

Investigating the Impact of Blended Learning on EFL Libyan Students' Writing Skills at Derna University

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دراسة تأثير التعليم المدمج علي مهارات الكتابة لدي طلاب اللغة الانجليزية

كلغة أجنبية في جامعة درنة ليبيا

فاطمة عاشور حمد عبد العاطي

قسم اللغة الانجليزية، كلية الآداب، جامعة درنة، درنة، ليبيا

تاريخ النشر: 2025-05-29

تاريخ القبول: 2025-05-13

تاريخ الاستلام: 2025-03-25

Abstract

The study aims to investigate the impact of blended learning on EFL Libyan students' on improvement writing skills. The study conducted with 80 first English language students at Derna university. The study design is experimental approach. The experimental group participated in blended learning while traditional group followed curriculum without utilizing online instruction. Pre- test and post-test conducted in the study to measure students improvement. Analyzing of data use SPSS .The study result showed that there a significant impact of blended learning on students' improvement writing skills. Recommended for future studies replicate with a larger number of students across different institutions.

Keywords: Blended learning, Writing skills, EFL students , University

الملخص

تهدف الدراسة الي دراسة تأثير التعليم المدمج علي تطوير مهاره الكتابة لدي طلاب . اجريت الدراسة علي 80 طلاب في السنه الاولى قسم اللغة الانجليزية في جامعة درنة. منهج الدراسة بحث التجريبي. المجموعة التجريبية استخدمته انترنت التعليم الالكتروني بينما المجموعة الضابطة اتباعه الطريقة التقليدية بدون استخدام انترنت. اجري اختبار القبلي و الاختبار البعدي علي مجموعتين لقياس مدي تحسن الطلاب في مهارة الكتابة. اظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن هناك تأثيراً كبيراً للتعلم المدمج على تحسين مهارات الكتابة لدى الطلاب. ويوصى بأن تُجرى دراسات مستقبلية مماثلة على عينة أكبر من الطلاب عبر مؤسسات مختلفة

الكلمات الدالة: التعليم المدمج - الجامعة- طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية- مهارة الكتابة .

Introduction

Technology has been widely integrated into educational settings. Technology has caused a remarkable alteration in teaching and learning strategies, particularly notable in blended learning. Blended learning strategies integrate in-person learning beside E-learning instructions. Blended learning offers a flexible and dynamic learning strategy. Emelyanova, N. & Voronina, E. (2017) conducted comparative studies on blended learning as a teaching strategy.

evidencing that blended learning methods have demonstrated more efficacy than traditional teaching methods. Blended learning is crucial for students as it equips them with necessary skills demanded in a professional environment Ttir, (2014).

Writing is identified as one of the four English skills. According to Ahmadpour (2017), proficiency in the English language demands mastery of writing skills. Rao (2018) recognizes writing as the most difficult skill to master, in addition to requiring extensive practice. Blended learning enhances learning outcomes in educational settings (Ma, 2017). The blended learning method has enhanced writing skills due to the following reasons: 1. It fosters interaction between teachers and students; 2. It reduces communication apprehension; 3. It promotes autonomous learners in improving their writing skills (Liu, M. 2013). Dwivedi (2015) conducted a study that showed the common challenges students face in mastering writing skills. Moreover, teaching writing encounters various obstacles, including students' needs requiring individual feedback (Kellogg & Raulerson, 2007).

According to Abukhattal (2016), the majority of EFL Libyan teachers have utilized traditional methods in teaching, such as the Traditional Method and Communicative Teaching Method. The integration of technology in the Libyan educational system remains minimal due to various reasons, including teachers' attitudes, experiences, and behaviors influencing their adoption of technology in educational settings. Despite the numerous studies conducted on technology and blended learning, very few papers focus on exploring the impact of blended learning on enhancing writing skills in the Libyan context.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the impact of using the blended learning method on improving EFL Libyan students' writing skills.
2. to analyse gender differences in the improvement of writing skills.

