Exploring EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Blended Onsite and Online Teaching at Saudi Universities: Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract

Blended teaching has become increasingly popular since the COVID-19 pandemic because of how it combines online and in-person learning. However, few studies have examined blended teaching in Saudi Arabia, with limited data on how best to incorporate it into that cultural context. To address that gap, this study investigated how English as a foreign language (EFL) Saudi university teachers perceived this approach. The sample consisted of 123 male and female respondents (out of a target population of roughly all 4720 EFL teachers in the country). The participating teachers were typically in their 30s and in the first few years of their teaching career. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from a structured questionnaire (including open-ended, closed-ended, and Likert-scale questions) to determine the perceived advantages and disadvantages of this approach. The majority of respondents found blended teaching to be advantageous due to its flexibility in terms of time and location. Over half also believed it helped meet the different teaching modality needs of students. The biggest problems reported with this approach were workload and time management. Another issue was lack of technological infrastructure and support for this teaching model. The ANOVA results indicated that the predictors (perceived benefits, perceived challenges, and technical support) were correlated with teachers' attitudes toward blended teaching, validating the perceived importance of these factors. Such concerns could be alleviated by better technology, training, and guidance on navigating the dual modalities of face-to-face and online learning. Institutions and policymakers are recommended to consider these issues in order to improve the implementation of blended teaching.

Keywords: blended teaching, EFL, L2 teacher, online teaching, onsite teaching, Saudi Arabia

1. Introduction

1.1 Benefits of Blended Teaching

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a paradigm shift in education systems around the world from traditional in-person classes to teaching students through digital technology (Darmo & Čaplánová, 2022; Singh, Steele, & Singh, 2021). In response, blended teaching—the integration of offline and online learning—has become increasingly popular due to its various perceived advantages (Hung, 2021).

In blended teaching, students and teachers can access materials anywhere they have an internet connection, making it easier to balance learning with other responsibilities (Williams & Donlan, 2023). In this paradigm, foundational content is covered online before class, freeing up classroom time for materials that need to be discussed, problem-solving, and hands-on activities (Doucet, Netolicky, Timmers, & Tuscano, 2020). This can encourage critical thinking skills and self-directed learning. It also helps develop skills with technology that students will likely encounter in their careers and helps administrators and educators make more data-driven decisions.

Blended teaching thus provides greater flexibility (Darmo & Čaplánová, 2022). Students can engage in independent practice with the help of internet resources while receiving feedback from tutors during live meetings. In remote or underdeveloped locations in Saudi Arabia, for example, students may benefit from the convenience and accessibility of online teaching (Ekhmimi, 2018). This flexibility is important for adult or part-time students who may have employment or family obligations, allowing them to finish coursework at their own pace.

Digital resources, such as videos, audio files, and interactive applications, can assist students in enhancing their listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills (Alshahrani & Al-Shehri, 2012). Online discussion boards, quizzes, and feedback can also improve writing and reading skills by facilitating more practice than would be available in a typical classroom. The use of multimedia can increase student motivation, partly because they are accustomed to this technology in their daily lives (Feubli, MacKevett, & Schwarz, 2024).

In addition to providing access to teaching material, blended teaching can help meet learner preferences (Höfling, Oliveira Lucas, & de Oliveira, 2023). It allows students to practice language skills in a more engaging and individualized setting (Alshehri, 2017). More specifically, asynchronous teaching platforms enable students to engage in conversations, submit written tasks, and receive feedback from teachers at their own pace, resulting in a more in-depth mastery of the language. In Alshehri (2017), for instance, Saudi English as a foreign

language (EFL) students in blended teaching environments improved significantly in reading and writing after regularly using online platforms that gave rapid feedback. The synchronous hybrid teaching of English, a model of online and onsite teaching, has thus been discussed as a model to address the difficulties that EFL students encounter within the Saudi classroom (Almuarik & Alangari, 2024).

Furthermore, using digital technology in blended teaching can sharpen skills needed for other digital platforms in a society dominated by information technology. De la Varre, Keane, Irvin, and Hannum (2011) pointed out that the blended teaching model gives learners more opportunities to work with the content and have positive experiences based on their preferences and needs, which in turn can help develop better strategies to absorb the content.

