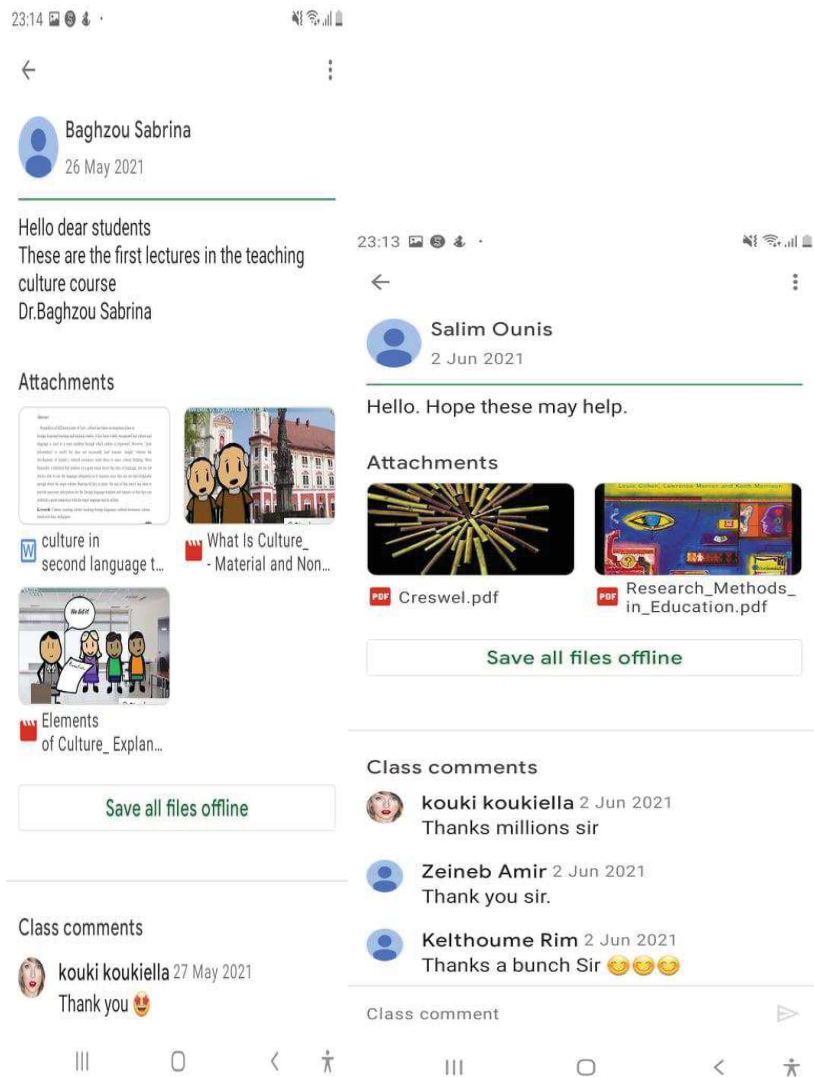
## The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy

Photo 2: Interaction among Participants



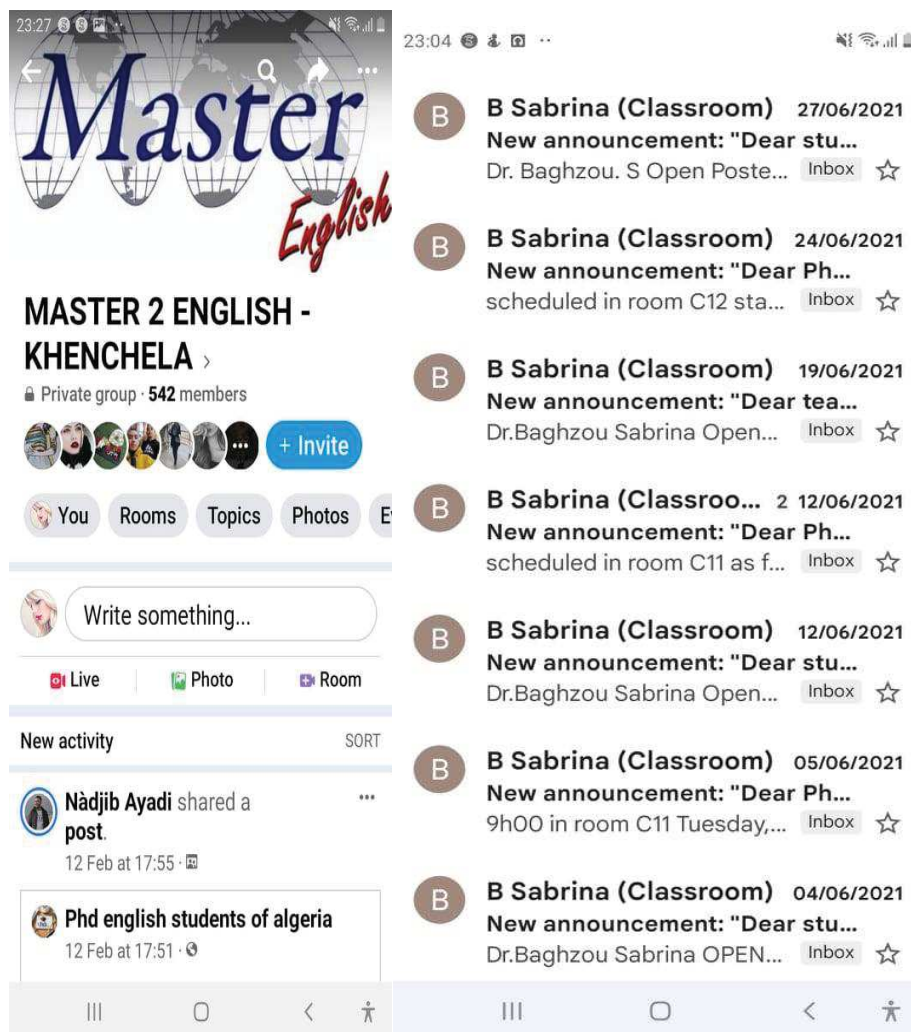
## The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy

**Photo 3:** Different forms of files



## The Role of Blended Learning in Fostering Students' Digital Literacy

**Photo n°4:** Examples of the use of Gmail messages and Facebook Private Group



## **Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects**

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### **E-learning et enseignement universitaire en Algérie : État des lieux, enjeux et perspectives**

### **E-learning and university education in Algeria: State of play, challenges and prospects**

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#### **Résumé:**

La présente contribution vise à décortiquer le contexte de transition d'un enseignement quasi exclusivement présentiel à un enseignement exclusivement distanciel dans un premier temps puis à un enseignement hybride dans un second temps. Elle se propose de dresser un état des lieux et de mettre en exergue les dysfonctionnements à l'origine des difficultés rencontrées, mais également de proposer quelques pistes de réflexion à même d'optimiser l'évolution vers un enseignement hybride plus réussi. Ainsi, notre recherche vise à rendre compte du processus de transition par lequel est passée l'université algérienne afin de faire face au contexte pandémique. Pour ce faire, nous nous sommes référés à la démarche ingénierique préconisée par Ardoin (2015). Dans cette perspective, nous nous sommes penchés sur les contenus mis en ligne par les enseignants de l'université de Batna 2 afin de déterminer leurs conformités par rapport aux standards, nous avons par ailleurs examiné les plateformes de télé-enseignement d'un point de vue d'accessibilité et de navigabilité. L'analyse des données recueillies montre clairement que l'enseignement à distance en Algérie a été mené sur le seul front pédagogique. Par ailleurs, toute l'attention a été portée sur le processus d'enseignement tout en négligeant totalement le processus d'apprentissage. De plus, le manque de formation des formateurs a conduit ces derniers à reproduire les schémas pédagogiques habituels (présentiel). Ce manque d'innovation dans les modalités didactiques s'est traduit également dans leurs pratiques évaluatives.

**Mots-clés:** E-learning- enseignement universitaire- contexte pandémique- état des lieux- enjeux

## **E-learning and university education in Algeria: State of play, challenges and prospects**

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### **Abstract**

This contribution aims to dissect the context of the transition from an almost exclusively face-to-face teaching to an exclusively remote teaching at first and then to a hybrid teaching in a second phase. It proposes to draw up an inventory and to highlight the dysfunctions at the origin of the difficulties encountered, but also to propose some lines of thought capable of optimizing the evolution towards a more successful hybrid education. Thus, our research aims to account for the transition process through which the Algerian university has passed in order to face the pandemic context. To do this, we referred to the engineering approach recommended by Ardoin (2015). In this perspective, we looked at the content put online by the teachers of the University of Batna 2 in order to determine their compliance with the standards, we also examined the distance learning platforms from a view of accessibility and navigability. The analysis of the data collected clearly shows that distance education in Algeria was carried out solely on the pedagogical front. Furthermore, all attention has been paid to the teaching process while totally neglecting the learning process. In addition, the lack of training for trainers has led them to reproduce the usual pedagogical plans (face-to-face). This lack of innovation in didactic methods is also reflected in their assessment practices.

**Keywords:** E-learning- university education- pandemic context- inventory- stakes

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## **E-learning and university education in Algeria: State of play, challenges and prospects**

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### **1. Introduction**

Pour des considérations économiques, portées par les multinationales, la formation est considérée comme un investissement qu'il convient d'optimiser. La voie la plus privilégiée pour réussir ce défi semble être celle de la généralisation des enseignements à distance (EAD dans la suite de notre texte) vu la démocratisation des TIC<sup>1</sup> à laquelle nous assistons, et cela depuis au moins trois décennies (Ricard, 2006). Ces dernières ont envahi notre quotidien à une cadence si accélérée que des dispositifs d'enseignement et de formation à distance — comme les plateformes — ont été développés puis mis en œuvre (Burton *et al.*, 2011). L'intérêt d'implanter et de consolider ces dispositifs se justifie par leurs avantages multiples (bénéficier des apports des experts étrangers, économiser les frais de formation...), d'où la numérisation de l'enseignement à laquelle nous assistons ces derniers temps. Mentionnons que la pandémie du Coronavirus ne constitue qu'un accélérateur de ce processus.

Bien que ces dispositifs aient jusqu'ici réussi à éveiller la curiosité de certains auteurs, chercheurs et enseignants algériens subjugués par leur nouveauté et leur utilité, ils ne constituaient que des outils supplémentaires investis pour consolider les apprentissages et appuyer les modes d'enseignement existants (Benabed et Kadi, 2019). Cette affirmation est loin de représenter la situation actuelle caractérisée par l'urgence de trouver des solutions et de les mettre en pratique pour apporter des réponses efficaces et efficientes à cette crise imposée par le Coronavirus. À l'instar des autres systèmes de formation dans le monde, le système universitaire algérien s'est tourné d'abord vers un enseignement distanciel, puis à un enseignement hybride afin de fructifier le confinement des étudiants (Lassassi, Lounici, Sami, Tidjani et Benguerna, 2020). Toutefois, la voie dessinée et empruntée par les responsables du secteur ne semble pas convenir à la réalité de la société algérienne ni aux besoins et attentes de tous les acteurs de l'université algérienne.

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<sup>1</sup>Technologies d'information et de communication.

## **E-learning and university education in Algeria: State of play, challenges and prospects**

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Cette transition d'un enseignement quasi exclusivement présentiel à un enseignement exclusivement distanciel dans un premier temps, puis à un enseignement hybride dans un second temps, retient notre attention dans la présente contribution qui se propose à la fois d'évaluer la formation à distance mise en œuvre, d'identifier les difficultés rencontrées pour déterminer leurs origines et de proposer quelques pistes de réflexion à même d'optimiser l'évolution vers un enseignement hybride plus réussi. Tout le propos de cette recherche est de répondre à la question suivante : tel qu'il est mis en pratique, l'enseignement distanciel à l'université algérienne tient-il compte de tous les paramètres qui président à la conception des dispositifs de formation ?

Nous nous sommes penchés sur les contenus mis en ligne par les enseignants afin de déterminer leurs conformités par rapport aux standards. Nous avons par ailleurs examiné les plateformes de télé-enseignement d'un point de vue d'accessibilité et de navigabilité. Enfin, nous nous sommes intéressés aux profils des premiers responsables pédagogiques des établissements universitaires ainsi qu'au rôle joué par la tutelle notamment à travers leurs directives.

### **2. État des lieux sur l'enseignement distanciel en Algérie avant la crise sanitaire**

La formation universitaire en Algérie a toujours opté pour un enseignement présentiel jugé plus rentable et plus adapté à la particularité des étudiants algériens. Bien que ces dernières années des dispositifs d'EAD ont été créés puis exploités, les modes classiques de formation demeurent privilégiés. En effet, les plateformes n'ont pas pu attirer les enseignants qui ne les maîtrisent pas suffisamment ni les étudiants qui se montraient aussi réticents que leurs enseignants (Lassassi, Lounici, Sami, Tidjani et Benguerna, 2020).

Les premières initiatives de la généralisation des EAD ont vu le jour fin 2015 et début 2016 à travers la mise en place d'un programme de formation au profit des enseignants universitaires fraîchement recrutés. En effet, dès la rentrée 2015/2016 le ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche scientifique a promulgué l'arrêté N° 932 du 28 Juillet 2016



## **E-learning and university education in Algeria: State of play, challenges and prospects**

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qui impose aux nouvelles recrues une formation consacrant un volet non négligeable à l'enseignement distanciel. L'année universitaire suivante (2016/2017), un projet pilote de master en ligne a été lancé dans certaines universités du pays (Benabed et Kadi, 2019). Outre ce projet, l'université algérienne tente de proposer des formations exclusivement en ligne comme c'est le cas de l'université de formation continue d'Alger (UFC) qui est en train de lancer des formations de Master en ligne. Mentionnons que l'UFC a « *joué en effet le rôle de précurseur* » dans ce mode d'enseignement à travers des formations continues assurées à distance (Benabed et Kadi, 2019).

Cette généralisation des EAD intervient après des tentatives d'intégration des nouvelles TIC à travers le télé-enseignement qui « *a été officiellement introduit dans les universités algériennes dans le cadre "des objectifs stratégiques 2007-2008-2009", et ce, afin de soutenir la formation présentielle en permettant la gestion du nombre toujours croissant d'étudiants par rapport au nombre insuffisant d'enseignants, surtout dans certaines zones du pays* (MESRS, 2010) » (Benabed et Kadi, 2019 : 21).