Research hypothesis

H1: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of students taught by blended learning and traditional methods.

H2: There is no statistically significant differences in the mean scores among students of different genders who participated in blended learning method versus traditional method.

Research questions

1. Is there a significant difference in the mean scores of EFL Libyan students taught by blended learning and traditional methods at the Faculty of Education?
2. Are there differences in writing skill scores between EFL Libyan male and female students?

Significant of study

Elshawish and Belshaikh (2021) mention that blended learning has various advantages: it supports students in attaining satisfaction and success while promoting a dynamic and collaborative environment. In addition, blended learning is synchronous, improving aims, content, and resources, focusing on individual differences, and enhancing learning outcomes. Therefore, the results of the study could provide critical insights for Libyan educators and policymakers regarding the potential integration of Web- based- learning tools with grammar translation teaching methods to foster language skills.

Literature Review

Blended learning relates to synchronous and asynchronous e- learning and integrates between in-person and E- learning to refine educational process Lanham, Augar, and Zhou (2005). Blended learning integrate traditional

classroom instruction as well as digital learning in environment context Graham (2006). Bersin (2004) define blended learning was used many approaches by combine various media technologies and methodologies instruction to achieve learning aims. Blended learning is traditional instruction and feedback links with online instruction; it integrates beneficial of digital learning and traditional learning which improve teaching and learning Shohel et al.,2022.

The study explored the effectiveness of blended learning on the achievement of writing skills compared to students taught by traditional methods.. The study involved 108 students. The students split to an intervention group and control group. An intervention group that employed blended learning while a control group employed traditional teaching. The study result revealed a significantly higher achievement in writing skills among the students of the intervention group. Moreover, the results showed that there was no significant difference in the mean writing marks between students genders (Saleh & Khader, 2016).

The study evaluated the effects of blended learning on enhancing first-year college students writing skills. The study design used a quasi-experimental approach with 80 students split into two groups. One group used a blended learning approach, while the other received the traditional approach. The study results showed that there was essential improvement in writing skills among students who utilized the blended learning approach compared to the students who utilized the traditional classroom instruction. Teachers generally had a positive view of integrating technology into education; however, the actual use of digital tools was moderate (Geta & Olango, 2016).

Alsalmi et al.(2019) explore these controversies, acknowledging a divided scholarly opinion on the impact of Blended Learning. However, a significant body of research supports its potential to enhance student achievements, especially in writing skills. The study by Alqahtani and Rajkhan(2020) highlights the effectiveness of the Blended Learning Model versus traditional learning in paragraph composition courses, advocating for its use in educational setting due to its superior outcomes for student performance. Despite this, the adoption of blended learning is subject to debate, with some studies suggesting minimal impact on educational achievement.

The study investigated the employ of the online application in enhancing writing skills in an advanced writing course through blended learning methods. The study involved 39 students divided into an experimental group, in which students received evaluative feedback through the technology. The second group used face –to- face instructions. The results emphasize significant improvements in the treatment group’s writing skills, particularly in vocabulary, grammar, structure, content, and mechanics. The results emphasize that the online application has a positive effect as a tool for writing enhancement (Jumariati & Febriyanti, 2020).

The study explored the effectiveness of blended learning methods in improving EFL students English writing skills. The study was conducted at Wolkite University with first-year students. 56 students was participated in the study. The students dispersed evenly into treatment group and a control group. An experimental design adopted which used a pre- and post-test was to evaluate students improvement. The intervention group was employed a blended learning method, while the control group received traditional classroom instructions. The findings demonstrated significant improvements in writing skills and perceptions of the intervention group. The results provide evidence of the efficiency of blended learning in enhancing EFL students writing skills (Mamo, 2021).

The study examines the effectiveness of blended learning on writing abilities.the design of the study a quasi-experimental, involving a total of 123 students. The assessment was based on student written tests. The results showed that the group integrated in E-learning demonstrated statistically significant achievement in writing skills

after the intervention. In contrast, the control group showed only minimal improvement. These results confirm that the blended learning has beneficial effect on students' engagement and writing abilities (Nurdin, Sulfasyah, & Madeamin, 2023).