1.2 Problems with Blended Teaching

Implementing blended teaching in an EFL classroom also comes with certain obstacles. One of the most important is the digital divide, a situation in which different students and teachers have different levels of access to physical equipment and the internet (Höfling et al., 2023). Where internet access is limited or students have less access to digital devices, blended teaching can deepen educational inequalities, making it difficult for all students to learn on an equal footing (Arnold, Davids, & Reiser, 2024; Höfling et al., 2023). In Bhutan, for instance, the transition to online teaching presented challenges in rural areas where internet infrastructure and affordability constrained access to digital education (Kuensel, 2020).

Brazil likewise shows a stark difference in digital literacy levels, particularly between urban and rural areas, as well as between socioeconomic groups (Winter, 2022). Not all students have the skills to engage fully with digital resources. In wealthier urban regions, students tend to have greater access to digital devices, internet, and digital skills, giving them a substantial advantage in online learning. For students in poorer and rural areas, online learning can become a daunting experience, with many struggling to keep up due to unfamiliarity with online platforms, reduced access to digital devices, or insufficient technical support.

In Saudi Arabia, one of the biggest challenges observed with education during the COVID-19 pandemic was an apparent undermotivation among students, an issue linked to such factors as the digital divide and a subpar learning environment (Oraif & Elyas, 2021). In 2020 and 2021, the country's Ministry of Education launched Madrasati ("my school") as a central platform for online instruction in Saudi public schools.

Moreover, blended teaching implies a significant shift in the education process, which can be challenging for teachers who have limited experience in this area. In Kaur (2013), teachers often noted the time and energy they had to spend to create and moderate online content along with face-to-face teaching. This can result in an overload of responsibilities and pressure on teachers, reducing the quality of their instruction and taking a toll on their emotional and physical health. In the same vein, Mahmood, Sharif, and Aleem (2024) and Skliarova, Meireles, Tchemisova, Ca ção, and Martins (2023) noted that online communication could be a drawback in language teaching, which values immediate feedback and interaction with others. Similarly, Rfissa (2023) pointed out that relying on such technology could reduce the interpersonal nature of the teaching process, leading to a more utilitarian approach.

Many English language teachers have voiced concerns about their technical competence and the learning curve that comes with incorporating online tools (Bui, 2022). This lack of confidence can prevent them from embracing blended teaching. Teachers frequently discover that encouraging students in an online environment necessitates different tactics than in a traditional classroom. Engagement, particularly in areas such as speaking and collaborative work, can be difficult to create online, raising concerns about finding the right balance between online and offline instruction.

Student motivation is a major issue in the English language education literature (Al-Hoorie, 2017). Students generally report a positive attitude toward studying online (Al-Jarf, 2007; Al-Owedi, 2020; Bukhari & Basaffar, 2019; Gulnaz, Althomali, & Alzeer, 2019), and studies have indicated that this approach is more likely to engage students and is associated with a higher motivation to learn (e.g., Kim & Frick, 2011). On the other hand, such an approach has to account for potential problems stemming from learners' surroundings and limited time, among other external issues (Hartnett, St. George, & Dron, 2011).

Al-Nofaie (2020) found that 25 students majoring in English at Taif University in Saudi Arabia lacked sufficient technology skills to use Blackboard. However, in the last several years, changes are expected to have been made since the Madrasati system was introduced, teaching students how to download PDFs, write notes online, and generally navigate the system.

For these reasons, English teachers often find themselves needing to offer basic technical support to their students, for example, showing them how to work with and share files (Sugarman & Lazarin, 2020). If teachers fail to assist students with technology, some students are expected to fall behind in English proficiency because the main medium of instruction on the devices and platforms used for these classes is English.

In one study in Saudi Arabia, Bin Dahmash (2020) conducted qualitative interviews with King Saud University students, who reported encountering technical issues with Blackboard, including compatibility, intermittent sound, and getting forcibly logged out. Such problems were more apparent when more people were attempting to use the platform at the same time. Likewise, when Mabrook and Mabrook (2020) asked 20 Saudi EFL university students, nearly two-thirds reported being repeatedly disconnected from the system, making it harder to take tests and teach students. Other studies have likewise found that poor internet quality interrupted learning and made online education more difficult, with learners potentially feeling frustrated and less motivated to learn (e.g., Hashim, Yunus, & Embi, 2018).

Another major concern for instructors is plagiarism (Mabrook & Mabrook, 2020). While tools for preventing plagiarism and cheating exist,

many teachers lack sufficient training to benefit from those tools, and in any case, students often have the skills to avoid being caught by such tools in the context of remote learning. As an example, in Mabrook and Mabrook's (2020) study, students looked up test answers online by employing another device. As a result, teachers were not able to get a true sense of how their students were developing.