Sur le plan stratégique, et bien qu'il y ait eu de louables tentatives comme celles citées plus haut, nous déplorons l'absence d'une stratégie claire proposant une vision à court et à moyen terme de la mise en place de l'enseignement distanciel. Ce constat repose sur les insuffisances relevées un peu partout au sein de nos universités, nous en citons dans ce qui suit quelques-unes :

- Absence d'espaces numériques dans les campus universitaires ;
- Nombre restreint de plateformes dédiées à ce nouveau mode d'enseignement ;
- Manque de formateurs hautement qualifiés pour prendre en charge la formation des enseignants universitaires ;
- Matériels et logiciels dépassés.

### **3. Description du contexte de transition**

Avec la crise sanitaire que connaît le monde, les universités algériennes se sont vues dans la nécessité de recourir à des modes d'enseignement plus récents et plus appropriés. Le confinement imposé a en effet aboli tout enseignement présentiel et contraint les acteurs impliqués à



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s'adapter aux nouvelles exigences. L'enseignement à distance jusqu'ici négligé est proclamé comme le remède qui pourrait déparalyser les universités algériennes désertées pendant des mois. En effet, une fois que le spectre d'un confinement prolongé a été confirmé, les responsables du secteur ont invité les enseignants universitaires à revoir leurs modes d'enseignement en les incitant à faire preuve de créativité et d'innovation pédagogiques.

Les décisions ministérielles prises (arrêté N° 633 du 26 août 2020) ont invité les enseignants à publier leurs cours sur les plateformes des universités, à inscrire les étudiants pour qu'ils puissent les consulter, à proposer des activités consolidant les acquis, à créer des espaces d'échange favorisant les interactions. Ces décisions adressées aux enseignants visent à mettre en œuvre un enseignement en ligne qui prépare les étudiants à un enseignement présentiel intensif où les contenus et les ressources déjà exposés seront discutés puis analysés sur le modèle de la pédagogie inversée mais, en organisant ces enseignements dispensés à distance, les universités algériennes ont-elles pris en compte les particularités de nos étudiants ?

### **4. Constat d'échec**

L'enseignement à distance en Algérie a été mené sur le seul front pédagogique. Toute l'attention a été portée sur le processus d'enseignement, ce qui a totalement négligé le processus d'apprentissage. De plus, le manque de formation des formateurs a conduit ces derniers à reproduire les schémas pédagogiques habituels (présentiel). Ce manque d'innovation dans les modalités didactiques s'est traduit également dans leurs pratiques évaluatives qui ne semblent pas adaptées aux nouvelles exigences.

#### **4.1 Rôle des étudiants**

Les dispositifs innovateurs sont par définition multiples et multifformes. Les responsables préconisent le recours aux plateformes où les enseignants créateurs de cours peuvent partager toutes les ressources dont les étudiants ont besoin, publier des activités, créer des espaces d'échanges, etc. (Marcant, 2016).

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Cette réalité pourrait désorienter les apprenants algériens qui sont, faut-il le rappeler, très peu autonomes lorsqu'il s'agit de leurs formations. Effectivement, le basculement vers ce nouveau mode d'apprentissage, auquel ils ne sont pas habitués (Vidal, 2020), a accentué leur démotivation non seulement à cause de la non-maîtrise des interfaces utilisées par les enseignants, mais également en raison du manque des moyens (Ordinateur personnel, accès à internet...) dont souffrent beaucoup d'étudiants. De plus, sur le plan décisionnel, les organisations estudiantines n'ont pas joué leur rôle dans les prises de décisions dans la mesure où leurs revendications se limitent à l'aspect socio-économique et délaissent quelque peu le volet pédagogique.

De notre point de vue, il aurait fallu impliquer tous les enseignants, et cela dès les premiers instants, dans l'analyse de la situation et dans la proposition des mécanismes permettant de gérer la situation de crise. En effet, face à une crise d'une telle envergure, on ne peut uniquement se contenter de réponses pédagogiques, dans la mesure où on a demandé aux enseignants de trouver des solutions sans les accompagner sur le plan stratégique et logistique.

### **4.2 Rôle des responsables**

Avant de parvenir aux considérations pédagogiques et à la créativité des enseignants, il convient d'abord d'analyser l'approche/démarche adoptée par la sphère stratégique ou décisionnelle.

Si dans les pays développés, les universités avaient toute la latitude pour évoluer et se moderniser sur le plan logistique et pédagogique à la fois, la nôtre s'est vue imposer une transition forcée. En effet, le processus de numérisation des universités algérienne peine à se généraliser. De ce fait, au lieu de parcourir ce chemin progressivement en se dotant graduellement de compétences et de moyens technologiques de plus en plus sophistiqués, l'université algérienne se retrouve contrainte de faire face aux défis d'un contexte 4.0 (Miraoui, 2021) avec des réflexions et un logiciel datant, dans le meilleur des cas, de l'ère 1.0. La situation actuelle est le résultat d'une posture attentiste dans laquelle s'est figée l'université algérienne, et ce depuis plusieurs décennies ; ce qui la condamne aujourd'hui à utiliser des dispositifs (outils technologiques), qui quand ils ne sont pas dépassés se révèlent peu innovateurs.

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L'autre contrainte que nous avons pu relever est celle liée d'une part aux profils des premiers responsables pédagogiques au niveau de chaque établissement et d'autre part à la nature même de leur mission. En effet, comme le montre le tableau 1, une grande majorité de ces responsables n'ont pas eu, dans le cadre de leurs parcours de formation, de formation pédagogique les qualifiant à assurer pleinement leurs tâches.

**Table 1.** Profil de formation des Vice-recteurs chargés de la pédagogie au niveau de la conférence régionale des universités de l'Est

<b>Vice-recteurs chargés de la Pédagogie</b>	<b>Profils académiques</b>
Université Annaba	Sciences de gestion
Université Batna 1	Mécanique
Université Batna 2	Mécanique
Université Biskra	Informatique
Université Bordj Bou-Arredj	Chimie
Université Constantine 1	Mécanique
Université Constantine 2	Psychologie/Sciences de l'éducation
Université Constantine 3	Géologie et environnement
Université El Oued	Lettres et Langue Arabe
El Taref	Géographie
Université Guelma	Psychologie
Université Jijel	Génie Civile
Université M'Sila	Économie
Centre universitaire Mila	/
Université Ouargla	Psychologie clinique
Université Oum El Bouagui	Informatique
Université Sétif 1	Sciences et Technologies
Université Sétif 2	Lettres et Langue Arabe
Université Skikda	Électricité
Université Souk Ahras	Mécanique

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Ainsi, leurs expertises reposent essentiellement sur leurs expériences en tant qu'enseignants de telle ou telle discipline. Or, l'hétérogénéité des parcours de formation à l'université exige de ces responsables pédagogiques non seulement une connaissance approfondie des spécificités de chacun d'entre eux, mais également de vraies compétences à la fois ingénieriques sur la conception des programmes de formation, mais également pédagogique : sur la manière de dispenser les contenus d'enseignement.

De plus, leur mission consiste non pas à analyser le contexte académique pour proposer des dispositifs pédagogiques authentiques répondant aux besoins immédiats des étudiants, mais à veiller à l'application des textes (arrêtés, notes) prescrits par la tutelle. En ce sens, leur mission se cantonne à l'aspect de la conformité réglementaire. D'ailleurs, la quasi-totalité des décisions prises par les instances décisionnelles et appliquées dans nos universités ont un caractère généraliste, dans la mesure où elles ne tiennent pas compte des particularités de chaque spécialité.

### **4.3 Rôle des enseignants**

La réticence d'une bonne partie des enseignants à s'engager dans l'EAD est due au manque de compétences dans la mesure où le manque de formation freine considérablement l'usage des NTIC à des fins d'enseignement (Nucci-Finke, 2015). En effet, une absence d'une démarche réflexive qui les aurait amenés à questionner leurs pratiques et à se rendre compte de la nécessité d'entreprendre des formations est constatée. Les autoformations et les formations continues deviennent nécessaires pour que les pratiques des enseignants évoluent et soient plus conformes aux exigences du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Ces enseignants qui rejettent toute innovation de leurs pratiques sont également convaincus que leurs modes d'enseignement classiques sont les plus appropriés au contexte national pour plusieurs raisons telles que : la particularité des étudiants algériens et leurs attentes, le manque de moyens...

A cette réticence, s'ajoute le manque de formation à l'enseignement distanciel dont sont victimes de nombreux enseignants universitaires ; d'où les difficultés du passage de l'enseignement présentiel au distanciel. En effet, dispenser un contenu d'enseignement en ligne ne suit pas la même

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logique que les cours en présentiel. Injecter/poster un contenu de cours sous forme d'un document Word, PDF, audiovisuel, ou diapositives sur les différentes plateformes dédiées à ce type d'enseignement –qui constitue une pratique courante de nos enseignants- ne peut être en aucun cas considéré comme un enseignement distanciel.

Parant, une formation ciblant la maîtrise du e-learning tâchera, outre la sensibilisation des enseignants aux spécificités de ce mode de transmission, d'installer un savoir-faire qui se caractérise principalement par l'implication des apprenants au moyen d'une série de tâches qui les invitent à s'engager dans un mode d'apprentissage par le « faire »<sup>1</sup>. En d'autres termes, au lieu de demander aux apprenants de consulter les supports mis en ligne puis procéder à l'évaluation, l'enseignant technopédagogue sera en mesure de proposer des enseignements interactifs découlant d'une scénarisation et séquentialisation des contenus bien réfléchie.

Ainsi, en plus du large panel de compétences professionnelles professorales dites conventionnelles ou traditionnelles, l'enseignant du XXI<sup>e</sup> est appelé à maîtriser des compétences pédagogiques, didactiques en rapport avec le contexte numérique, des compétences techniques relatives à l'installation et à la manipulation des outils numérique, et des compétences relatives à l'infographie pour assurer l'aspect ergonomique de l'apprentissage. Ce sont ces compétences qui permettent aux enseignants de relever le défi de l'université.

En outre, la question de l'enseignement distanciel soulève une problématique des plus complexes, à savoir l'évaluation des compétences des étudiants. Si les questions liées aux objectifs des cours ainsi que les contenus qui les prennent en charge demeurent en suspens, celles relatives à l'évaluation le sont encore plus. L'introduction relativement tardive des plateformes e-learning ainsi que l'absence d'espace numérique dans les campus universitaires ont fait qu'enseignants comme étudiants ne maîtrisent pas, ou du moins maîtrisent peu, ces interfaces virtuelles censées supplanter l'enseignement conventionnel. En effet, les pratiques d'évaluation en ligne

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<sup>1</sup>L'apprentissage est conditionné par l'accomplissement des tâches.

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qui pourraient être investies (Audet, 2011) demeurent écartées étant donné que les enseignants n'ont pas été antérieurement formés à les exploiter.

Dans de telles dispositions, la démarche évaluative semble compromise, car celle-ci prend la forme d'une évaluation en présentiel : les modalités d'évaluation et les activités sont en effet maintenues. Seul le mode de collecte des réponses change. En effet, les enseignants publient, sur les réseaux sociaux des départements, des facultés ou sur leurs sites officiels, le sujet de l'examen dans lequel ils indiquent leurs adresses mail personnelles ou professionnelles pour que leurs étudiants leur remettent leurs réponses. Certes, cette organisation a permis aux étudiants de passer leurs examens et de valider leurs années et cycles, cependant, on ne peut en aucun cas laisser cette situation perdurer, car d'une part, elle fait perdre aux enseignants énormément de temps dans le tri, l'enregistrement des travaux, la relance, etc. D'autre part, les enseignants n'ont aucune garantie ni sur l'authenticité des travaux réalisés surtout en l'absence de logiciel permettant la détection des passages plagiés ni sur la vraie identité du répondant (Nizet, Leroux, Deaudelin, Béland, Goulet, 2016).

### **5. Quelles solutions ?**

S'obstiner à forcer la transition de l'enseignement présentiel au distanciel par des stratégies non éprouvées revient à condamner à l'échec plusieurs générations d'étudiants. La solution la plus écologique serait celle d'une transition souple et flexible qui se fera à l'aide d'un dispositif de formation hybride alliant l'enseignement en présentiel d'un côté et une formation en ligne de l'autre. Il va sans dire que la part du présentiel se réduira à force que le e-learning prendra de la place. Ce procédé présente un avantage non négligeable, celui de laisser du temps aux enseignants universitaires afin de se former/se perfectionner au e-learning. Il permet également aux étudiants de s'adapter et de se familiariser avec ce nouveau mode de formation. Aussi, les deux acteurs de ce nouveau mode d'enseignement/apprentissage devront s'initier à une nouvelle forme de travail qu'est le tutorat, qui a un impact sur le progrès des étudiants et de leurs performances (Quintin, 2007). En effet, l'enseignement distanciel repose en grande partie sur cette forme d'échange. Si sur le plan théorique, ce procédé de suivi et de supervision des apprentissages des étudiants est

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relativement facile, le principal défi est quant à lui d'ordre pratique. En effet, la principale contrainte qui peut le compromettre est celle du nombre manifestement élevé des étudiants notamment dans les spécialités relevant du domaine des sciences sociales et humaines où l'enseignant a, à sa charge, jusqu'à trois groupes de plus de 50 étudiants chacun. Le tutorat est-il alors compatible avec la massification des publics ?

Pour répondre à cette question, nous pouvons affirmer sans le moindre doute que dans ces circonstances, il est quasi impossible pour un enseignant de gérer l'apprentissage d'une centaine d'étudiants. Ce constat est d'autant plus vrai que l'un des principaux objectifs du tutorat est la rétroaction qui se fait grâce au mailing et aux blogues (accuser réception, corriger, remédier, relancer, etc.), ce qui ne pourrait pas être fait actuellement.

Dans ces conditions, même en combinant les deux formes de tutorat (synchrone et asynchrone) les enseignants exerçant dans les contextes tels que nous venons de décrire ne pourront jamais assister leurs étudiants. Face à cette réalité, il devient plus qu'urgent de nous pencher sur d'autres formes de tutorat notamment sur le tutorat par des pairs que les universités et même les lycées occidentaux appliquent depuis plusieurs décennies. En effet, il s'agit en réalité de faire appel aux étudiants des cycles avancés pour accompagner leurs camarades (des doctorants pour tutorer des mastérants à titre d'exemple). Nous tenons à préciser que le recours au tutorat par des pairs n'a pas vocation à décharger les enseignants d'une partie de leur travail, mais vise davantage à les soulager pour qu'ils se focalisent sur la scénarisation des enseignements.