Blended Learning Tools

Chew, Norah, and Turner (2008) noted that blended learning encompasses diverse concepts based on the aims of individual institutions and their specific requirements. Blended learning employs various models and techniques tailored to the particular learning environment and the developers' objectives. Stein and Graham (2014) defined blended learning as the integration of online and face-to-face instructional techniques to create a flexible, productive, and dynamic learning environment.

Blended learning tools can be broadly classified into three primary categories: 1) Learning Management Systems (LMS), 2) social networking platforms, and 3) synchronous tools. Three prominent models of blended learning exist: 1) station rotation, 2) individual rotation, and 3) the flex model.

The station rotation model requires students to transition between different learning stations, potentially within or across classrooms, while focusing on a single subject or topic. Each station offers diverse learning activities, such as small group interaction, with at least one station dedicated to online tasks. The individual rotation model involves students transitioning between stations based on a personalized schedule determined by the instructor or adaptive software. This model offers varied approaches; attendance at each station is not mandatory, and students may focus solely on the tasks included in their individual learning playlist.

The flex model provides students with a range of learning activities and flexible schedules tailored to their individual needs. This model emphasizes personalized learning pathways, often requiring students to move between various locations on campus. While similar to station rotation, the key distinction lies in the change of physical learning environments rather than remaining within a single classroom or set of rooms. Furthermore, the flex model should incorporate online learning within at least one of its learning tasks (Moiseienko & Ozarko, 2019).

Wang (2015) argued that the integration of blended learning technologies within higher education settings fosters learner interaction and engagement. Consequently, blended learning enhances the educational environment by adapting to students' diverse learning needs. Crucial skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and communication, are enhanced through the strategic use of blended learning tools. These tools facilitate interactive and engaging learning experiences, effectively promoting the development of these essential skills. Blended learning offers significant support to educational settings for a variety of reasons, including providing more accessible learning resources, fostering social interaction among students, and optimizing the allocation of instructional time. By integrating traditional instructional approaches with e-learning environments, blended learning methodologies effectively enhance the overall quality of educational settings.

Theoretical Facet

The individual rotation model represents an approach within the blended learning framework that emphasizes individualized education. Unlike traditional methods, which often prescribe a constant pace of learning for all students, the individual rotation model employs different learning stations on a schedule dependent on students' individual needs (Horn & Staker, 2015). This model merges online instruction with traditional methods, with activities adapted to students' interests. Thus, the individual rotation model promotes a personalized learning experience. The Individual Rotation Model incorporates adaptive

online activities that dynamically and immediately respond to learners' performance. Moreover, educational activities are automatically tailored to learners' participation and proficiency (Feldstein & Hill, 2016).

Numerous researchers have investigated the effectiveness of the individual rotation model. Findings indicate that it fosters academic performance by promoting student participation and increasing success rates in courses that utilize individualized learning. The individual rotation model allows teachers to meet the diverse educational needs of students through differentiated activities (Pane et al., 2017).

Methodology

DESIGN

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design to investigate the impact of blended learning on improving English writing skills. The experimental design was chosen for its suitability in measuring the effects of blended learning interventions on the development of writing proficiency. This study aimed to provide evidence of how blended learning enhances the development of students' English writing skills.

SAMPLE

The sample of the study consisted of first-year students at Derna University registered for the 2023-2024 academic year.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants were first-year university students enrolled in English courses at the Faculty of Education in Derna. 80 students participated in this study. The sample of the study was randomly selected which was divided into two groups: an experimental group (n=40, comprised of 20 males and 20 females) who received instruction via blended learning, and a control group (n=40, comprised of 20 males and 20 females) who received instruction via traditional learning methods.