Another source of difficulty is the teaching platform, as tools are often employed that are less secure or private than they should be for an educational context, such as WhatsApp (Alabasi & Alghamdi, 2019). This and other social media have been criticized for the ways they handle user data (Williams & Fudge, 2020). As Williams and Fudge (2020) noted, a prime example of this issue was Zoom, a previously relatively unknown videoconferencing service that was suddenly used by millions around the world to teach remote classes during the COVID-19 pandemic—despite security issues that allowed people to interrupt Zoom sessions they were not invited to. However, such problems did not necessarily lead to the service being replaced. In fact, a study by Alfadda and Mahdi (2021) showed that when Saudi EFL students used Zoom for university studies, they were more likely to see that platform as useful.

Al-Sinani (2023) found that communities in charge of training English teachers in Oman exhibited different levels of embracing blended teaching based on technical support, training support, and cultural disposition toward online teaching platforms. Almuarik and Alangari (2024) found that despite an overall endorsement of blended teaching in Saudi Arabia, there were issues with providing the same level of interaction between students and teachers online as in a traditional face-to-face scenario. Other papers on the use of digital resources in EFL environments have expressed similar findings, stating that the suitability of blended teaching approaches depends on the availability of sufficient technical support and on students and teachers alike being willing to change the way they do things to accommodate such approaches (AlTamimi, 2023; González, 2023).

1.3 Teachers' Perspectives on Blended Learning

Teachers' perspectives are critical to the success of blended learning. A survey conducted by Hung (2021) revealed that while teachers were grateful for the flexibility of teaching online, they experienced a lack of personal contact and increased working hours. Similarly, Al-Emran (2015) found that although faculty members in the Gulf region had positive attitudes toward mobile teaching, they had concerns about its reliability.

Teachers' impressions of blended teaching are influenced by the level of support they receive from their institutions, such as access to technology, professional development, and administrative assistance; a lack of resources or training can cause frustration and diminish the efficacy of blended teaching (Alshehri, Rutter, & Smith, 2019). The transition from traditional to blended teaching necessitates not only technical but pedagogical adjustments. In other words, EFL teachers must rethink lesson design, classroom management, and student assessment to accommodate this approach (Rahman, 2020). This frequently requires more time and effort from teachers, which could lead to resistance or ambivalence toward the new method.

Almuarik and Alangari (2024) investigated the synchronous blended teaching of English in Saudi Arabia, where teachers liked the idea of teaching students online but were annoyed by technical challenges, such as weak internet connectivity and a lack of online materials. In Anissa (2023), teachers acknowledged the positive effect that blended teaching had on students' engagement in EFL writing but identified difficulties in balancing the two modes of content delivery.

Liu, Zhang, and Gao (2023) found that teachers' perceptions played a crucial role in the adoption of blended teaching models in technology-enhanced language education through a scoping review of pedagogical design in this context. The perceived technological competence of teachers and perceived institutional support played a significant role in determining the level of blended teaching in classrooms. Participants who reported a lack of training or support voiced their opposition, reinforcing the importance of continuous education and organizational endorsement.

A study involving Egypt and the UAE found no significant differences between instructors in the two countries regarding technology readiness, attitudes toward technology, behavioral intentions, or preference for human interaction (El-Alfy, Gómez, & Ivanov, 2016). Key findings indicated a strong link between instructors' technology readiness, attitudes, and behavioral intention to adopt e-teaching. A preference for human interaction was a shared factor in both countries, suggesting it could influence instructors' willingness to adopt such technology.

As these studies demonstrate, teacher perceptions are important because they determine to what extent blended teaching is actually implemented (Almuarik & Alangari, 2024). Positive attitudes can foster better implementation and use, improving teaching and learning (Fadde & Vu, 2014), while negative perceptions—often associated with technical difficulties, greater workload, or lower quality of communication—can become an obstacle (Feubli et al., 2024; Garcia-Ortega & Galan-Cubillo, 2021). For instance, some teachers have indicated that while blended teaching has made it easier for them to access resources and materials, others are concerned about their ability to balance their in-person and online courses (De la Varre et al., 2011; Salih & Omar, 2023). Such concerns are particularly relevant in areas with relatively less teacher training in this approach, such as the Middle East and North Africa.

