EFL Students' Perspectives on e-Learning in a Saudi University during Coronavirus Variants

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Abstract

The researchers investigated the advantages and disadvantages of the sudden shift to e-learning from the perspectives of Saudi EFL students during COVID-19. That shift was the only learning option for a long time to come after the existence of new variants of the virus. Studying students' perspectives during the pandemic was important to display how they took responsibility for their learning, interact with the teachers, and collaborate. The researchers performed this study to describe: (a) EFL students' perspectives on e-learning, (b) advantages of e-learning for EFL, and (c) disadvantages of e-learning for EFL in Saudi Arabia during Coronavirus variants. A self-devised questionnaire and individual interviews were administered virtually during COVID-19 with male EFL students while they were studying an integrated-skills English course as an intermediate-level course in the PYP of a Saudi university. Using the Constant Comparative Method to analyze the qualitative data resulted in eight benefits and four drawbacks of e-learning for the Saudi EFL context. Most students viewed that e-learning and Social Media as supporting platforms of their learning while a few of them did not think favorably of e-learning. Recommendations were offered to enhance the benefits and decrease the drawbacks.

Key words

Coronavirus variants, e-learning advantages and disadvantages, face-to-face learning, Saudi EFL context, students' perspectives.

آراء طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في التعليم الإلكتروني في جامعة سعودية خلال متغيرات فيروس كورونا

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الملخص

درس الباحثان مزايا وعيوب التحول المفاجئ للتعليم الإلكتروني خلال جائحة كورونا. كان ذلك التحول هو الخيار الوحيد لاستكمال التعليم لفترة طويلة من الزمن. دراسة آراء الطلاب أثناء تلك الأزمة يلعب دورا مهما في معرفة كيفية تحملهم المسؤولية عن تعليم أنفسهم ، وكيف تفاعلوا مع مدرسيهم ، وكيف تعاونوا فيما بينهم.

قام الباحثان بهذه الدراسة بهدف وصف: (أ) وجهات نظر الطلاب حول التعليم الإلكتروني ، (ب) فوائد التعليم الإلكتروني ، (ج) عيوب التعليم الإلكتروني . هذه الدراسة تختص ببيئة تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية في المجتمع السعودي خلال جائحة كورونا.

أعد الباحثان استبيانًا خاصًا لجمع البيانات ، بالإضافة إلى عمل مقابلات فردية عن بعد مع الطلاب أثناء دراستهم في المستوى المتوسط من السنة التحضيرية بإحدى الجامعات السعودية في فترة جائحة كورونا.

عملية تحليل البيانات النوعية أنتجت ثمانٍ مزايا وأربعة عيوب لاستخدام التعليم الإلكتروني في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في السعودية ، معظم الطلاب اعتقدوا أن التعليم الإلكتروني ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي عبارة عن منصات تدعم تعليمهم للغة الإنجليزية، وخالفهم القليل من الطلاب الذين لم يبدوا إعجابًا بالتعليم الإلكتروني. اختتم الباحثان بتقديم بعض الاقتراحات لتعزيز المزايا وتخفيف الملاحظات.

الكلمات المفتاحية

متغيرات فايروس كورونا، مزايا وعيوب التعليم الإلكتروني، التعليم التقليدي، بيئة تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في السعودية، وجهات نظر الطلاب

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Introduction

In December 2019, some cases of pneumonia of an unknown cause were discovered in China. Similar cases were discovered in Thailand and the Republic of Korea. Soon after, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported an outbreak of a new virus causing similar pneumonia cases in many other countries in the world. The new virus was called new Coronavirus or COVID-19. In March 2020, the number of confirmed cases in the world was 509,167 with 23,335 deaths including 1012 cases with 3 deaths in Saudi Arabia as per WHO situation report 67 (WHO, 2020). Thus, WHO declared COVID-19 as a world pandemic.

Many countries closed their borders to international travel and decided to close their universities and schools. Likewise, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) suspended all educational institutions and workplaces (Saudi Gazette, 2020). After four months of lockdown, the KSA partially opened borders with other countries and resumed air travel in August 2020. Certain precautionary measures were enforced, such as the use of face masks, hand sanitizers, and social distancing. Canine virus detectors were also used in all Saudi airports to help discover any infected passengers (OBAID, 2020).