INSTRUMENT

To evaluate the impact of the blended learning approach on improving English writing skills. This study utilized structured pre and post-test design. The tests were carefully designed to measure writing proficiency. The pre-test was conducted to both groups (experimental and control groups) prior to the implementation of the blended learning intervention. Achievement test used to evaluate students writing skills. This test aimed to establish a baseline measurement of the students' existing writing skills. The pre-test consisted of a series of prompts requiring students to write short essays under timed conditions. A post-test, with a similar structure and criteria as the pre-test, was administered after the intervention. The test was designed to assess the same writing skills evaluated in the pre-test.

The Study Reliability

The retest reliability resulted in a coefficient of 0.75. According to Pallent (2020), Pearson's correlation coefficients above 0.7 indicate a strong correlation, while coefficients between 0.4 and 0.6 show a moderate correlation, the result between 0 and 0.3 represent a weak correlation. Therefore, the test is considered reliable.

Procedures

At the beginning of the semester pre-test was conducted to two groups. Students were split into two groups: a control group and a intervention group. The control group received instruction using traditional teaching methods, which involved face-to-face lectures and paper-based assignments without any online components. Blended learning

intervention used Padlet, and Cambridge writing assessment .The intervention for the treatment group involved implementing blended learning techniques, including online exercises with feedback mechanisms, access to online resources, and participation in online forums. This intervention continued for 12 weeks. a post-test was administered for intervention and control groups at the end of academic term.

DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data collected from the pretest and post-test were analysed using an independent samples t-test. This test was utilized to compare the means between the experimental group (blended learning) and the control group (traditional learning). The t-test was selected due to its effectiveness in determining whether statistically significant differences exist between two independent groups under different conditions.

Findings and Discussion

First hypothesis

The first hypothesis posited that blended learning method has no statistically significant impact on the improvement of students’ writing skills versus traditional method in learning environments. The descriptive statistics displays a mean and standard deviation, for both groups in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post test	Control group	20	41.6500	.92233	.99509
	Experimental group	20	49.7000	.29250	.18344
Pre test	Control group	20	31.3000	2.34205	.75977
	Experimental group	20	39.6500	.51794	.90467

The control group's pre-test scores had (M = 31.30, SD = 12.34), while the intervention group's pre-test scores had (M = 39.65, SD = 8.51). The control group's post-test scores had (M = 41.65, SD = 8.92), and the intervention group's post-test scores had (M = 49.70, SD = 5.29) whereas control group post-test (41.6, . There was a difference in post-intervention mean scores. The experimental group show a higher mean performance with (8.05) than control group .

Table 2: Independent Sample Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.		Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Difference	95% Confidence Interval Of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Pre-test Control Equal Variances Assumed	1.755	.193	.099						
Experimental group Equal variances assumed			.099	36.209	.922	3.53000	3.53000	-6.80775	7.50775

Post-test Control group Equal variances Assumed	3.676	.063	-8.092						
Experimental group Equal variances assumed			-8.092	34.261	.000	27.90000	44792	-34.9050	-20.89495

Table 2 reveals that the results of the t-tests. The pre-test t-value of 0.099, with a corresponding p-value of 0.922, indicates no statistically significant difference in pre-test writing scores between the blended learning group and traditional method group. However, the post-test intervention results reveal a highly significant difference between the two groups, with a t-value of -8.092 and a p-value of .000 the experimental group has a significantly outperformed the control group in post-test. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. These findings suggest that blended learning has a statistically significant positive impact on the improvement of students' writing skills compared to face-to-face learning environments.

Second Hypothesis

H2: There is no statistically significant differences in the mean scores among students of different genders who participated in blended learning method versus traditional method.

Table 3: Gender Scores in Pre and Post tests

Gender		Pre test	Post test
Female	Mean	31.7500	41.0500
	N	20	20
	Std.Deviation	11.08282	12.61359
Male	Mean	38.8000	47.9500
	N	20	20
	Std.Deviation	10.26286	7.78308
Total	Mean	35.2750	44.5000
	N	40	40
	Std.Deviation	11.13089	10.91928

Table 3 shows that male students' mean scores increased from 38.80 on the pre-test to 47.95 on the post-test, demonstrating a greater improvement over the study period compared to female students, whose mean scores increased from 31.75 to 41.05. Posttest scores reveal that male students had a higher impact than female students.