In Arab countries around the Persian Gulf, there is a growing interest in using blended teaching to meet the needs of university students (Al-Emran, 2015). Research in member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council shows that learners as well as instructors often report positive perceptions of blended teaching, acknowledging its benefits (Alqarni, 2023). In particular, technological innovations often pass through the UAE before appearing in other countries in the Middle East. While the UAE has combined traditional and online teaching since 2007 (Taha, 2007), less research has been conducted on these teaching methods in Saudi Arabia, since it has adopted them more recently.

1.4 Study Purpose and Objectives

Saudi Arabia has witnessed a major shift toward blending learning, especially in second language (L2) education (Mahmood et al., 2024). As noted above, teacher perceptions shape the education process and determine the success of applied strategies (Skliarova et al., 2023). However, few studies have investigated Saudi EFL teachers' perceptions of this type of teaching. The present study sought to address that gap with the following three objectives:

1) To determine how EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia view the blending of onsite and online teaching.
2) To identify the perceived benefits of blended teaching from the perspective of Saudi EFL teachers.
3) To explore the problems that Saudi EFL teachers associate with blended teaching.

This study is expected to enrich the literature on blended teaching practices, outcomes, and interventions. In addition, exploring the perceived strengths and weaknesses of this approach could lead to more effective teacher training.

2. Method

The study employed an exploratory design due to the relative lack of previous research on the topic. Thus, there was a need to generate new ideas and acquire in-depth information. This approach enabled the author to describe teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences without influencing them.

2.1 Population and Sample

The study population consisted of EFL university instructors in Saudi Arabia, focusing on those who had experience with both onsite and online teaching methods. The eligibility criteria stipulated that participants needed to have teaching experience, be actively teaching, and be willing to participate, ensuring representation across different levels.

Not being able to determine the exact population of EFL instructors in universities and language institutions in Saudi Arabia from the Ministry of Education website, the author made an estimate. Noting the educational provinces indicated by the Ministry of Education (2024), the author randomly selected one institution from each of those five provinces (Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western, and Central). Furthermore, the author counted the number of EFL instructors within each province based on individual university websites (Central: 68, Northern: 45, Southern: 78, Eastern: 25, and Western: 79), for a total of 295. There were 80 universities, colleges, and similar institutions in Saudi Arabia (List of Universities and Colleges in Saudi Arabia, 2019). This translated to an average of 59 EFL instructors in each university. Based on the above, the study population consisted of approximately 4720 EFL instructors in tertiary education in the country.

To determine a sample size that closely matched the general population, the author used Andrew Fisher's formula, the parameters of which are given in the following list and Figure 1.

1) Standard deviations are not usually determined. The author assumed there would be an average deviation from the statistics, choosing a standard deviation of 50% -0.5, with $p = 0.5$.
2) The margin of error was 5%. Since the author believed the statistical results would closely match the survey respondents chosen for the study, margin of error was set at 0.05.
3) The z-score is a standardized value according to the confidence level for the study; 95% is the usual confidence level for most studies. The z-score for this confidence level was 1.96.

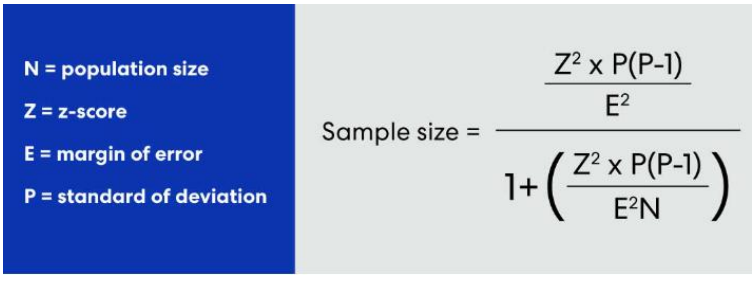

Figure 1. Sample size formula

Following this, the author arrived at an estimate of 356 for the sample size. The author emailed surveys to 356 individuals, randomly selecting them without bias for age, gender, or area. Removing any responses that were unusable due to incompleteness resulted in a total of 123 respondents, for a relatively good response rate of 35%.

2.2 Data Collection

The data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire administered through email and Google Forms. It included closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, and questions on a Likert scale. The Likert scale helped quantify teachers' views on blended teaching.