Il est à noter que parallèlement au tutorat, les enseignants pourront initier leurs étudiants à la forme d'enseignement symétrique en les incitant à se retrouver sur des applications qui ne sont pas destinées à l'apprentissage (Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp...), mais favorisent les échanges et les interactions. Ce mode d'apprentissage qui se base sur un apprentissage horizontal entre apprenants du même niveau (symétrie des compétences) se distingue du tutorat qui est considéré comme un mode d'apprentissage vertical et asymétrique, car le tuteur se doit être plus compétent que ses

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tutorés. Cette forme de travail collaboratif n'est pas encouragée dans les sphères académiques algériennes.

Signalons l'importance que devront accorder les enseignants à l'attractivité de leurs contenus. Effectivement, il convient de savoir que les apprentissages en ligne sont concurrencés par une multitude d'objets connectés qui sont nettement plus attractifs que les cours (jeux vidéo, TV, réseaux sociaux...). En ce sens, il faut intégrer cette donnée pour rendre le contenu et la forme de l'enseignement ergonomique pour les étudiants. Pour ce qui est de l'évaluation, en l'absence des garanties évoquées supra, les enseignants pourront opter pour des activités évaluant les habiletés cognitives supérieures où la documentation est autorisée. Par ailleurs, il convient de sensibiliser les étudiants à la nécessité de respecter la propriété intellectuelle, car l'omniprésence de ces derniers sur la toile peut les conduire à une forme de dépersonnalisation des travaux des autres pour les approprier.

Bien que nous ayons évoqué plus haut les difficultés d'ordre technique, nous y reviendrons afin de montrer l'importance de disposer et cela sur l'ensemble du territoire national d'une bande passante aux normes internationales pour que les échanges se passent dans des conditions optimales. De plus, l'acquisition des versions professionnelles (payantes) de systèmes en ligne tel que ZOOM qui permettent de faire des vidéos-conférences ainsi que des webinaires dans de bonnes conditions est capitale pour la réussite de l'enseignement/apprentissage en ligne.

Il importe aussi de mettre en place deux types de cellules : les premières seront chargées de créer et les plateformes et les contenus pédagogiques alors que les secondes seront chargées d'assurer des veilles technopédagogiques dans le but de repérer toute innovation dans ce domaine et de permettre ainsi aux instances dirigeantes de se positionner sur le marché pour les acquérir. Ces stratégies prospectives visent à éviter au système de formation algérien ce temps de retard qu'il accuse depuis bien longtemps par rapport aux pays qui l'entourent.



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### **5. Conclusion**

Bien qu'ils n'aient pas été réellement formés à un enseignement distanciel de qualité, les enseignants universitaires algériens ont été contraints d'adopter ce mode d'enseignement et de l'imposer à leurs étudiants en dépit de toutes les contraintes. Cette réalité alarmante rend nécessaire la révision des modalités de l'enseignement distanciel, qui intègrent les modes et les activités d'évaluation, pour les rendre plus conformes au contexte national et aux particularités des étudiants algériens.

Ainsi, les enjeux actuels ne peuvent pas se cantonner dans le volet pédagogique pour que nous puissions nous tourner uniquement vers les enseignants. En effet, la réussite de ce projet est conditionnée par l'implication de plusieurs secteurs et la mutualisation des efforts de tous, car les défis auxquels fait face en premier lieu l'université algérienne et à travers elle tout le pays exige une approche systémique et une vision, à court et à moyen termes, claire. Cette approche doit se faire surtout au niveau décisionnel.

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## Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects

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### L'enseignement hybride et l'intégration des dispositifs pédagogiques technologiques au service de l'enseignement de la littérature à l'Université algérienne

### Blended learning and the integration of pedagogical-technological devices in the service of the teaching of literature at the Algerian University

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#### Résumé

Cet article décrit une expérimentation effectuée «en mode hybride» combinée à une hybridation de pédagogies dans un environnement d'apprentissage pratique de la littérature centré sur l'étudiant ainsi que sur des activités socioconstructivistes via Classroom et Google Meet. Les phénomènes didactiques ont été conçus en créant des milieux d'apprentissage, des artefacts, et des séquences d'enseignement et d'apprentissage dans des contextes pédagogiques authentiques. Ainsi, il semble se développer une meilleure prédisposition à l'étude du module « Ouvertures sur la littérature » ; de plus, l'expérimentation mesurant l'écart entre l'apprentissage dans les situations ordinaires et celui avec l'intégration de nouveaux dispositifs et scénarisations; indique que les méthodes d'enseignement alternatives fonctionnent pour la plupart des étudiants. Nous visons à améliorer l'acquisition de la compétence de pensée critique pour faire initier les étudiants à « apprendre à réfléchir » tout en élaborant la tâche associée à un cours de littérature de façon à avoir une incidence sur la performance des étudiants à réfléchir en littérature. Les résultats quantitatifs démontrent des avantages importants en ce qui concerne les progrès dans l'utilisation pédagogique-technologique en mode hybride..

**Keywords:** enseignement hybride ; dispositifs pédagogotechnologiques ; Classe inversée ; Brainstorming ; carte mentale ; motivation/efficacité.

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### **Abstract**

This article describes an experiment carried out "in hybrid mode" combined with a hybridization of pedagogies in a student-centered practical learning environment of literature as well as socio-constructivist activities via Classroom and Google Meet. The didactic phenomena were designed by creating learning environments, artifacts, and sequences of teaching and learning in authentic pedagogical contexts. Thus, it seems to develop a better predisposition to the study of the module "Openings on the literature". In addition, experimentation measuring the gap between learning in ordinary situations and that with the integration of new devices and scenarios indicates that alternative teaching methods work for most students. We aim to enhance the students' critical thinking skill to make them "learn to think" by designing the tasks associated with a literature course in such a way as to foster students' performance in thinking in literature. The quantitative results demonstrate significant advantages with regard to progress in the pedagogical-technological use in hybrid mode.

**Keywords:** hybrid teaching; pedago-technological devices; Flipped classroom; Brainstorming; mind map; motivation/effectiveness.

### **1. Introduction**

Réinventer l'enseignement supérieur en intégrant obligatoirement de nouvelles technologies au sein des pratiques pédagogiques des enseignants était une conséquence du contexte contraint auquel l'enseignement supérieur fait face depuis la crise pandémique (COVID-19) et qui a exigé l'hybridation pédagogique comme stratégie enseignante pour assurer la continuité des cours, en alternant les vagues du présentiel et de l'enseignement à distance. C'est ce qui a réorganisé et bouleversé l'enseignement et a donné à revoir les pratiques enseignantes et leur conception socio-pédagogique.

Les technologies qui ont toujours facilité la production et l'accès au savoir devaient, dans ce contexte pandémique, permettre la conception de parcours de formations plus flexibles (Lebis et al., 2021), ce qui favorise l'instrumentalisation des pratiques pédagogiques chez les enseignants.

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Ce contexte sanitaire a amené tous les systèmes éducatifs à redécouvrir l'hybridation comme nouvelle modalité qui correspond aux besoins pédagogiques tout en mettant en œuvre des scénarisations hybrides opérationnelles. À ce défi s'ajoute celui d'enseigner la littérature qui est une matière transdisciplinaire qui communique un savoir qui permet de l'expliquer, de le comprendre et non de la faire.

La problématique de notre article concerne l'intégration de l'enseignement hybride dans l'approche pédagogique offerte habituellement dans le cours de littérature. Nous avons remarqué que les enseignants de littérature s'intéressent communément à la tâche réalisée, soit le cours, et non à la démarche ou de l'évaluation de ce dernier. Si les étudiants suivent le cours qui comporte beaucoup d'informations pluridisciplinaires, comment peut-on espérer que ces derniers arrivent à répondre aux questions de l'évaluation qui sont généralement une analyse littéraire (voire une dissertation)? Ce qui fait : réussir cette matière demeure une affaire de méthodologie.

Les enseignants doivent alors apporter une aide personnalisée aux étudiants qui consiste à avoir accès aux processus mentaux de ces derniers car ils ne sont aucunement impliqués aux processus de l'évaluation et ils ne savent même pas comment réussir un tel apprentissage puisque le savoir-faire ou les compétences sollicitées demeurent abstraits.

Ce constat nous a interpellées sur l'impact du choix de dispositif hybride sur la formation en littérature et de l'acquisition de nouvelles compétences telles que celle de l'esprit critique chez les étudiants. Et, c'est ce qui nous a conduits à mener une expérimentation avec les étudiants de première année Master (didactique) pour pouvoir mesurer l'écart entre les acquis d'un cours ordinaire et ceux d'un autre hybride (enseignement et dispositif hybrides) tout en passant à l'évaluation.

Nous allons, donc, répondre à la question suivante : « En quoi un enseignement hybride est-il un dispositif innovant favorisant la motivation, l'autonomie et l'apprentissage de la littérature à l'enseignement supérieur? »

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Nous supposons, qu'un enseignement hybride scénarisé à partir de la pédagogie de la classe inversée puis un brainstorming via Google Classroom et Google Meet et l'utilisation de la carte mentale pour l'évaluation serait le processus de l'éveil de la réflexion de la pensée critique qui pourrait se concrétiser à travers les acquis modifiés selon les nouvelles données.

Afin de favoriser une meilleure acquisition du contenu du module «Ouvertures sur la littérature», nous avons tenté de mettre en place dans nos classes une approche par problèmes fondée sur une pédagogie socioconstructiviste. Pour permettre aux étudiants de bénéficier de tous les avantages d'une pédagogie de la discussion et afin de rendre visible leur questionnement (d'une part pour voir où se situaient leurs difficultés réelles et cela en instaurant le doute positif et, d'autre part, pour tenter de baliser le travail de réflexion attendu d'eux).

C'est ainsi que notre recherche examine le potentiel d'utilisation d'une telle hybridation liée à une approche par problèmes pour favoriser le développement de la compétence de l'esprit critique et d'amener les étudiants à produire des interprétations originales des couvertures des œuvres littéraires. Cette approche par problèmes qui est liée à l'utilisation de l'enseignement hybride est inscrite dans des stratégies métacognitives.

Cet enseignement hybride dans une classe de littérature de niveau de master pourrait offrir aux étudiants un espace de créativité et de découverte et, partant, encourager une telle créativité. Nous avons donc analysé cette inventivité des étudiants, leur capacité à sortir du connu pour interpréter les couvertures et les titres des œuvres proposées dans la séance de la classe inversée et le Brain-storming. L'intégration de l'approche par problèmes en littérature favoriserait une meilleure explication des textes littéraires que ceux de non-utilisateurs, grâce au savoir construit collectivement.

Pour vérifier ces hypothèses, nous avons analysé la profondeur des propos échangés sur la séance en mode synchrone dans laquelle les étudiants discutaient de leurs interprétations du support proposé dans le document proposé lors de la classe inversée. Les explications offertes en démonstration de la compréhension de lecture au terme de l'exercice,

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explications que nous avons comparées à celles des étudiants n'ayant pas participé au dialogue électronique, mais soumis aux mêmes conditions générales."

Dans ce qui suit nous allons d'abord, définir les concepts clés de notre recherche puis nous présenterons le protocole de l'expérimentation et les resultants.

### **1. Définition de l'hybridation pédagogique**

Définir l'hybridation demeure nécessaire puisqu'un enseignement multimodal peut avoir plusieurs types de scénarisations. Charlier et al., (2005), retiennent comme caractéristiques de l'hybridation l'articulation entre présence et distance et l'intégration des nouvelles technologies pour soutenir le processus d'enseignement/apprentissage.

Lebrun (2011) affirme que cette articulation participe au continuum des rapports enseigner/apprendre et spatio-temporel, ainsi que le nécessaire recours à un dispositif techno-pédagogique.

Dans le cadre de la continuité pédagogique et de l'hybridation de la formation, la DGESIP<sup>1</sup> indique que l'hybridation s'apprête à prendre plusieurs formes, de la simple « mise à disposition de ressources » jusqu'à « la scénarisation de situations pédagogiques ».

D'ailleurs, elle introduit le concept de contraintes qui prend en charge toutes les composantes du contexte d'enseignement multimodal (nombre d'étudiants, profils, équipement, type d'enseignement, contexte, ...) qui doit être pris en considération lors de l'hybridation d'une situation pédagogique.

Deschryver et al. (2014) voient que c'est vraiment dommageable de considérer l'hybridation comme une solution à un problème plutôt qu'un « ancrage » vers de nouvelles pratiques. L'hybridation doit se caractériser comme étant un produit sur mesure qui tient compte à la fois du contexte,

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<sup>1</sup> Voir fiche de la « Direction générale de l'enseignement supérieur et de l'insertion professionnelle » GESIP intitulée « PLAN DE CONTINUITE PEDAGOGIQUE FICHE 10 – HYBRIDER LA FORMATION DANS UN CONTEXTE CONTRAINT » du 13 mars 2020 accessible au lien suivant : [https://services.dgesip.fr/fichiers/Fiche\\_10 - Hybrider la formation dans un contexte restreint.pdf](https://services.dgesip.fr/fichiers/Fiche_10_-_Hybrider_la_formation_dans_un_contexte_restreint.pdf)  
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des contraintes et des besoins des étudiants et des enseignants. Ce qui peut se concrétiser à partir du métissage des paramètres comme les démarches pédagogiques, les activités, le contexte spatiotemporel. Ce métissage combinatoire est par ailleurs préconisé par Lebrun (2011) pour assurer le continuum des rapports évoqués.

Cependant, une telle définition de l'hybridation n'explique nullement la nécessité du recours aux dispositifs techno-pédagogiques. Donc, il est nécessaire de compléter cette définition de l'hybridation en ajoutant son aspect spatial mouvant qui chevauche entre l'enseignement à distance et en présence. Et sa temporalité : synchrone et asynchrone.