Table 4 One Way ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pre-test	Between Groups	497.025	1	497.025	4.357	.044
	Within Groups	4334.950	38	114.078		

	Total	4831.975	39			
Post-test	Between Groups	280.900	1	280.900	4.284	.045
	Within Groups	2491.500	38	65.566		
	Total	2772.400	39			

The results of ANOVA test show that the instructional groups post-test is $F(1, 38) p = .045$ which is significant value (sig.) of post-test is less than (0 .05). the between- group sum of squares was 280.900, with a mean square of same value. On the post-test result, male scored statistically higher than female participants which indicate a gender-based difference in performance. As a result, the Null hypothesis, There is no statistically significant differences in the mean scores among students of different genders who participated in blended learning method versus traditional method is rejected.

Discussion

This study provides significant insights into the impact of blended learning on enhancing students' writing skills. The findings demonstrate substantial improvement in writing skills among EFL Libyan students who engaged in web-based-learning (blended learning).

The study's finding that blended learning intervention improves students' writing skills supports the integration of technology in education, as advocated by researchers. Horn and Staker (2015) and Pane et al. (2017) both suggested that blended learning enhances students' writing skills. Furthermore, Geta and Olango (2016) found significant achievement in writing skills among students participating in technology learning (blended learning)environments. Jumariati and Febriyanti (2020) reported that the application of the Line app within a blended learning context promotes writing skill development. This study results demonstrated that blended learning may dynamically improve writing skills within a Libyan context. This aligns with the notion proposed by Alqahtani and Rajkhan (2020) that blended learning is a superior method in educational environments, offering a valuable alternative to traditional methodologies by integrating web-based learning and traditional learning instruction.

The individual rotation model, as a personalized educational approach, utilizes technology-assisted learning alongside traditional instruction. A range of learning preferences can be accommodated through the design of individual learning models, which foster student participation and individualized learning.

The theoretical basis of the study strongly correlates with the results obtained. The results demonstrate that students in the treatment group, who utilized the technology learning approach, represented substantial advancement in students' writing skills. In contrast, students in the control group, who utilized the face to face instruction, revealed less achievement . These results support the theoretical framework's claim that blended learning is more effective and personalized than traditional instruction. The study suggests that blended learning can support students' individual learning styles ,needs, enhance student participation, and create a more effective learning experience.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that blended learning can dynamically improve writing skills within a Libyan context. This aligns with the notion proposed by Alqahtani and Rajkhan (2020) that blended learning is a superior method in educational environments, offering a valuable alternative to traditional methodologies by integrating both face-to-face and online instruction.

The individual rotation model, as a personalized educational approach, utilizes technology-assisted learning alongside traditional instruction. A range of learning preferences can be accommodated through the design of individual learning models, which foster student participation and individualized learning.

Recommendation of the study blended learning can implement in educational context in Libya, institutions of education should establish a set of tangible policies. The ministry of education should adopt a regulatory framework to combine digital platforms with traditional learning instruction, to confirm harmonization and equitable quality across Libyan educational institutions. Moreover, Libyan institutions should provide training program for teachers to equip with necessary technological skills and to incorporate technology in curricula and lesson plan. Thereby participation international educational platforms which implicate for students good access diverse, premium resources. Based on gender differences, intervention should focus on fostering females students engagement. Implementing strategies of gender-sensitive instructional design which enhance monitoring opportunities for female. Male strategies should promote sustained motivation and incorporating competitive and interactive could enhance academic persistence.

The limitation of study focus on small sample size in one educational institution which may effect on generalized the findings. Future study should implement across different educational contexts with larger sample groups to validate findings.

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