In December 2020, the US Food and Drugs Administration issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) for the COVID-19 Vaccine ("Pfizer-BioNTech", 2021). This meant the US started to use the Pfizer vaccine to vaccinate its citizens. Other countries followed suit including the KSA. However, a new variant of Coronavirus was discovered in the UK, which was spreading more quickly than the original strain. It was reported more contagious, but no evidence suggested that it was more deadly than the original one ("Coronavirus latest", 2021; WHO, 2021).

Other new variants of Coronavirus were also reported in South Africa and Brazil ("About Variants of the Virus", 2021). Soon these new variants were reported to have spread in different countries (Reuters Staff, 2020). Therefore, many countries decided to close their borders to stop that spread. In January 2021, a new Coronavirus variant was detected in the KSA (Taha, 2021), which led to extending the already in place travel restrictions and border closures till May 2021 (Abueish, 2021).

Problem Statement

Because Coronavirus was declared a world pandemic in March 2020 (WHO, 2020), universities and schools across the world were shut down. To keep education going, an overnight shift from face-to-face learning to e-learning took place (Hassan, Mirza & Hussain, 2020). It is a matter of fact that e-learning was not an invention by itself, and it was used in many countries including the KSA via different platforms, such as Blackboard (Alshehri, Rutter & Smith, 2019). However, Blackboard and other e-learning platforms were used to complement classroom face-to-face learning. The move to complete e-learning was the new twist as a result of COVID-19 and the appearance of new variants of the virus ("About Variants of the Virus", 2021) in many countries (Reuters Staff, 2020) including in the KSA (Taha, 2021).

The problem then, that the researchers wanted to investigate, was the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning from the perspectives of Saudi university students in the light of the sudden and total shift to e-learning that seemed to be the only option to teach for a long time to come especially after detecting a new Coronavirus variant in the KSA (Taha, 2021).

Purpose of the study

This study aimed at describing the students' perspectives of e-learning for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a Saudi university during new Coronavirus variants. In addition, it aimed to have a closer look at the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning for EFL in a Saudi university during such variants.

Importance of the study

It was important to find out about students' perspectives of e-learning for EFL in a Saudi University after the sudden and total shift to e-learning warranted by COVID-19. Moreover, such e-learning confused the educational society for many weeks (Al Shlowiy, Al-Hoorie, & Alharbi, 2021) and seemed to stay longer after the appearance of new variants that have spread in many countries (Reuters Staff, 2020). In addition, students' views were important as the researchers believe in student-centered learning where students take responsibility for their learning, interact with the teachers, and collaborate with each other (Oinam, 2017).

Research Questions

The research questions were:
1- What are students' perspectives of e-learning for EFL in a Saudi university during new Coronavirus variants?
2- What are their perspectives of e-learning advantages?
3- What are their perspectives of e-learning limitations?

Literature Review

E-learning is defined as enhancing students' learning via any suitable information and communication technologies (Ellis, Ginns,

& Piggott, 2009). Thus, e-learning could comprise Learning Management Systems, such as Blackboard and Moodle; video-conferencing tools, such as Skype and Zoom; Mobile applications, such as Telegram and WhatsApp; and Social Media sites, such as Facebook, Blogs, Wikis, and Google Docs. These technologies include both means of communication: synchronous (i.e., chatrooms, Listservs) and asynchronous (i.e., e-mails, discussion boards) for educational purposes.

In 2020, the researchers performed a review of literature on students' perspectives of e-learning for EFL in Saudi universities at Coronavirus time. The review mainly displays students' positive views and minor drawbacks of various e-learning platforms, tools, and applications including Blackboard used for teaching/learning English in Saudi universities during COVID-19 (Layali & Al shlowiy, 2020).

For instance, Abu-Ayfah (2020) stated that male and female EFL students at Taibah University had positive perspectives of using Telegram (i.e., a cloud-based application for exchanging text, pictures, audio, and video) for EFL learning. Students favored this application for learning vocabulary more than reading, grammar, listening, speaking, and writing respectively.

Ahmad (2020) showed that female students at the English Department of Jubail College of Education had favorable perceptions of using Google Docs (i.e., a free cloud-based online collaborative writing tool) for EFL writing. Moreover, using Google Docs was found to improve the students' writing quality.