L'hybridation est définie donc comme étant un continuum programmé qui prend en charge le contexte spatio-temporel et l'intégration d'un artefact numérique/pédagogique qui doit se scénariser selon la matière enseignée, les besoins des étudiants et les compétences visées.

Ce qui fait l'hybridation dans l'enseignement supérieur doit miser sur la conception de dispositifs pédagogiques hybrides tout en prouvant leur efficacité et adéquation dans des situations d'apprentissage hybrides.

### **2. Définition la pensée critique**

Tout le monde a une idée sur ce que désigne « la pensée critique » alors que sa définition est toujours en mouvance. D'ailleurs, Boisvert (2000) dans son livre « La formation de la pensée critique : théorie et pratique », l'a affirmé tout en fixant trois angles complémentaires qui servaient à l'appréhender :

Une stratégie de pensée faisant appel à plusieurs opérations coordonnées ;

Une investigation menant à une conclusion justifiée ;

Un processus orienté vers la résolution d'un problème.

### **3. Les apports de la carte mentale comme outil d'évaluation dans cette experimentation**

Partons de la spécificité première de la carte mentale qui pousse l'apprenant à apprendre de manière autonome car elle favorise la pédagogie d'«apprendre à apprendre».

La carte mentale est considérée comme : outil mental holistique visuel et graphique qui peut s'appliquer à toutes les fonctions cognitives en particulier la mémoire, la créativité, l'apprentissage et toutes les formes de pensée, c'est en quelque sorte le couteau suisse du cerveau.(Tony et Barry Buzan, 2012)

Buzan (2012) la définit aussi comme : représentation de la pensée rayonnante ou le processus par lequel le cerveau humain génère des idées. En capturant celle-ci sur le papier, le mind mapping crée un reflet externe de ce qui se passe à l'intérieur du cerveau. Ce qui signifie que la carte mentale étant un produit personnel, nul ne peut forcer l'apprenant à imiter celle de son camarade ou encore d'imposer un modèle carte mentale à tous les apprenants. Ce qui la rend un moyen personnel d'apprendre.

La carte mentale demeure le meilleur moyen qui **rend l'apprenant conscient de sa manière d'apprentissage**, elle lui permet de mener une réflexion sur l'ensemble des connaissances utiles à apprendre tout en les classant.

Elle permet **aussi la mémorisation efficace** tout en créant et cela par cette liberté autorisée à l'apprenant. Puisque ce dernier devient créatif une fois on l'autorise à s'exprimer librement.

La carte mentale serait le meilleur moyen de voir la métacognition qui se définit comme:

La capacité de connaître comment on connaît, la capacité de se regarder en train de penser et, conséquemment, de gérer de plus en plus efficacement son propre processus d'apprentissage. {...]  
La métacognition est partie intégrante de l'autoévaluation, du fait qu'elle amène l'élève à prendre conscience de sa démarche

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d'apprentissage; ce qui fait de cette évaluation un élément essentiel de toute stratégie pédagogique. (Aylwin, 2000, p165)

### **3. L'expérimentation**

Notre objectif opérationnel est d'élucider la question de l'efficacité de cette scénarisation hybride dans l'éveil et la formation de la pensée critique, autrement c'est mesurer l'écart entre un cours ordinaire et celui conçu avec l'intégration de nouveaux dispositifs et pédagogie.

#### **3.1 L'échantillonnage**

Des étudiants de première année Master (groupe expérimental 30 étudiants) + (groupe témoin 30 étudiants).

#### **3.2 Choix du module**

Nous avons choisi le module « Ouvertures sur la littérature » pour les raisons suivantes :

C'est une matière de l'unité fondamentale du tronc commun du master<sup>1</sup>. Le contenu du module est très riche et varié il représente une vision panoramique sur l'histoire de la littérature, sa relation avec l'homme et son processus productif et transdisciplinaire. Et vu le nombre considérable des compétences visées et les informations /compétences que les étudiants doivent retenir/acquérir, les enseignants comme les étudiants rencontrent des difficultés pour gérer le temps comme l'assimilation du contenu du module. Nous avons assuré le module en ligne lors du confinement puis en mode hybride en post-confinement.

**3.4 Le processus de recherche (l'opérationnalisation des concepts clés)** Nos choix de scénarisation des activités de l'enseignement hybride étaient les suivants :

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**Tableau 1 : L'opérationnalisation des concepts clés de la recherche**

<b>Première étape</b> Faire découvrir le thème et installer le doute productif	<b>Deuxième étape</b> Booster les étudiants à trouver des idées inimaginables sur la cause de l'écart idéal	<b>Troisième étape</b> Faire des synthèses textuelles .Concevoir des cartes mentales	<b>Quatrième étape</b> Mesurer l'impact de l'enseignement hybride sur l'éveil et la formation de la Pensée Critique
<b>Classe inversée via Classroom</b>	<b>Brainstorming via Meet</b>	<b>Prise de notes</b>	<b>Présentation des résultats</b>
Phase de la mise en ligne des supports vidéos sur le cours	Nous comptons nous appuyer sur la capacité créative du groupe expérimental à trouver des idées nouvelles en dehors de toute influence de normes ou d'idées préconçues, sur la cause de l'écart idéal existant entre les deux vidéos. La carte mentale a été choisie pour pouvoir recenser l'ensemble des idées émises qui viennent à l'esprit sans les organiser ou les classer	La phase de vérification des acquis et de l'élaboration de la synthèse  La carte mentale organise et classe les idées issues du brainstorming	Le contenu idéal et informationnel de la carte mentale serait l'indicateur pour vérifier notre hypothèse de départ qui cherche à voir l'impact d'une scénarisation hybride sur l'éveil et la formation de l'esprit critique chez les étudiants.

### 3.5 Activité pour les deux groupes (groupes : témoin & expérimental)

#### 3.5.1 Activité réalisée à travers la perspective de la classe inversée

Nous avons demandé aux étudiants de visionner (via Classroom) deux vidéos qui traitent: l'Epopée de GILGAMESH et L'Illiade d'Homère avec la consigne suivante : « Est-ce qu'on peut dire que ces deux textes peuvent être à l'origine de la littérature ? ». Ce choix de supports est fondé sur l'écart idéal existant dans les vidéos, puisque la première intitulée « Homère : ce que l'on sait de lui (ou d'elle)»(2019) donne à réfléchir sur la crédibilité du contenu de la deuxième « L'Épopée de Gilgamesh : Le plus vieux récit du monde» (2014).

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Puis, nous avons demandé aux étudiants de visionner (via Classroom) deux romans francophones (« 1Q84 » de Haruki Murakami et « 1984 » de George Orwell). Ce choix de supports est fondé sur l'écart idéal existant dans le contenu des titres et des couvertures des romans, donne à réfléchir sur la symbolique de ces derniers.

Notre objectif était d'instaurer une situation de doute pour booster la curiosité des étudiants. Nous avons demandé, ensuite, au groupe témoin de prendre notes et de les poster sur la plateforme (via fonctionnalité « Travaux et devoirs » de Classroom, utilisée de façon individuelle). Il est question donc d'une activité asynchrone individuelle.

### **3.5.2. Activité d'apprentissage 2 (groupes : témoin & expérimental)**

Nous avons expliqué le cours « Ouvertures sur la littérature » en mode synchrone (via Google Meet). Nous avons donné aussi les résumés des deux romans en mode synchrone.

### **3.5.3. Activité pour le groupe témoin**

Nous avons demandé aux étudiants du groupe témoin (30 étudiants) (en présentiel) à mettre leurs notes en commun pour produire le plan d'une synthèse qu'ils considèrent complète, puis chacun des étudiants va produire sa propre synthèse et va la poster sur Classroom. Il s'agit ici d'une activité synchrone.

### **3.5.4. Activités destinées aux étudiants du groupe expérimental**

Une première séance (en ligne synchrone via Google Meet), nous avons donné un feedback aux étudiants pour les remettre dans le contexte du cours précédent, puis nous avons posé quelques questions pour le brainstorming. Nous avons demandé aux étudiants de trouver des réponses à propos de l'écart idéal existant entre le contenu des deux vidéos. Notre objectif était d'amener les étudiants à trouver des idées nouvelles en dehors de toute influence d'idées préconçues, pour trouver des explications logiques à cet écart. Les étudiants ont donné différentes réponses concernant Homère et Gilgamesh, leurs vies, les périodes dans lesquelles ils ont vécu et l'absence de la littérature à leurs époques.

-Ils ont donné différentes réponses concernant les romans, leurs titres, la différence entre les couvertures et même les critiques. Ce qui a montré comment ces deux vidéos dialectiques comme les deux couvertures des

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romans ont boosté les étudiants à chercher d'autres supports sur net pour vérifier les possibilités et les causes de similitudes entre les contenus proposés.

### 3.5.5 Activité destinée aux étudiants du groupe expérimental

La dernière étape de cet enseignement hybride était la conception de la carte mentale comme synthèse heuristique du cours et qui doit répondre à la question suivante : En quelle période la littérature est née ? et quel sont les éléments communs entre tous les supports présentés ?

## 4. Présentation et interprétation des données recueillies

### 4.1 Groupe témoin : (30 étudiants)

La consigne d'évaluation était la suivante : « Après avoir regardé les vidéos écrivez un texte pour répondre à la question suivante: « quel était le premier texte littéraire dans toute l'humanité ? »

La deuxième consigne : quels sont les similitudes et les divergences entre les deux romans « 1Q84 » de Haruki Murakami et « 1984 » de George Orwell ?

L'objectif de cette activité est de voir l'impact de l'application de la classe inversée sur le respect du contenu informationnel. Ainsi que l'exécution des tâches de: conceptualiser, synthétiser.

**Tableau 2.** Résultats de la première consigne (groupes témoin & expérimental)

	Dépasser le contenu informationnel proposé dans le cours et les vidéos		Respecter le contenu informationnel du plan de la synthèse
	Nombre de travaux qui contiennent de nouveaux détails	Nombre de travaux qui contiennent un ajout d'idées	Il n'y a pas d'ajout
<b>Les étudiants</b>	10	10	40
<b>Total</b>	20		40
<b>%</b>	33%		67%

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**Tableau 3. Résultats de la deuxième consigne (groupes témoin & expérimental)**

	Dépasser le contenu informationnel proposé par le cours et les vidéos		Respecter le contenu informationnel du plan de la synthèse
	Nombre de travaux qui contiennent de nouveaux détails	Nombre de travaux qui contiennent un ajout d'idées	Il n'y a pas d'ajout
Les étudiants	40	14	6
Total	54		
%	90%		10%

**Tableau 4. Les réponses trouvées par la majorité des étudiants**

Titre du 1 <sup>er</sup> Roman	Titre du 2 <sup>ème</sup> Roman	Similitudes
<b>1984</b> George Orwell (1903-1950) est un écrivain, essayiste et journaliste britannique.	<b>1Q84</b> Haruki Murakami (1949) est un écrivain japonais contemporain.	<b>Q et 9 se prononcent de la même façon</b>
		La première couverture Les deux récits se rejoignent à travers la secte ésotérique des Précurseurs, qui s'inspire à l'évidence de la secte Aum, créée en 1984. Aomame et Tengo finissent tous deux par l'affronter chacun à sa manière.
<b>Le gouvernement pour Orwell</b>	<b>Le Petit Peuple pour Murakami</b>	<b>Forces abstraites</b>
		La deuxième couverture Comme le laisse deviner le titre, 1Q84 fait référence à 1984 de George Orwell. Le premier s'en différencie dans la mesure où il tente d'appréhender l'existence d'un mal invisible, qui aborde les gens sous un jour séduisant et raffiné, et qui contrôle et déforme leur pensée et leur conscience à leur insu.

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**Tableau 5.** Brainstorming + Motivation & participation (groupe expérimental)

	Nouvelles d'idées			Motivation & participation	
	Sur les vidéos	Sur Homère et Gilgamesh	Nouvelles données (romans)	Etudiants qui ont participé activement	Etudiants qui n'ont pas participé
<b>Les étudiants</b>	20	5	5	30	00
<b>Nombre d'idées</b>	66,66%	16,66%	16,66%		
<b>Total</b>				100%	
<b>Les étudiants qui ont apporté des idées nouvelles</b>	100%			100%	

Lors du Brainstorming tous les étudiants ont répondu aux questions, ils ont tous participé puisqu'ils avaient des idées sur Homère et Gilgamesh et leurs histoires, et cela à partir des vidéos qu'ils ont visionnées et du cours. Comme les deux vidéos ne renvoient pas aux même type d'informations : les étudiants ont recouru à d'autres types de ressources pour vérifier la crédibilité des ressources, ce qui leur avait permis d'apprendre plus d'informations sur le sujet.

La comparaison des deux couvertures des romans leur avait permis de construire une idée sur l'aspect intertextuel de la littérature ainsi que sur la possibilité de la réécriture de l'Iliade d'Homère à partir de l'épopée de Gilgamesh.

**Tableau 6.** Contenu des cartes mentales (groupe expérimental)

	Présence d'idées principales du cours	Intégration d'idées évoquées lors du Brainstorming	Nouvelles informations reliant les idées principales
<b>Les cartes mentales</b>	24	3	3
<b>%</b>	80%	10%	10%



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Sur ce tableau nous observons que 80% des étudiants ont intégré dans leur carte mentale, les idées principales sans se référer aux nouvelles idées, ce qui reflète le taux élevé d'acquisition des informations. Cela confirme l'efficacité de la scénarisation hybride : classe inversée puis brainstorming.

20% ont respecté les idées principales tout en ajoutant les idées évoquées lors du Brainstorming et en reliant les aspects communs à chaque idée, ce qui renvoie à la perception critique de l'idée.

### **5. Résultats Et Discussions**

Pour pouvoir mesurer l'impact de nouveaux dispositifs et pédagogie sur la formation de l'esprit critique chez les étudiants nous avons modifié la manière de l'évaluation et la scénarisation entre les deux groupes (expérimental et témoin).

80% des étudiants du groupe expérimental ont intégré les idées principales dans leurs cartes mentales ce qui dépasse avec 13% le taux des synthèses écrites des étudiants du groupe témoin. Cet écart est l'indicateur de l'efficacité du Brainstorming lors de l'enseignement de la littérature.