Each respondent signed a consent form prior to answering the questionnaire, which was self-administered. The consent form explained the

research goals, how any participation was entirely voluntary, and that all answers would be anonymous. It should be noted that although open-ended questions offer valuable qualitative insights, they have a number of drawbacks:

1) Compared to closed-ended questions that yield precise, quantitative data, open-ended responses require human coding and thematic analysis, which takes more time.
2) Responses may be viewed differently depending on the researcher's biases or preconceptions. The consistency and objectivity of the analysis may be jeopardized if multiple researchers categorize the same response differently.
3) Some participants may provide extensive, thoughtful responses, while others may provide brief or unclear responses, resulting in variable data quality and making it difficult to draw valid conclusions.

2.3 Data Analysis

The main dependent variable was the teachers' perceptions of blended teaching. This variable was captured under several sub-constructs, such as perceived effectiveness, level of engagement, level of satisfaction, and perceived difficulties in hybrid course delivery. The questionnaire items employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to measure the extent of agreement or disagreement with different statements concerning blended teaching.

The data were analyzed descriptively through frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. This gave an overall picture of the teachers' impression of blended teaching and any differences in responses based on age, teaching experience, or type of institution. Moreover, correlation analysis was used to identify the interconnections between the variables of interest, that is, teachers' demographic characteristics and their attitudes toward the use of blended teaching. The statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS since it could be used to manage large datasets and extract useful information from them. The outcomes were presented in tabular forms and graphs that enabled the researcher to more easily analyze the results and reach conclusions.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, with all respondents providing informed consent. The use of pseudonyms, safe data storage, and confidentiality was assured. Teachers knew that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

3. Results

3.1 Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the 123 EFL teachers are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	67	54.5
Female	56	45.5
Age Group		
20–29	28	22.8
30–39	50	40.7
40–49	32	26.0
50+	13	10.5
Years of Teaching Experience		
1–5	34	27.6
6–10	41	33.3
11–15	28	22.8
>15	20	16.3
Type of Institution		
Public University	48	39.0
Private University	37	30.1
Language Institute	38	30.9

The sample was 54.5% male and 45.5% female. The largest age group was 30–39 (40.7%), followed by 40–49 (26.0%). This meant that many of the teachers were in their early to mid-30s, which could play a role in their ability to embrace new techniques, such as blended teaching. Regarding teaching experience, 33.3% had been teaching for 6–10 years and 27.6% for 1–5 years, meaning that the majority of participants were still in the first decade of their career. Finally, 39% of teachers were in public universities, 30.1% were in private universities, and 30.9% were in language institutes. Thus, the sample was reasonably diverse in terms of the educational contexts that participants were embedded in, which was important when considering how perceptions of blended teaching might differ based on context. Overall, the sample encompassed a diverse range of teachers with different demographics, giving a broad overview of Saudi EFL teachers' perceptions of blended teaching.

3.2 Perceptions of Blended Teaching

The results for how EFL teachers perceived blended teaching are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Perceptions of blended teaching

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Blended teaching improves flexibility and accessibility	8.1%	12.2%	21.1%	36.6%	22.0%
Blended teaching increases student engagement	7.3%	13.0%	25.2%	39.0%	15.4%
Blended teaching adds an extra workload for teachers	6.5%	10.6%	23.6%	32.5%	26.8%
Online components reduce the quality of student-teacher interaction	9.8%	14.6%	28.5%	26.0%	21.1%
Adequate technological support is available for blended teaching	14.6%	23.6%	27.6%	21.1%	13.0%

The majority of respondents (58.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that blended teaching enhanced flexibility and accessibility, one of its perceived benefits. However, 47.1% either agreed or strongly agreed that online components negatively affected the quality of student-teacher interaction, supporting the idea of a perceived loss of direct engagement being a major issue. Furthermore, 59.3% of teachers indicated that blended teaching imposed a heavier workload, discouraging some of them from adopting it. Regarding technical support, responses were divided between 34.1% who agreed or strongly agreed that there was sufficient support and 38.2% who disagreed or strongly disagreed with this item. These results indicated that although blended teaching was considered flexible and easy to access, there were significant concerns about workload, interaction quality, and sufficiency of technical support.