Alshehri and Cumming (2020) posited that students and teachers in the Department of Linguistics, Math, and ICT in both King Abdulaziz University and King Khalid University had positive perceptions of integrating mobile technologies at these universities. Students and teachers believed that integrating mobile technologies

enhanced the academic environment and communications among students and with their teachers. However, a minor drawback was reported by some students, namely slow Internet connectivity. Institutional support was required to solve this minor problem.

In fact, the positive results reported above (Abu-Ayfah, 2020; Ahmad, 2020; Alshehri & Cumming, 2020) can be explained in light of the increased motivation and decreased anxiety-related to e-learning. For example, e-learning was found to intrinsically motivate students more than face-to-face learning (Rovai, Ponton, Wighting, & Baker, 2007). Moreover, e-learning was reported to lower the anxiety of students more than traditional learning especially after one semester of adopting it, which ensures many students got familiar and are comfortable to use the e-learning platform chosen by the university (Pichette, 2009).

Hakami (2020) stated that female students at Sharoura College of Science and Arts of Najran University had favorable views of Nearpod (i.e., a web-based learning application) when integrated with a video-conferencing system in a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) learning environment. Students suggested that Nearpod promoted more interaction, collaboration among students, and communication with the teacher. However, slow Internet connectivity was reported by some students as a slight disadvantage. In addition, some students did not like bringing their own devices in the BYOD model.

Moreover, Alshehri, Rutter, and Smith (2019) found that students had positive views of Blackboard and perceived its most important usability features were: information quality, navigation, and learnability respectively. Students reported no drawbacks for Blackboard.

Mutambik (2018) showed that students had positive views of e-learning and used it particularly for listening and speaking. They

reported many benefits of e-learning such as: being independent, flexible, and interactive learning. Some students were concerned about not developing their handwriting properly when using e-learning.

Oyaid and Alshaya (2019) found that students had positive views of the e-book application and thought its most important features were interactivity, user-friendly interface, and the ability to highlight important parts of the e-book text. Some students reported they could not copy any part of the text in the e-book application and paste it into other applications. Some students reported not being used to studying from a screen.

Sharma (2019) stated that students had a positive attitude toward using Social Media to support their EFL learning. They preferred WhatsApp to YouTube. Students were concerned about their privacy when using such Social Media. As were reported by Hakami (2020), Alshehri, Rutter, and Smith (2019), Mutambik (2018), Oyaid and Alshaya (2019) and Sharma (2019) students re-affirmed their positive views of various e-learning and Social Media applications which can be better understood when we know that such e-learning and Social Media promote students' interaction as McGreal and Elliott (2004) reported e-learning inherent technologies of audio/video streaming, synchronous and asynchronous communication (i.e., instant messaging and discussion boards) support interaction.

Constructivists placed utmost importance on interaction via dialogue and exchanging experiences as the best way for learning (Jonassen, Davidson, Collins, Campbell, & Haag, 1995). Applying Constructivism to e-learning, Blackboard, e-books, WhatsApp, and YouTube allowed students to interact with each other and with their teachers which resulted in better learning. However, some drawbacks were also reported by students when using such e-

learning applications. For example, disruption by slow Internet and concern over their privacy.

After the spread of Coronavirus variants in many countries (Reuters Staff, 2020) and a new variant was detected in the KSA (Taha, 2021), such e-learning seemed to stay for a long time as the only way to learn. With this in mind, the researchers sought to find out EFL students' perspectives of e-learning: Will they remain mainly positive as was reported in previous studies? Will they tend to be more negative? Will there be a mix of both positive and negative perspectives? Will some students start to feel nostalgic for face-to-face learning? They were eager to delineate and report the students' perspectives during these new Coronavirus variants.

Research Context
Setting
The setting for this case study was the Preparatory Year Program (PYP) in a Saudi university. The PYP is a common one-year program in Saudi universities. Usually, the PYP adopts the quarter system that lasts for eight weeks. Students study English, Mathematics, Information Technology, and study skills that prepare them for pursuing their undergraduate studies at various colleges in the university. Students were contacted at the beginning of the second quarter of the first academic semester.

Participants
Fourteen Saudi male students from the PYP expressed their interest to participate in a questionnaire and online individual interviews. Their mean age was 19. They studied an integrated-skills English course throughout the university Blackboard platform. They used a textbook called *Intermediate student's book: New Headway Plus* (Soars & Soars, 2019). It includes audio CDs and workbooks that come with the key answers and writing support. They were at the B1 level (intermediate level) as per the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Data Collection Methods

The researchers collected verbal data to answer the research questions. They used a self-devised questionnaire and online individual interviews. They sent the questionnaire during that quarter and interviewed the students upon finishing the final exams of the quarter.