20% des étudiants du groupe expérimental ont ajouté des idées nouvelles tout en les reliant au contexte d'acquisition et aux aspects communs, ce qui renvoie à la perception critique de l'idée. Par contre, 33% des étudiants du groupe témoin ont dépassé le contenu informationnel puisqu'ils ont rajouté des idées non pertinentes.

Ce qui nous permet de dire que cet enseignement hybride a permis aux étudiants de conceptualiser, analyser, synthétiser et/ou évaluer les données collectées ou engendrées par l'observation, l'expérience, la réflexion, le raisonnement, ou la communication, afin de se guider dans ses convictions et ses actions.

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### **6. Conclusion**

Les résultats recueillis, dans cette expérimentation, nous ont permis de mesurer l'impact de l'intégration de quelques pédagogies et dispositifs hybrides sur l'enseignement de la littérature, la motivation chez les étudiants et la formation de la pensée critique.

Nous nous sommes intéressés à l'enseignement hybride et nous l'avons expérimenté sur deux plans : d'abord en chevauchant les cours entre présentiel et à distance, synchrone et asynchrone puis nous avons scénarisé à partir d'une hybridation des pratiques enseignantes en combinant plusieurs pédagogies : la pédagogie de la classe inversée qui est considérée comme étant un vrai bouleversement des pratiques enseignantes et qui se pratique aisément avec la nouvelle technologie. Elle a donné plus de temps pour pouvoir faire le cours et elle a contribué à rendre les étudiants plus attentifs et les a mis dans un état d'éveil et de concentration, en stimulant leur curiosité et l'envie d'apprendre. D'autant plus; le contenu des vidéos était polémique, ce qui a installé le doute et avait boosté les étudiants à rechercher la vérité.

Le brainstorming, a rendu les étudiants plus créatifs à travers la recherche de nouvelles idées, surtout qu'ils ont été déjà boostés à travers les vidéos.

La carte mentale a aidé les étudiants à acquérir l'ensemble des informations et idées sur le cours « Ouvertures sur la littérature » tout en ajoutant, des données critiques et en construisant une représentation mentale cohérente et fidèle au cours.

La conception des cartes mentales après avoir eu un enseignement hybride n'a pas seulement favorisé la bonne assimilation qui se manifeste par le respect des consignes mais il a enrichi les productions de l'évaluation par des idées critiques non évoquées pendant l'enseignement.

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## Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects

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**L'enseignement hybride de la compréhension et l'expression écrites en contexte pandémique : Étude d'actions didactiques à caractère hybride proposées à des étudiants de première année licence**

**The hybrid teaching of *written comprehension and expression* in a pandemic context: Study of didactic actions of a hybrid nature offered to first-year undergraduate students**

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### Résumé

La situation pandémique que vit le monde en général et l'Algérie en particulier a bouleversé les pratiques enseignantes par la généralisation de l'enseignement hybride qui propose deux modes d'enseignement : en temps réel et à distance. La réduction des séances de travail en mode synchrone et l'intégration de l'enseignement à distance voire même la programmation d'examens à distance a mis les enseignants face au défi d'atteindre les objectifs visés en se basant sur de nouveaux outils d'apprentissage. La présente contribution propose d'analyser des activités de compréhension et d'expressions écrites proposées à des étudiants de première année licence en combinant des activités d'apprentissage offertes en présence, en temps réel et à distance, en mode synchrone ou asynchrone. Cet article s'intéresse donc à l'appropriation de ces nouvelles pratiques pour les étudiants en questionnant ce que cela puisse produire en termes d'apprentissage. Il s'agira aussi pour nous d'un moment d'interrogation ce qui peut se jouer lorsque des enseignants proposent un enseignement hybride.

**Mots clés :** compréhension de l'écrit- expression écrite- enseignement hybride- compétence- objectif d'apprentissage- Moodle

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**Abstract**

The pandemic situation experienced by the world in general and Algeria in particular has upset teaching practices by the generalization of hybrid education which offers two modes of education: face to face and online. The reduction of work sessions in synchronous mode and the integration of distance learning or even the programming of distance exams has challenged teachers to achieve the objectives based on new learning. This contribution proposes to analyze comprehension and written expression activities offered to first-year undergraduate students by combining learning activities offered in the presence, in real time and online, in synchronous or asynchronous mode. This article therefore focuses on the appropriation of these new practices for students by questioning what this can produce in terms of learning. It will also be for us a moment of questioning what can be at stake when teachers offer blended teaching.

**Keywords:** reading comprehension- written expression- hybrid teaching- competence- learning objective- Moodle.

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## **1. Introduction**

Depuis deux ans, L'Algérie, à l'instar du monde entier, subit sans cesse des retentissements de grande ampleur dans tous les domaines y compris le secteur de l'enseignement supérieur qui retient notre attention, dans ce présent article. Un ensemble de mesures sanitaires restrictives a été pris avec l'obligation du travail d'abord en mode distantiel puis hybride afin d'atteindre les objectifs d'enseignement-apprentissage en situation pandémique. Face à cette conjoncture inédite, des solutions d'apprentissage en ligne ont été proposées telle que la plateforme Moodle qui permet de créer des communautés pour des finalités pédagogiques.

Les mesures restrictives avaient des retombées sur le volume horaire attribué à chaque matière d'enseignement. Les matières les plus affectées par ces décisions sont celles qui bénéficiaient, avant la pandémie, d'un volume horaire important et dont l'objectif est de renforcer les compétences principales de la formation offerte telle que la matière de « compréhension et expression écrites ». Effectivement, dans ce contexte particulier, il fallait prendre des décisions rapides notamment par rapport aux activités à proposer en modes synchrone et asynchrone.

Le présent article décrit les résultats de l'analyse de pratiques de classe dans la matière de « compréhension et expression écrites » proposées à des étudiants de première année licence en situation pandémique. Un tel choix a été motivé par l'ambition de décrire à la fois les effets de la pandémie sur les pratiques enseignantes et sur les étudiants afin d'offrir une photographie de la réalité vécue en situation de crise. Basé sur une approche empirique, ce travail est celui d'un enseignant ayant proposé un matériel didactique pour compenser la réduction du volume horaire d'une matière de l'unité fondamentale de licence de français. Son objectif est de tenter d'identifier l'influence de l'intégration d'un enseignement asynchrone en décrivant notamment les limites d'une telle décision dans nos pratiques quotidiennes et de rapporter la réaction des étudiants au sujet de ces décisions.

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Quelles sont les actions didactiques qui caractérisent un enseignement hybride (synchrone et asynchrone) de la compréhension et de l'expression écrite à l'université ? Quels sont les avantages et les limites d'un tel enseignement ? Constituent les questions qui orientent notre réflexion dans ce présent article.

## **2. Contexte de l'expérience**

L'expérience a été réalisée à l'université de M'sila au cours du premier semestre (du mois d'octobre jusqu'au mois de décembre) de l'année universitaire 2021/2022. Face à l'absentéisme des étudiants causé par la situation sanitaire et aux difficultés d'apprentissage dues principalement aux différents changements ressentis lors du passage du secondaire à l'université, la tâche de l'enseignant s'avère difficile. En effet, le taux d'échec en première année licence est alarmant dans tous les départements de l'université. C'est dans ce contexte que nous avons voulu proposer une alternative pédagogique en exploitant la plateforme Moodle proposée par l'université de M'sila afin d'aider les étudiants à rester en contact permanent avec le cours de l'écrit.

Les étudiants ayant participé à l'expérience n'ont pas été choisis selon des critères spécifiques, mais nous avons travaillé avec les étudiants des groupes que l'administration nous a attribués au début de l'année. L'évaluation diagnostique révèle des niveaux de compétences qui se rapprochent. Il s'agit d'étudiants qui ont des performances faibles en expression écrite et moyennes en compréhension de l'écrit alors qu'une seule étudiante manifeste des compétences du niveau B2 en compréhension et expression écrites.

L'expérience consistait à proposer des activités de compréhension et expression écrites à des étudiants de première année en deux modes : synchrone et asynchrone. L'enjeu est de pouvoir accompagner les étudiants dans cette nouvelle situation d'enseignement-apprentissage et d'atteindre les objectifs fixés au début de l'année. Dans cette intention, nous avons préparé les premières activités à proposer aux étudiants pour observer leurs réactions à un enseignement hybride.

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L'objectif étant d'observer les gestes didactiques en classe face à un tel enseignement les documents ont été complétés de manière à répondre aux besoins des étudiants.

Depuis ses prémices jusqu'à la fin du semestre, le projet a progressivement évolué en fonction des besoins des étudiants et du temps de la réalisation des activités proposées en synchrone. Par conséquent, plusieurs séances envisagées au départ sous forme de cours en présentiel ont été reprogrammées pour être assurées en distanciel en raison de plusieurs facteurs : prérequis et compétences des étudiants, nombre de séances programmées pour l'enseignement en mode synchrone, le nombre d'étudiants ...

Tous les étudiants de première année licence ne sont pas initiés à l'enseignement asynchrone puisque, pour la majorité, la seule mesure prise par le ministère de l'éducation au cours de leurs deux années d'apprentissage au secondaire était d'imposer la distanciation physique par la réorganisation des classes en respectant la norme « cadre » 25 élèves par salle. La première séance a été consacrée à la présentation des deux modalités de travail au cours du semestre, et l'inscription à la plateforme Moodle s'est faite progressivement. Les inscriptions tardives peuvent être expliquées par plusieurs raisons :

- Le fait que l'inscription à Moodle n'a pas été proposée par tous les enseignants de la matière a donné un caractère facultatif à ma proposition. Certains enseignants proposent de la documentation en version papier, d'autres publient les cours sur la page Facebook du département ou de la faculté, d'autres encore préfèrent créer des groupes Facebook privés pour les étudiants. Il a fallu donc que nous insistions sur les inscriptions des étudiants.
- Les inscriptions tardives des étudiants à l'université et les changements de groupe étaient à l'origine de la lenteur de l'accès à la plateforme.
- D'autres étudiants ne sont pas encore familiarisés à l'usage d'Internet et ignoraient encore comment surfer dans le site de l'université pour accéder à E-Learning.

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- Les différentes pannes de la plateforme à cause des différentes attaques de Hacker, souvent signalées par les responsables de la numérisation au niveau de l'université, et les problèmes dus à la maintenance de la plateforme constituent un autre problème à signaler.
- Enfin, l'accès à Internet est très difficile dans la région de M'sila notamment dans certains quartiers de la ville ainsi que le coût qui dépasse les capacités économiques de certaines familles.

Malgré toutes ces raisons, les étudiants se sont pliés à notre demande et se sont familiarisés progressivement à ce nouvel outil d'apprentissage dans ce contexte imposé par des facteurs externes. Nous les avons aussi rassurés en acceptant la remise des travaux sous différents formats (image, Word, Pdf)

Il est important, enfin, de souligner que les étudiants ont démontré une excellente adhésion au processus de travail adopté même s'ils expriment parfois la nécessité de créer un groupe Facebook en raison de l'accès facile à ce réseau social et les notifications qu'il offre pour les nouvelles publications.

### **3. La grille d'observation**

Pour analyser les pratiques, nous avons adopté une grille d'observation qui nous semble cohérente et complète dans l'observation de tous les actants de la situation d'enseignement-apprentissage : la grille Miroir des gestes professionnels proposée par Bocquillon & al (2018). Dans les situations d'enseignement-apprentissage traditionnelles où l'enseignant est face à l'apprenant dans une classe, les gestes professionnels se résument dans des « actions » menées par l'enseignant au cours de sa séance de formation, qui peuvent prendre la forme d'actes de langage (expressions, phrases ou mots), d'actions gestuelles (par exemple, déplacement de son corps dans l'espace, mouvement du doigt, du bras ou encore de la tête) ou encore d'expressions du visage (par exemple, de surprise, de non compréhension ) » (Brudermann & Pélissier, 2008, p. 22).

Dans le modèle de la pratique enseignement-apprentissage hybride (en synchrone et en asynchrone), la grille d'observation des pratiques de classe doit permettre de visualiser d'autres types d'actions qui se

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matérialisent également dans les échanges via l'outil de médiation. C'est pour cette raison, que nous adoptons la grille « Miroir des gestes professionnels » dont les axes d'observation assurent une visibilité des actions et les caractéristiques des deux actants du processus d'enseignement-apprentissage tout en donnant à l'enseignant la possibilité d'observer le contexte de l'échange.

Cette grille se polarise, sans négliger le rôle de l'apprenant, sur l'observation des actions des enseignants en raison, selon la littérature existante, de leur impact sur les apprentissages et la réussite des élèves. En effet, plusieurs recherches confirment le rôle positif des actions des enseignants dans l'amélioration des résultats des élèves, mais l'enjeu actuel est de se questionner sur les actions les plus efficaces des enseignants sur les apprentissages des apprenants. Pourtant, depuis de nombreuses années, on a tendance à insister sur le rôle de l'apprenant dans les apprentissages en marginalisant l'apport de l'enseignant. La grille propose donc un ensemble de critères qui peuvent être vérifiés par des phénomènes observables en classe réelle.

#### **4. Analyse**

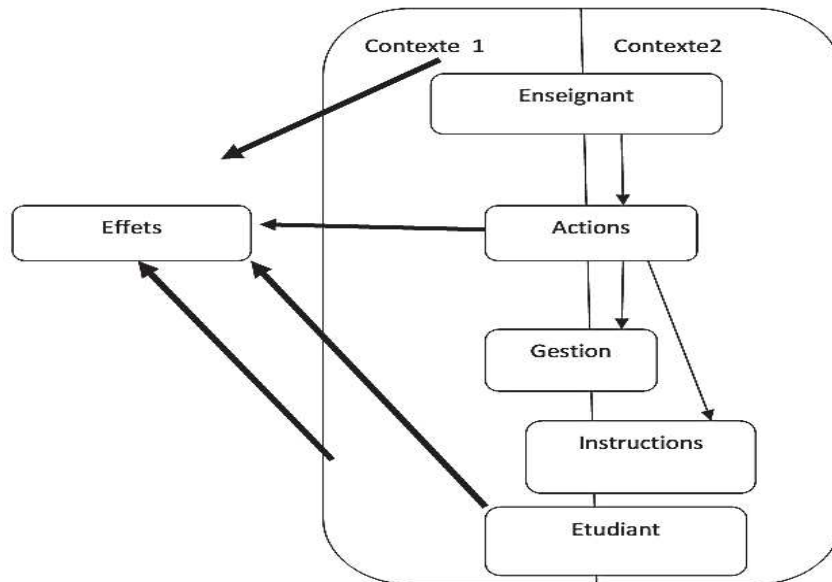
Comme nous l'avons précédemment mentionné, nous analyserons les résultats d'une expérience que nous avons menée auprès de nos étudiants en période de pandémie. Notre analyse sera donc plutôt qualitative afin de montrer les points forts et défaillances de l'introduction d'une nouvelle forme d'apprentissage dans un contexte particulier.