Questionnaire

The researchers used a-fifteen item self-devised questionnaire (Appendix A) to collect verbal data from the participants online. It contained five main sections: (a) Availability of digital devices, Internet, and platform; (b) Advantages of e-learning; (c) Disadvantages of e-learning; (d) Open-ended questions; and (e) Future use of e-learning after Coronavirus ends. Out of 14 students, ten students completed it. Since the study focuses on students' perspectives, they were asked to answer the questionnaire in their native language (i.e., Arabic). Therefore, they could articulate their answers better while their identities were kept anonymous by assigning a number to each student.

Interview

The researchers performed a semi-structured interview of five items (Appendix B) that correspond to the five sections of the questionnaire, excluding the Availability of devices and the Internet and platform. This ensures students' consistency of answers. The items included: (a) advantages of e-learning, (b) suggestions to promote advantages of e-learning, (c) disadvantages of e-learning, (d) suggestions to alleviate disadvantages of e-learning, and (e) future use of e-learning after Coronavirus ends. The interviews were conducted individually online via the Zoom platform with 10 students who completed the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The researchers used the Constant Comparative Method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) for analyzing qualitative data to investigate data. This method is flexible in creating initial themes and categories as well as changing or modifying the themes and categories upon more perusal and analysis of verbal data.

In other words, two main categories were identified in the data: (a) advantages of e-learning and (b) disadvantages for e-learning. Under each category, different themes were identified (Table 1).

Table 1

Advantages and disadvantages of e-learning as per students' perspectives.

Advantages	Disadvantages
1- Motivation	1- Some students are not used to e-learning/learning from screen.
2- Being student-centered	2- Lack of socialization and personal touch as in face-to-face learning.
3- Interaction/collaboration among students	3- Disruption by slow/no Internet.
4- Being relaxing	4- Some functions of Blackboard do not work on mobile.
5- Being convenient	
6- No unintelligible handwriting	
7- Online assignments and testing/no paper needed	
8- Satisfactory learning option during Coronavirus.	

Each researcher analyzed the data separately and discussed the results to agree on their analysis. Also, they share these categories with two professors of Applied Linguistics who perused the qualitative data several times and confirmed them.

Findings

The participants of this study had laptops, smartphones, and reliable Internet connections most of the time at their homes. Eight students expressed their approval of and satisfaction with e-learning, especially at Coronavirus time when answering the questions of advantages of e-learning sections both in the questionnaire and interview. For instance, student #3 explained that e-learning generally and Blackboard Collaborate Ultra motivated him to study. He preferred using technology for learning and collaborating with his classmates via threaded discussion and chat. In the interview, he

further stated that he did not like writing in the classroom when he was a high school student. However, he started to like writing when he wrote at home and used the help of his classmates via WhatsApp to find relevant expressions for the writing topic.

Moreover, in the questionnaire, student #7 suggested that e-learning especially Blackboard was more student-oriented where the teacher gave some instructions and allowed students to work on their own and collaborate. He thought online classes were more suitable as he did not have to commute to the university and waste time. In the interview, he restated that he believed online sessions focused on students and allowed them to work together via threaded discussions. He also believed that the sessions were convenient as he did not have to drive his car through crowded streets to reach his university (Table 2).

Table 2

Student #3 and student #7 answers about advantages of e-learning section

Participant	Questionnaire	Interview
Student #3	I like technology a lot and it motivates me to connect with my friends and family. It also motivates me to learn; Blackboard Collaborate Ultra makes it easy for me to interact and collaborate with my classmates. I can use the threaded discussion feature, but I prefer chat because it is real-time.	I feel motivated by technology as it brings me close to my classmates at Coronavirus time. I did not like writing in class in high school. Now, I prefer writing at home especially when I ask my classmates to help me with expressions for the writing topic. I connect with them by chat or WhatsApp.
Student #7	E-learning via Blackboard is good as the doctor does not talk much as in class. He just gives us directions on how to answer assignments and allows us to interact and collaborate on the platform. What I like best is the convenience of attending classes from home and not having to go to university and return every day.	I like online sessions because these allow me and my classmates to collaborate via threaded discussions. This online learning also saved my time and effort as I did not have to go through traffic jams to attend classes. Riyadh streets are usually crowded and busy.