##### **4.1 Emergence de nouvelles formes d'actions enseignantes et étudiantes**

Il est tout d'abord indéniable que la pandémie a introduit des changements profonds dans les pratiques enseignantes à l'université. Ces mutations se font progressivement à l'université et évoluent avec la généralisation de ces pratiques. Le modèle de la pratique d'enseignement-apprentissage est modifié par l'introduction du contexte numérique qui complète le contexte traditionnel de la classe et les actions de l'enseignant ont été enrichies par d'autres spécifiques à la plateforme adoptée par l'université.

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**Fig.1.** Modèle de la pratique d’enseignement-apprentissage hybride

L’introduction du nouveau contexte numérique renforce et complexifie le rôle attribué à l’enseignant dans un contexte théorique où « la relation élève-savoir est valorisée par rapport à celles entre enseignant et élève ou enseignant et savoir » ( Houssaye, 1992). Dans cette logique, Rolland pointe du doigt la subtilité de la situation vécue par l’enseignant à proposer des instructions et exercer des actions qui orientent l’apprenant de manière à développer efficacement des compétences langagières et communicationnelles:

« Nous sommes en fait dans un processus d’apprentissage avec l’élève au centre et non dans le schéma d’enseignement unilatéral nombriliste du professeur qui en oublie que l’élève existe. C’est sans doute là que réside toute la difficulté de l’enseignant-metteur en scène-acteur qui doit mettre en place des outils indispensables aux élèves, puis identifier des besoins, définir des objectifs, analyser des contenus, élaborer une méthodologie, choisir des matériaux, déterminer des activités, évaluer avec une bonne empathie, pour pouvoir faire vivre le scénario avec un comportement oscillant entre le modèle rigoureux et le conseil chaleureux. Ceci implique évidemment la dimension affective si difficile à mesurer. » (Rolland, 2005, p15)

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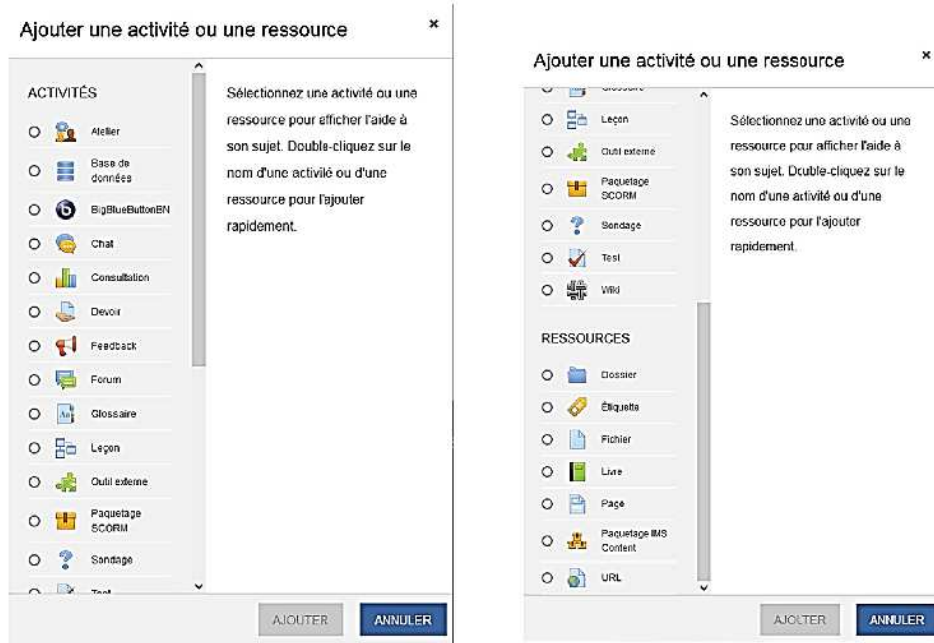
## **4.2 Fonctions des interventions verbales de l'enseignant**

Il s'agira ici de décrire tous les gestes et activités proposées par l'enseignant et qui renvoient généralement à « l'ensemble des activités déployées par les maitres, directement ou indirectement, afin qu'au travers de situations formelles (dédiées à l'apprentissage, mises en place explicitement à cette fin), des élèves effectuent des tâches qui leur permettent de s'emparer de contenus spécifiques » (Crahay & Dutrevis, 2010, p. 110).

L'enseignant intervient par la voix de sa parole en synchrone et en asynchrone. Dans la classe traditionnelle programmée en présentiel, les interventions verbales visent à gérer l'espace physique, le temps des séances et la gestion de la participation. En distantiel, l'enseignant peut aussi s'adresser verbalement aux étudiants par voie de l'enregistrement audio ou vidéo assuré par la plateforme Moodle.

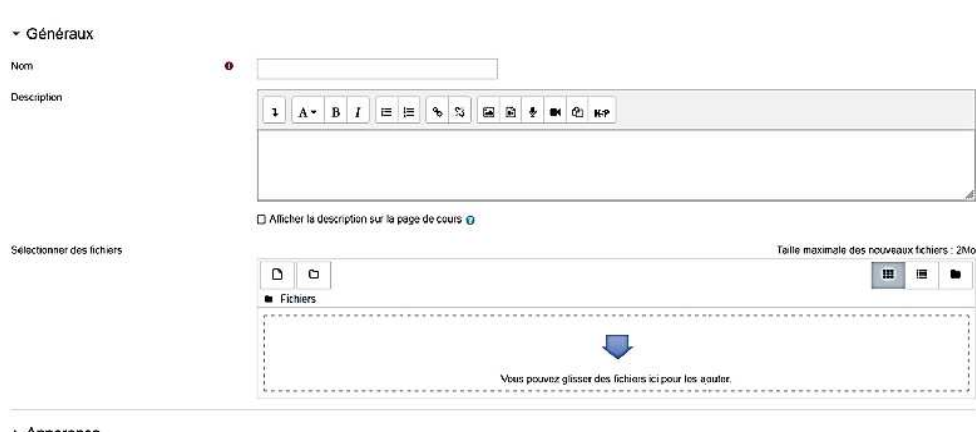
En effet, cette plateforme permet d'ajouter plusieurs activités ou de ressources qui assurent une versification des actions de l'enseignant dans le contexte numérique (voir fig.2.)

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**Fig.2.** types d'activités et ressources sur Moodle

L'ajout de chaque activité ou ressource peut être complété par des instructions complémentaires dans la présentation de l'activité comme le montre la figure 3 ci-dessous.



**Fig.3.** Les généraux de l'ajout d'une activité ou ressource



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Les instructions prennent donc la forme exclusivement écrite sauf si l'enseignant décide d'ajouter un enregistrement vidéo ou audio des instructions à donner. La codification « Objectifs/plan/activité », qui consiste à présenter d'abord les objectifs et les contenus des cours ainsi que les activités connexes et, par la suite, montrer le lien entre les objectifs et les différents contenus proposés, se déroulent en présentiel selon un schème dont la trajectoire pivote autour des objectifs d'enseignement. Ainsi, le cours commence par une présentation des objectifs auxquels nous pouvons revenir à tout moment du cours pour assurer une meilleure transition entre les éléments du cours. En distanciel, le trajet de la progression de la codification se fait souvent par l'écrit dans l'espace réservé à la description de l'activité ou dans le fichier Pdf décrivant l'activité proposée. Les instructions sont des consignes qui explicitent des informations sur les contenus ou les tâches suggérées ou des instructions générales qui donnent une idée d'ensemble sur le contenu et les objectifs des activités proposées.

L'objectivation revoie à tous les moyens explicites qui permettent de construire l'objet d'apprentissage (compréhension ou dans notre cas aussi l'expression écrite) en interrogeant ses connaissances et ses processus métacognitifs. En présentiel, les cinq types d'objectivations formulés par Bocquillon & *all* (2018) sont présents alors qu'on observe l'absence des objectivations stéréotypées et de la métacognition. L'absence d'échanges directs entre l'enseignant et l'étudiant a fait que les discussions sur le fonctionnement métacognitif, les limites et les impasses cognitives sont exclus des instructions de l'enseignant.

Le feedback sur Moodle est assuré par les fonctionnalités *feedback*, *chat* et *forum* qui ne sont pas exploitées en raison du problème de connexion Internet que rencontrent les étudiants. Il est souvent compliqué de pouvoir réunir l'ensemble des étudiants. Le feedback sollicitant une correction/ une amélioration / un développement de la réponse et le feedback spécifique sont souvent les modalités les plus utilisées en distanciel. Malgré ce nombre réduit des types de feedback, il nous semble que les interventions spécifiques permettent de contourner les limites de l'échange sur Moodle.

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L'anglet « Note » Permet à l'enseignant de s'adresser directement à l'étudiant, le fournir de toutes les remarques nécessaires sur sa performance dans l'activité proposée et de lui permettre par conséquent de lier entre la performance, l'effort et les stratégies d'apprentissages mises en œuvre.

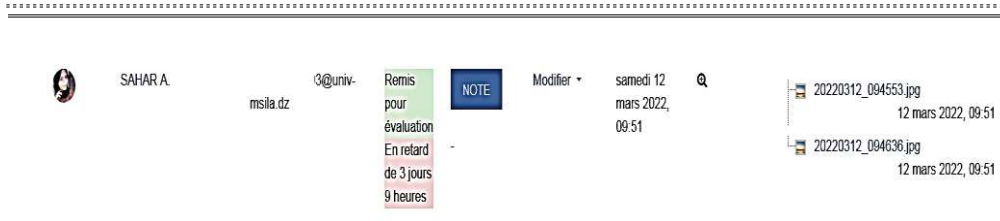
Au cours de son apprentissage, l'apprenant a besoin, au moins au début de chaque étape d'apprentissage, d'un « étayage » ou de l'aide pour qu'il puisse réaliser la tâche exigée. En présentiel, la matière servant d'étayage doit être préparée et envisagée avant même le début du cours pour la remettre à l'étudiant en classe alors que l'enseignement médié par Moodle offre l'opportunité à l'enseignant de proposer du matériel auxiliaire en fonction des problèmes réellement rencontrés par l'étudiant. En revanche, l'étudiant doit faire un travail de correction pour améliorer son travail de départ.

### **4.3 Les interventions de l'étudiant**

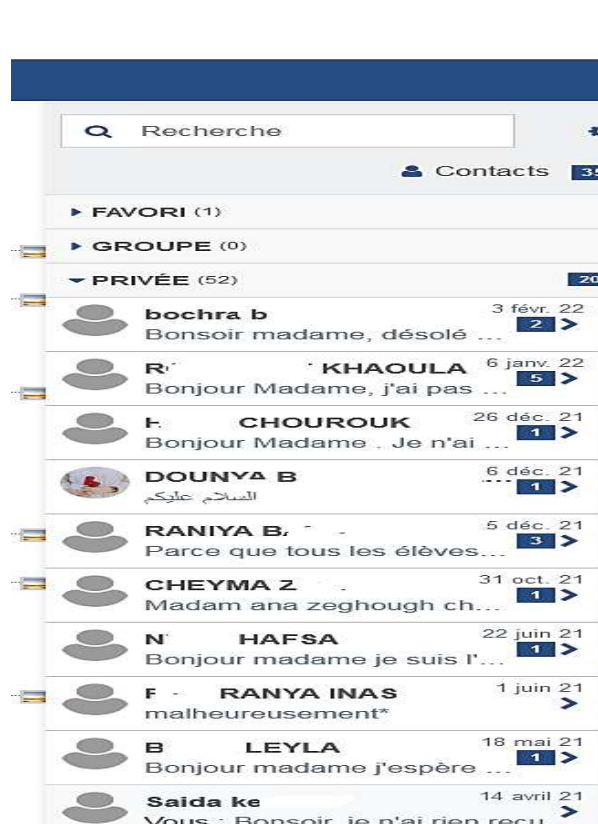
Eu égard à la réduction des séances de travail en présentiel, plusieurs activités ont été réduites notamment celles qui exigent un travail collectif ou de groupe. Effectivement, il était important pour nous de vérifier les compétences scripturales des étudiants en mode individuel. Les interventions des étudiants se limitent donc aux réponses individuelles ou aux questions des étudiants concernant le contenu du cours ou sur les activités proposées ou encore sur les problèmes rencontrés lors de la réalisation des activités.

L'enseignement à distance permet d'introduire de nouvelles formes d'actions qui accordent de nouvelles opportunités aux étudiants pour exprimer leurs avis ou poser des questions soit en ajoutant leurs commentaires lors de l'envoi des travaux ou en envoyant un message à l'enseignant.

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**Fig.4.** Les informations sur le travail remis



**Fig.5.** L'espace de la messagerie dans la plateforme

Les modalités secondaires de l'intervention des étudiants qui assurent un contact avec les pairs sont réduites même en distanciel. Pourtant, les recherches en didactique ont montré que le sens peut être construit par les apprenants « non seulement à partir de ce qui est donné à apprendre (le contenu d'apprentissage), mais également à partir des idées de leurs partenaires » (Molinari *et al.*, 2016 : 44)

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Le temps de la réalisation des activités se trouve moins contrôlé par l'enseignant. En effet, le temps consacré à une activité en mode présentiel se trouve prolongé à au moins une journée pour que les étudiants puissent envoyer leurs travaux. L'enseignement hybride permet donc de maximiser le temps des apprentissages par le maintien du contact entre apprenant et enseignant, mais il est difficile de mesurer le temps engagé par les étudiants dans leurs apprentissages. Bien qu'il soit facile de vérifier le dernier axé de l'étudiant au cours (figure 6), il est difficile de connaître le temps d'engagement réel ou la durée du temps consacrée à la réalisation de la tâche par l'étudiant.

Dans ces conditions, les activités cognitives peuvent être vérifiées par l'évaluation des travaux remis par les étudiants alors que les activités observables risquent de poser des difficultés quant à leur évaluation. De ce fait, la haute fréquence de connexion de l'étudiant à la plateforme ne peut être un indice de son activité cognitive. Un étudiant qui prend moins souvent la parole en classe ne peut être jugé comme non actif sur le plan cognitif.

Prénom / Nom	Adresse de courriel	Rôles	Groupes	Dernier accès au cours	Statut
AMANI SABRINA A	2@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	27 jours 19 heures	Active
YASSAMINA A	3@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	26 jours 22 heures	Active
DOUAA A	3@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	15 jours 16 heures	Active
IKRAM A	2@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	104 jours 20 heures	Active
NOR EL HOUDA A	6@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	81 jours 21 heures	Active
SALIM A	2@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	12 jours	Active
HALA B	5@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	7 jours 16 heures	Active
DOUAA MERIEM B	3@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	2 jours 2 heures	Active
RANIYA B	3@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	15 jours 14 heures	Active
NOR EL HOUDA B	2@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	123 jours 3 heures	Active
DALAL B	5@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	101 jours 2 heures	Active
YAAQOUB B	2@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	29 jours 18 heures	Active
MERIEB B	3@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	126 jours 22 heures	Active
FATIMA B	3@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	12 jours 20 heures	Active
DOUNYA B	8@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	6 jours 23 heures	Active
NOUHA B	6@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	139 jours 4 heures	Active
FATIMA B	2@univ-msila.dz	Étudiant	Aucun groupe	3 jours 18 heures	Active

**Fig.6.** Dernière connexion des participants

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Il est à noter que les réactions des étudiants face aux instructions écrites ne sont pas rapides et le recours à l'enregistrement vidéo ou audio facilite la compréhension des étudiants et permet la réalisation des activités proposées. Les délais sont respectés si l'activité proposée est suivie ou accompagnée d'un enregistrement vidéo, ce qui confirme que les étudiants n'étant pas encore préparés à l'enseignement à distance soutenu par des documents exclusivement écrits.

Une amélioration des productions écrites par un enrichissement apparent à travers l'usage d'images soient intégrées dans le fichier Word, soit en accompagnant l'image du texte écrit à la main. Les étudiants sont conscients de la nécessité d'ajouter d'autres substances pour compléter leurs textes. Par ailleurs, il faut reconnaître des difficultés à suivre un enseignement-apprentissage en expression écrite asynchrone en raison des difficultés à s'exprimer à l'écrit que manifestent notre population expérimentale. Par conséquent, les séances programmées en synchrone, et grâce aux supports proposés pour la compréhension de l'écrit en distanciel, ont été consacrées à l'activité de l'expression écrite. Ceci étant, par le suivi des activités en mode synchrone, nous avons pu déceler et comprendre les difficultés rencontrées au niveau de l'expression écrite.

Du moment que le contact avec l'enseignant est généralement par écrit via les moyens de communication informatiques, les étudiants, suite aux différentes remarques de l'enseignant, s'initient à la rédaction des e-mails électroniques.

Les gestes non verbaux de l'enseignant en distanciel n'assurent pas un contrôle efficace des gestes de l'étudiant car, à cause des difficultés exprimées par les étudiants à se connecter à la plateforme, l'enseignant ne dispose pas d'autres moyens de contrôle que le choix de la durée accordée à l'activité ou pour la remise des travaux.

La catégorie qui a pu bénéficier de l'enseignement hybride est celle des supports qui renvoient aux « ressources pour la fabrique de l'action enseignante, nous renvoyons à des artefacts qui par l'utilisation qui en est faite en classe sont actualisés par l'enseignant et/ou les élèves en outil

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servant le processus d'enseignement/apprentissage. Face à la très grande hétérogénéité des supports utilisables en classe » (Le Ferrec & Leclère-Messebel, 2015)

Ainsi, ces instruments se trouvent accrus du fait que plusieurs fichiers et ressources peuvent être intégrés au cours qui devient par conséquent enrichi surtout par des documents multimédias. Ainsi, des images et des vidéos peuvent être intégrées pour aider l'étudiant à comprendre un texte. Des documents de tout ordre (tableaux, vidéos, audio, liens web..) peuvent fournir de l'aide à l'étudiant lors de la rédaction des textes.

Ces instruments peuvent être exploités ultérieurement au cours des chapitres et cours suivants et deviennent « instruments de connaissance » (Rabardel, 1995 : 73)

#### **4.4 Quelles limites à un enseignement hybride ?**

Les premiers obstacles soulevés sont d'abord d'ordre technique à commencer par celui de la connexion à la plateforme qui altère de façon apparente le processus d'enseignement-apprentissage. Certains étudiants résident dans des régions qui ne sont pas couvertes par des réseaux internet ou à faible connexion, d'autres n'ont pas un téléphone portable ou ordinateur pour se connecter à la plateforme. Des problèmes au niveau de la plateforme surviennent de temps à autre lors des mises à jour techniques ou à cause des attaques de Hacker.

Au début de l'année, plusieurs étudiants ont tenté de créer des comptes Moodle mais leurs tentatives ont échoué. Les étudiants n'étant pas familiarisés ni à l'enseignement hybride ni à l'usage de la plateforme Moodle se trouvaient face à ce nouvel outil de management éducatif sans qu'ils soient initiés à son usage et seuls à résoudre les difficultés rencontrés.

Tous ces problèmes ont fait que les ressources Feedback, forum et chat ne sont pas exploitées au cours de tout le semestre. L'échange en distanciel se limitait donc à l'échange écrit, via mail, avec les étudiants ou au travers de quelques vidéos partagées.

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Sur le plan pédagogique, le volume horaire limité en asynchrone a eu des retombées négatives sur la dynamique des actions à la fois des enseignants et des étudiants. L'étayage, élément indispensable du processus enseignement-apprentissage et intégré à notre grille d'analyse, se trouve ainsi très réduit voire absent en mode asynchrone et très limité en mode synchrone. Nous partageons à cet effet les propos de Bucheton (2006)

« Mais la préoccupation charnière indissociablement didactique et pédagogique qui réarticule toutes les autres est celle que nous avons appelée d'après Bruner (1983), la préoccupation d'**étayage**.

L'action centrale de l'enseignant dans la classe vise à aider les élèves à réaliser les tâches demandées, à apprendre, à comprendre, à se comporter en élève. Selon les situations, les matières enseignées, l'avancée de la leçon, les **imprévus** qui surgissent, ces gestes s'étagent sur divers registres d'étayage où se régule la part de l'aide du maître, la part de l'aide des pairs, la part de l'activité propre de l'élève ou du collectif.

L'enseignant peut ainsi être amené à enseigner, expliquer, ou simplement mettre sur la voie en localisant la difficulté, en « soufflant » le début de la réponse. Il peut reformuler pour faire écho à la pensée de l'élève, faire commenter ou reverbaler une réponse, montrer soi-même, être le gardien du cap de l'exploration, valider ou suspendre momentanément la validation, lâcher prise, déléguer à un tuteur, autoriser des controverses, etc. »

Il ajoute encore que : « Il arrive que cet étayage relève du **contre-étayage** : un geste d'impatience par lequel le maître, dans le souci de faire avancer l'élève ou le cours, donne la réponse sans laisser le temps à l'élève ou à la classe de penser. » (Bucheton, 2006 )

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## **5. Conclusion**

Rappelons que cet article n'avait d'autre ambition que de présenter les résultats d'une expérience menée auprès d'étudiants de première année licence au cours de la pandémie. Notre analyse s'est appuyée sur une grille utilisée pour l'analyse des actions didactiques en situation d'enseignement « classique » où les apprenants et l'enseignant sont présents dans une classe.

L'enseignement hybride, nouveau dans notre contexte algérien, reste difficile à appliquer dans des situations où l'Internet, les ordinateurs ou la formation à l'usage de l'outil informatique ne sont pas disponibles. Par ailleurs, nous avons ressenti un intérêt croissant de la part des étudiants pour ces nouvelles pratiques.

Dans cet article, nous avons relevé l'existence d'avantages et de limites à un tel dispositif à l'université puisqu'il ne s'inscrit pas dans un continuum avec l'enseignement au secondaire. En effet, cette forme hybride d'enseignement opère une rupture avec les formes antérieures d'enseignement auxquelles les étudiants avaient affaire. Il serait donc judicieux d'initier non seulement les enseignants à l'usage de ces plateformes numériques mais également les étudiants de première année licence. Les dimensions affectives et émotionnelles aussi ne sont pas prises en compte par un tel enseignement malgré l'insertion de publications incitant les étudiants à continuer à fournir des efforts.



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## **Blended Learning in Higher Education: Insights and prospects**

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**De l'enseignement en présentiel à la formation à distance : quel intérêt pour l'étudiant algérien ?**

**From face-to-face teaching to distance learning: what interest for the algerian student?**

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### **Abstract**

Given the many advantages of (TIC) for teaching practices, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has set up a digital device likely to develop and improve the quality of education at the Algerian university. Following the health situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, Algerian university teachers have turned to distance learning as a modality that replaces face-to-face teaching. This contribution aims to lift the veil on the practice of this mode of teaching by dealing with an experiment carried out in one of the Algerian universities. The results of the analysis show the limits and constraints of the implementation of such an approach, which is nevertheless considered as a means of opening up to the world. Face-to-face teaching therefore remains the most appropriate method for effective teaching. It represents an important advantage for the Algerian student, often held back by the obstacles of distance learning.

**Keywords:** Distance learning; face-to-face teaching; teacher; student.

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## From face-to-face teaching to distance learning: what interest for the algerian student?

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### 1. Introduction

Il est remarquable que depuis les deux dernières décennies, le monde entier a été bouleversé par la révolution technologique et numérique qui a complètement changé notre vie quotidienne. Vu les multiples et considérables ressources des (TIC), l'Algérie désire accroître cette évolution technologique et l'intégrer aux différents champs : social, professionnel, économique, etc.

En effet, les pratiques pédagogiques ont été également influencées par cette innovation. Aujourd'hui, les nouvelles méthodes d'enseignement favorisent l'intégration des (TIC) en classe afin de développer des compétences transversales chez les apprenants et les amener à construire une culture numérique profitable. Cette nouveauté caractérisant les méthodes d'enseignement est relativement liée au public visé. Les apprenants d'aujourd'hui sont des « *natifs du numérique* » ou « *Digital natives* », tels qu'ils sont décrits par Prensky qui affirme que : « *Nos apprenants ont radicalement changé. Les apprenants d'aujourd'hui ne sont plus les personnes pour lesquelles notre système d'éducation a été créé pour enseigner* » (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). C'est pourquoi, à l'heure actuelle, une adaptation des méthodes d'enseignement qui favorise l'intégration des (TIC) s'avère nécessaire.

Dans le contexte particulier de l'Université algérienne, le Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique a encouragé cette tendance en créant des dispositifs numériques au profit des enseignants et des étudiants universitaires afin de développer et d'améliorer la qualité de l'enseignement / apprentissage à distance. Parmi ces dispositifs numériques, nous citons par exemple le e-learning, la plateforme (Moodle), les cours en ligne ouverts et massifs (Mooc), etc. Un programme de formation au profit des enseignants universitaires a été également lancé par la tutelle afin de les initier à un usage efficace de ces dispositifs numériques. Toutefois, suite à la situation sanitaire causée par la pandémie Covid-19, la formation a été interrompue et les enseignants universitaires se sont engagés à exercer l'enseignement à distance malgré le manque d'un soutien technique.

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Or, le faible sentiment de compétence techno pédagogique et la motivation insuffisante n'ont pas empêché les enseignants à présenter leurs cours en ligne.

Notre problématique dans cette contribution tourne autour de cette situation spécifique caractérisée par un changement de pratique : du présentiel à la formation à distance, quelques questions majeures sont donc posées :

Comment se réalise la formation des étudiants depuis la propagation de la pandémie Covid-19 ? Quels sont les dispositifs mis en place par le (MESRS) ? Quelles sont les contraintes rencontrées dans l'enseignement à distance ? Quel est le mode d'enseignement le plus adopté et le plus efficace pour l'étudiant algérien ?

Nous tentons d'apporter quelques éléments de réponse à ces questions en se référant à une expérience exercée dans l'une des universités algériennes qui met en œuvre différents modes d'enseignement. L'objectif est d'évaluer et comparer entre les pratiques d'enseignements proposés afin de repérer le mode le plus utile pour un apprentissage efficace.

Pour ce faire, nous aborderons d'abord, quelques notions de base relatives aux pratiques de l'enseignement supérieur. Ensuite, nous exposerons l'expérience qui met en œuvre les modes d'enseignement exercés. Et enfin, nous terminerons par la présentation et la discussion des résultats obtenus.

### **2. L'enseignement en présentiel**

L'enseignement en présentiel désigne une pratique pédagogique qui s'exerce en classe. Il offre des contenus dans un local et selon différents formats (exposés, ateliers, laboratoires, etc.). En présentiel, l'enseignant peut faire appel aussi aux TIC pour simuler la motivation de ses étudiants ou réaliser des productions à l'aide d'outils numériques.

En adoptant la classification de J. Sener, l'enseignement en présentiel peut offrir un autre type de cours classés « en présentiel augmenté » (Sener, 2015). Il s'agit de présenter des contenus en présentiel et dans lesquels l'enseignant peut inviter ses étudiants à participer à des

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activités d'apprentissage ou d'évaluation en ligne, par le biais d'une plateforme ou d'un site web donné.

### **3. L'enseignement à distance**

Depuis 2012, une typologie des différents cours a été proposée par Frank Mayadas, Gary Miller et John Sener (Coswatte, 2014; Sener, 2015). En se référant à des commentaires formulés par des professionnels et des experts en matière de la formation en ligne, cette typologie est mise à jour par ses auteurs. Ce moyen de classification des différents cours s'articule en fonction d'une échelle qui part des cours en présentiel sans aucune technologie jusqu'aux cours dits « flexibles ». Sener (2015) avait recensé sept types de cours mais depuis 2010, un autre type a été proposé par Michael Power et ses collègues (Lakhal & Power, 2016; Power & Vaughn, 2010). Il s'agit des « cours hybrides » en ligne appelés aussi (Blended learning).