Furthermore, in the questionnaire, student #1, student #4, student #5, student #6, student #9 and student #10 expressed favorable

perspectives of e-learning and thought it had advantages, such as being more relaxing as it puts them under less pressure than being in face-to-face classes especially when they were asked to write an essay in each unit of the coursebook. In addition, they liked the fact that writing on a computer is clear and professional, unlike some students' unintelligible handwriting. In the interviews, they stressed the fact that they preferred the relaxing atmosphere of online classes to face-to-face as they were able to write the required essays. They further appreciated that all students' writing would look clear and easy to read on a computer rather than by handwriting. They appreciated receiving and returning their assignments online where no paper was needed. They also expressed their satisfaction with e-learning and Blackboard at the time of Coronavirus otherwise their education would be disrupted. However, they did not like the fact that the Internet was sometimes slow or down as they could not attend classes nor complete assignments then.

Two participants, students #2 and student #8 expressed the disadvantages of e-learning in the questionnaire. For example, student #2 explained that he was not used to e-learning. He preferred learning from books and notebooks rather than learning from a screen. He wanted to use pen and pencil with paper to learn new vocabulary in English. In the interview, he repeated his desire for traditional face-to-face classes where he used books, paper, and pen rather than a computer or smartphone screen to learn. He further explained that when he tried to access Blackboard on his Android mobile phone, some features either were sluggish or did not work at all. Furthermore, in the questionnaire, student #8 stated that he neither like e-learning nor Blackboard much because he preferred the traditional learning on campus. He could not study or turn in the required assignments when the Internet was down. In the interview, he explained that he did not like e-learning as he missed the socialization and personal touch in face-to-face teaching. He wanted the teacher to speak more and explain more and that it was easier to reach the teacher and ask questions in traditional classes (Table 3).

Table 3

Student #2 and student #8 answers in disadvantages of e-learning section

Participant	Questionnaire	Interview
Student #2	I do not know maybe I'm different. I do not like to use technology for learning. I prefer to learn from books, not from a screen. I prefer writing using a pen or pencil and paper, especially when learning new English words and expressions not using a computer.	As I said before, I am different. I prefer traditional classes to online classes. I miss the days when I sat in class and used a book, paper, and pen to learn. Besides, I tried to access Blackboard on my Samsung Mobile phone and it was very slow and some icons did not function; a book would not do that, see my point.
Student #8	I like face-to-face classes more than online classes. I find that I understand better in traditional classes. Also, when the Internet was down, I could not study nor do my assignment and send it on time.	I just do not like online classes because I miss seeing the doctor and my classmates in person. I miss socializing with my classmates and I miss the personal touch each student brings to class. I want the doctor to speak and explain topics more and I feel it's easier for me to ask him or my classmates' questions face-to-face.

Discussion

To start with, the Internet, its websites and platforms, is a part of Web 0.2 technology. Web 0.2 has an interactive interface that enables two-way student-student and student-teacher communications via feedback (Hartshorne & Ajjan, 2009). Moreover, Blackboard, especially Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, has built-in features that allow for synchronous (Video/audio conferencing and real-time chat) as well as asynchronous (email and threaded discussion) communication. This promoted interaction and collaboration among students and between students and their teachers.

Because of such inherent features of Web 0.2 and affordances of Blackboard, 80% of the participants expressed their approval and

support of e-learning in general and Blackboard in particular for learning EFL in the PYP in this university. As was stated in the findings section above, eight students expressed the following favorable perspectives of e-learning and Blackboard for EFL:

- Motivation
- Being student-centered
- Interaction/collaboration among students
- Being relaxing
- Being convenient
- No unintelligible handwriting
- Online assignments and testing/ no paper needed
- Satisfactory learning option during Coronavirus.

Thus, e-learning was more student-centered when the students wrote their required essays in each unit of the textbook at home. E-learning brought more interaction and collaboration by enabling them to seek help from each other on vocabulary and expressions suitable for the writing topics. This was facilitated by the Blackboard asynchronous threaded discussion and synchronous chat features. This was in line with Vygotsky's (1978) Socio-cultural Theory of learning where interaction between student-student and student-teacher lead to a scaffolding process that boosts the students learning of the language skills (i.e., writing).

Furthermore, these eight students assumed that e-learning was more motivating and more relaxing than learning in the traditional classroom. They felt more relaxed when they did their written assignments at home, rather than in a traditional class. In fact, this is understandable as writing is the most difficult language skill (Nepomuceno, 2011). While writing, students must take care of both accuracy and fluency, cohesion, and coherence and form and content. This is demanding for most students who recently joined the university after high school and did not develop this skill well. When they wrote online outside class and helped each other, they became motivated and relaxed so that they write better. This

improvement agrees with Krashen's (1981) affective filter hypothesis where low anxiety and high motivation allow the language input to pass through the learners' affective filter and reach into the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), in which students learn the language skill at hand.

Despite these eight students' positive perspectives of e-learning, two participants, student #2 and student #8 did not support e-learning for EFL. This means 20% of the participants of this study thought that e-learning had the following disadvantages:

- Unfamiliarity with e-learning and learning from the screen.
- Lack of socialization and personal touch as in face-to-face learning.
- Disruption by slow Internet.
- Limited features of Blackboard on a mobile application.

Both students preferred traditional face-to-face classes. Student #2 liked using books, papers, and pens to learn especially vocabulary in English rather than learning from a screen. Student #8 missed socializing in face-to-face classes. Moreover, he could not use some Blackboard features on his Samsung mobile phone. These two students represent a type of students who prefer the good old way of learning regardless of the benefits of technology, they always opt for the no-tech option. Although it is impossible to bring back traditional teaching approaches on-campus classes for such students because of the pandemic, teachers should do all they can to make the e-learning experience as satisfactory as possible as explained in the next section.

Recommendations

The study suggests some recommendations to maximize the Benefits. To make the e-learning experience satisfactory for all students including traditional-classes lovers, several measures should be taken into consideration. First, teachers should make sure

all students get training in how to use the e-learning application used in their university. Technical support is also needed in the form of easy and interactive how-to videos that show how to use the application. Second, the chosen e-learning application should be a cross-platform application (D'Ambra, 2018). In other words, it should be compatible with various operating systems and run on tablets, smartphones, PCs, and laptops. Student #2 complained that he could not run some features of Blackboard on his Samsung (i.e., Android system) mobile phone. If Blackboard was a cross-platform application, this technical glitch would not happen. Third, teachers should use different emoticons (showing happiness, appreciation, admiration, surprise) and background themes and colors to liven up their classes on the university platform. This will attract traditional-classes lovers who miss the personal touch in online classes. Fourth, teachers should make utmost use of the university platform with its synchronous including video/audio conferencing and chat, and asynchronous including e-mail and threaded discussion features. Some teachers tend to rely on e-mail more than chat or threaded discussions more than video/audio conferencing; indeed, using varied modes of communication in the platform will motivate students and prevent boredom. Fifth, teachers should use other applications and not be limited to one. There is no one application that is complete in and by itself. Each platform has one good and easy-to-use feature. For instance, Zoom, with its video/audio conferencing features, is more streamlined and easier to use than other applications for the purpose of video/audio meetings. WhatsApp is better than other applications in instant messaging of text, photos, and audio. Therefore, using various applications would enrich the e-learning experience. Finally, special curricula and course textbooks should be developed for e-learning. Participants in this study stated that they used the same course textbook (Soars & Soars, 2019).

Conclusion

Eighty percent of the participants of this study confirmed many benefits of e-learning for EFL learning in the Saudi university. These benefits included motivation, student-centered context, interaction and collaboration among students, relaxing and convenient environment, lack of unintelligible handwriting, paper-saving for online assignments, and self-satisfactory. Similar results were documented in the literature. For example, students thought e-learning was interactive and flexible learning (Ahmad, 2020). Mobile technologies enhanced student-student communication (Alshehri & Cumming, 2020). Students had positive attitudes towards Blackboard (Alshehri, Rutter, & Smith, 2019) and favored Social Media to support their EFL learning (Sharma, 2019). However, twenty percent of the participants did not think favorably of e-learning. Two students preferred traditional on-campus classes and missed the social and personal touch of face-to-face teaching. The use of emoticons, different themes, and backgrounds in the Blackboard platform along with using other platforms and several tips were presented to make the e-learning experience satisfactory for such students.

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