À l'Université algérienne, le transfert de connaissance se réalise aujourd'hui par le biais de plusieurs techniques des (TIC) telles que, le e-learning, la (FAD), la (FOAD), l'(EAD), le blended Learning...etc. Nous nous intéressons dans cet article à citer les dispositifs numériques les plus exploitables.

#### **3.1 La formation à distance (FAD)**

La formation à distance est un concept qui existe depuis longtemps mais sous différents aspects. Au dix-neuvième siècle, sa première apparition était en Angleterre, où le concept trouve son origine dans les cours par correspondance. En 2010, une définition a été lancée sur le site web du comité de liaison interordres en formation à distance (CLIFAD) qui la considère comme : « *Un dispositif de formation comportant un ensemble de moyens organisés pour atteindre les objectifs d'un cours ou d'un programme. Ce dispositif permet à une personne d'apprendre de façon relativement autonome, avec des contraintes minimales, d'horaire et de déplacement, et avec le soutien à distance de personnes-ressources* ». (Potvin, 2011, p. 1).

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Selon cette citation, le (CLIFAD) définit la formation à distance et insiste sur les contraintes minimales d'horaire et de déplacement ainsi que le soutien de personne-ressource, éléments que nous allons évoquer ultérieurement dans cet article.

### **3.2 La formation ouverte et à distance (FOAD)**

La formation ouverte et à distance est un concept qui a été d'abord proposé par certaines institutions anglophones sous le nom de « Open and Distance Learning » (ODL). Ainsi, la (FOAD) représente un modèle d'enseignement à distance qui se caractérise par la liberté dans le choix des activités didactiques et pédagogiques et par l'accessibilité. Ce qui est bien confirmé par Loisier qui qualifie les formations ouvertes par « *une liberté d'accès aux ressources pédagogiques, mises à disposition de l'apprenant, sans aucune restriction à savoir, absence de conditions d'admission, itinéraire et rythme de formation choisis par l'apprenant selon sa disponibilité, et conclusion d'un contrat entre l'apprenant et l'institution* ». (Loisier, 2011, p. 10). C'est ainsi que les étudiants et notamment ceux qui ne peuvent pas accéder à un enseignement ordinaire, pour différentes raisons, prennent l'initiative de leur formation en exerçant un apprentissage selon leur rythme personnel.

### **3.3 Le E-Learning**

Comme son nom l'indique, le concept *e-learning* est d'origine anglaise. C'est un mot composé de la lettre « E », étant l'abréviation d'« Electronique » ; et le mot « learning » qui signifie « apprentissage » en français. Ainsi, le « e-apprentissage » est lié à la numérisation et la diffusion de l'information grâce aux avancées de l'électronique. (Bernard, 2005, p. 11). Le « E-Learning » est donc l'équivalent de « E-Formation », « E-Savoir » ou « Apprentissage Electronique ». (Kurtz, 2013, p. 434).

À l'Université algérienne, un programme national de télé-enseignement a été lancé depuis les années 2000. Le Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique (MESRS) s'est engagé à inciter les établissements universitaires à développer l'activité de télé-enseignement et de e-learning.

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En effet, des moyens ont été mis à la disposition des établissements, des formations pour les personnels ont été lancées, des plates-formes acquises, un accroissement des débits des connexions Internet et une évaluation de l'état de la mise en place de cette opération ont été réalisés. L'objectif recherché par la mise en place du système de télé-enseignement est le soutien de la formation en présentiel. Parmi les plates-formes mises en œuvre, nous pouvons citer (**Moodle**) qui représente un dispositif numérique utilisé par certaines universités algériennes et qui fonctionne selon trois niveaux d'utilisation :

**Tableau 1.** La plate-forme (Moodle)

RÔLE	FONCTION
<b>Administrateur</b>	Gère l'ensemble de l'environnement
<b>Enseignant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Générer des événements, des cours ou des sujets selon les domaines thématiques définis.</li><li>- Générer des formations ou des événements qui sont désignés.</li></ul>
<b>Étudiant</b>	Accède et interagit avec un événement spécifique et participe aux sujets auxquels ils sont abonnés.

Source: Lopes, A., 2014, p. 5362.

Après avoir exposé et défini quelques dispositifs numériques établis par la tutelle, nous nous intéressons dans cette contribution à synthétiser les informations sur les modes d'enseignement exercés selon les perspectives établies par l'Université algérienne.

#### 4. Les types d'enseignement mis en pratique par l'Université algérienne

Avant 2020, l'enseignement en présentiel représentait le moyen de formation le plus adopté à l'université algérienne. Or, depuis l'apparition de la pandémie Covid-19, et par mesure de précaution contre la propagation, l'enseignant universitaire s'est engagé à exercer un enseignement à distance. Une expérience réalisée à l'Université de M'sila peut former un exemple

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concret sur la mise en pratique de différents modes d'enseignement exercés pendant la pandémie.

### 4.1. Déroulement de l'expérience

L'expérience s'est déroulée au département des Lettres et Langue française à l'Université de M'sila. Notre analyse porte sur la présentation des cours de la matière *Compréhension et expression écrite* destinée à un groupe composé de 32 étudiants de première année Licence, pendant le premier semestre de l'année universitaire 2021/2022. La formation des étudiants s'est réalisée selon deux modes d'enseignement : en présentiel et à distance. L'outil numérique exploité dans la formation à distance est la plate-forme (Moodle).

Notre étude consiste à identifier et analyser quelques données relatives à la présentation des cours, en les regroupant selon quatre dimensions : la présence des étudiants, la communication, l'apprentissage de savoir-faire et l'accessibilité. Ces éléments sont classés dans le tableau ci-dessous, en fonction des modes d'enseignement exercés dans des périodes précises :

**Tableau 2.** Types d'enseignement et dimensions

	Types d'enseignement / période				
	<i>En présentiel</i>		<i>À distance</i>		
<b>Dimensions</b>	30 oct -25 nov. 2021	11-16 déc. 2021	03-28 oct. 2021	27nov.-09 déc. 2021	02-06 janv. 2022
<i>Présence</i>	70%	90%	00%	/	/
<i>Communication</i>	50%	85 %	00%	10%	25%
<i>Apprentissage de savoir-faire</i>	60%	80%	00%	15%	20%
<i>Accessibilité</i>	/	/	00%	30%	35%
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>Très</b>	<b>applicable</b>	<b>Peu</b>	<b>applicable</b>	



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### **4. 2. Analyse des résultats**

#### **- La présence des étudiants**

Selon les données présentées dans le tableau 2, la présence des étudiants est de 70% dans la première période de l'enseignement en présentiel. Elle augmente jusqu'à 90% durant la seconde période, c'est-à-dire que la majorité des étudiants assistent aux cours en présentiel. Les 10% des étudiants absents représentent généralement des répétitifs qui sont inscrits et qui ont eu déjà la matière de C.E.E., ou encore quelques étudiants exerçant d'autres métiers.

Quant à l'enseignement à distance, nous constatons une absence collective des étudiants durant la première période. Cela s'explique par la situation instable des étudiants de première année licence qui viennent de s'intégrer à l'université et qui ignorent encore les procédures de l'enseignement à distance.

Pendant la deuxième période, le taux d'accessibilité aux cours en ligne augmente à 30% et il atteint 35% durant la troisième période. En comparant ces résultats à ceux de l'enseignement en présentiel, nous constatons que les étudiants favorisent les cours en présentiel c'est pourquoi, peu d'entre eux intègrent les cours en ligne.

#### **- La communication**

Dans les cours en présentiel, les étudiants peuvent être invités à prendre part à des échanges. Durant la première période, la communication est de 50% car les étudiants ne sont pas encore habitués au climat de l'université, aux enseignants et aux cours présentés. Certains sont timides et sont en phase de découverte. Or, pendant la seconde période, la communication augmente jusqu'à 80%.

L'animation des cours par l'enseignant permet de stimuler la communication et la collaboration au processus éducatif des étudiants (Loisier, 2011). De plus, la rapidité des échanges en classe contribuent à l'avancement des cours.

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Pour les cours à distance, malgré qu'ils permettent de conserver une certaine approche magistrale (Loisier, 2013) et facilitent le contact entre les étudiants et l'enseignant (du point de vue où ils permettent des interactions en temps réel), les étudiants de première année licence ne les intègrent pas suffisamment.

Le tableau ci-dessus représente 00% en première période, 10% seulement en deuxième et 25% des étudiants qui communiquent avec leur enseignante en troisième période d'enseignement. De même, parmi les différents outils mis à la disposition des étudiants et qui permettent de développer les habiletés en communication, ces derniers n'exploitent que celles de la communication écrite puisque ce mode de communication constitue le principal moyen utilisé afin d'entrer en contact les uns avec les autres (Kim, 2011).

#### **- Apprentissage du savoir-faire**

Les cours en présentiel favorisent l'apprentissage du savoir-faire car il semble qu'ils sont les plus appropriés pour les apprentissages pratiques (60% durant la première période d'enseignement et 80% pendant la seconde). La matière de C.E.E. nécessite des activités de lecture, d'analyse de textes et des travaux de rédaction. C'est pourquoi, les cours à distance conviennent moins bien aux apprentissages nécessitant ce genre d'activités (Albéro, 2011; Bowen, 2013).

#### **- Accessibilité**

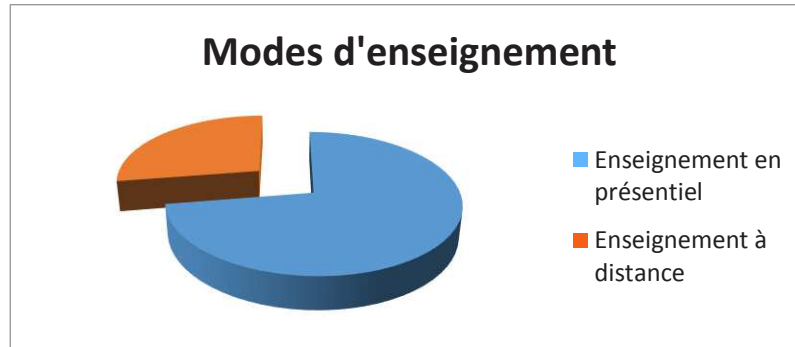
La formation à distance contribue grandement à briser les barrières spatio-temporelles entre l'étudiant et l'enseignant. Or, l'absence physique des étudiants peut entraîner un sentiment d'isolement (Bates, 2015). Selon les statistiques présentées dans le tableau précédent, peu d'étudiants intègrent la plate-forme (Moodle) car la majorité ne bénéficie pas d'un accès internet. Cela nous oriente vers d'autres contraintes qui forment de véritables obstacles d'accessibilité à la formation à distance.

#### **4. 3. Comparaison entre les deux modes d'enseignement**

Selon les données exposées dans le tableau 2, la comparaison entre l'enseignement en présentiel et la formation à distance peut être présentée dans le diagramme suivant :

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**Fig.1.** Modes d'enseignement exercés

Suite à ce diagramme, il apparaît clairement que les étudiants de première année Licence favorisent le mode d'enseignement en présentiel. Cela est relatif aux avantages de la présence physique qui permet de stimuler la communication et garantir un apprentissage efficace. En classe, les échanges sont plus rapides et fertiles, c'est pourquoi les étudiants en tirent un grand.

Quant à la formation à distance, elle ne représente qu'un taux de 27,5%. Cela est dû à plusieurs obstacles qui empêchent les étudiants à intégrer les cours en ligne.

### **5. Quelques contraintes de l'enseignement à distance**

La propagation de la pandémie Covid-19 avait exigé une pratique exceptionnelle de la formation à distance. C'est pourquoi, ce mode d'enseignement a été imposé à l'Université algérienne sans aucune préparation pour les différentes parties participantes, et sans susciter leur moindre intérêt, ce qui a entraîné des conséquences négatives sur la qualité de la formation.

De même, le manque des équipements et du personnel chargé de la manipulation du matériel réservé à la formation ; la faiblesse du débit d'internet et les problèmes de déconnexion représentent aussi des obstacles qui influencent négativement sur la formation à distance. De plus, certains étudiants ne possèdent pas les moyens nécessaires pour un apprentissage en ligne (microordinateur ou un smart phone, abonnement internet, ...). Ainsi, être à jour avec l'apprentissage en ligne demeure donc impossible.

Le manque de formation des enseignants au niveau de la préparation des cours et des conférences à distance représente également une des principales contraintes. C'est pourquoi, certains enseignants se contentent de déposer des cours sur la plate-forme de l'université sans aucune structure.

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### **5. Conclusion**

Au terme de cet article, nous avons tenté de rappeler les modes d'enseignement mis à la disposition de l'enseignant universitaire afin de garantir un apprentissage efficace. En contexte universitaire algérien, le passage de l'enseignement en présentiel à la formation à distance a été imposé dans des circonstances particulières relatives à la propagation de la pandémie Covid-19.

C'est pourquoi, malgré les divers dispositifs numériques mis en place par le Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, la pratique de l'enseignement à distance est assez difficile à mettre en œuvre. Les résultats de notre expérience réalisée auprès de nos étudiants de première année licence confirment qu'ils favorisent l'enseignement en présentiel par rapport à la formation à distance. Ce choix n'est pas relatif à la non maîtrise des outils numériques ou à l'ignorance de leurs avantages. Au contraire, l'étudiant algérien est parfaitement conscient de la grande opportunité de la formation à distance en matière d'efficacité, mais son choix est relatif aux nombreux obstacles qui empêchent l'avancement de ce mode d'enseignement.

Nous sommes parfaitement conscientes que le public visé dans cette expérience peut être jugé insuffisant ou pas représentatif, mais le plus important est de fournir tous les moyens nécessaires, les ressources humaines et matérielles afin de garantir un apprentissage efficace, par le biais des dispositifs numériques.

La sensibilisation et la formation de tous les acteurs, enseignants, personnels et étudiants s'avèrent nécessaires pour être en mesure d'intégrer l'enseignement à distance. Cela demeure une nécessité car l'enseignement à distance est considéré comme un moyen d'ouverture sur le monde. Sa pratique à l'Université algérienne donne un nouveau souffle à l'enseignement, et ce pour faire face à la compétitivité internationale, basée essentiellement sur la compétence et l'innovation. La formation à distance doit donc répondre aux mêmes objectifs de l'enseignement en présentiel, afin d'atteindre un apprentissage efficace.

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