3.3 Perceived Benefits of Blended Teaching

The second objective of this study was to ascertain the perceived advantages of blended teaching according to Saudi EFL teachers. Their responses are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Perceived benefits of blended teaching

Benefit	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Flexibility in teaching schedules and locations	4.9%	10.6%	22.8%	38.2%	23.6%
Increased access to teaching materials	5.7%	13.8%	25.2%	35.0%	20.3%
Enhanced student engagement through diverse resources	6.5%	13.8%	24.4%	38.6%	16.3%
Ability to cater to different teaching styles	5.7%	11.4%	24.4%	38.6%	19.5%
Improved student autonomy and responsibility	7.3%	15.4%	23.6%	36.6%	17.1%

The greatest perceived advantage in the data was greater flexibility in terms of schedule and location, with 61.8% of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, indicating that teachers appreciated the ability to choose the time and place that best suited them. The flexibility to meet the needs of students with different teaching modalities showed a 58.1% agreement, in line with the education objective of personalization. Increased availability of resources (55.3%) and interest of students (54.9%) were also identified as important. Blended teaching was thus perceived as a flexible model leveraging the advantages of online and face-to-face education. Nevertheless, these advantages were accompanied by the need to tackle certain problems, such as technological readiness and effectively managing one's workload, to make the most of these opportunities.

3.4 Perceived Disadvantages of Blended Teaching

The third study objective was identifying the difficulties and disadvantages that EFL teachers experienced with blended teaching, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Perceived challenges of blended teaching

Challenge	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Increased workload and time management issues	6.5%	11.4%	23.6%	32.5%	26.0%
Insufficient technological infrastructure and support	14.6%	20.3%	28.5%	24.4%	12.2%
Limited interaction and communication with students	8.9%	16.3%	27.6%	26.8%	20.3%
Difficulty in maintaining student motivation	9.8%	17.9%	27.6%	28.5%	16.3%
Lack of professional training in blended teaching methods	12.2%	17.9%	26.8%	26.0%	17.1%

The biggest problem according to respondents was workload and time management, with 58.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the dual mode of online and face-to-face delivery could be very challenging for teachers. The problem that received the second highest rate of agreement (47.1%) was a lack of interaction and communication with students. After that were losing students' interest (44.8%) and a lack of professional preparation for blended teaching (43.1%). The problem that received the lowest agreement was lack of technological infrastructure and support (36.6%). These findings revealed that although blended teaching has several advantages, it is imperative to solve related challenges to implement it effectively.

3.5 Regression Analysis

To further examine respondent attitudes (the dependent variable), regression analysis was performed to determine the relationships between perceived benefits, perceived challenges, and technical support (the predictors), as presented in Tables 5–7.

Table 5. Model summary

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Squared	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.723	0.522	0.517	0.354

The Multiple R of 0.723 implied a strong positive relationship between the set of independent variables (perceived benefits, perceived challenges, and technical support) and the dependent variable (attitude toward blended teaching). The R squared of 0.522 indicated that 52.2% of the variability in the dependent variable could be explained by the independent variables, suggesting that they played a strong role in influencing teachers' attitudes toward blended teaching.

Table 6. ANOVA results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	65.480	3	21.827	61.231	0.000
Residual	59.940	119	0.189		
Total	125.420	122			

The results of the ANOVA analysis for the regression model ($F(3, 119) = 61.231$) indicated that the predictors (perceived benefits, perceived challenges, and technical support) had a significant correlation with the teachers' attitudes toward blended teaching ($p < 0.05$), validating the importance of these factors.

Table 7. Regression coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		*t*	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		0.000
(Constant)	0.652	0.145		4.497	0.000
Perceived Benefits	0.298	0.060	0.387	4.967	0.000
Perceived Challenges	-0.243	0.065	-0.310	-3.738	0.000
Technical Support	0.215	0.059	0.265	3.627	0.000

As evident from the regression coefficients, perceived benefits had the highest beta weight ($B = 0.298$, $p < 0.001$), with a standardized Beta value of 0.387. This suggested that the more benefits were associated with blended teaching, the more likely a teacher would have a positive attitude about the program. Perceived challenges had an influence on teacher attitude, with a regression coefficient of -0.243 and *p*-value of less than 0.001. This meant that when challenges were perceived, attitudes toward blended teaching dropped by 0.310, which was highly significant. Finally, perceived technical support had a positive relationship with teacher attitudes ($B = 0.215$, $p < 0.001$), with a Beta value of 0.265; thus, adequate technological resources would appear crucial in improving teacher attitudes. These outcomes suggest that to promote positive attitudes toward blended teaching in Saudi EFL classes, policymakers and educational institutions could work on increasing perceived benefits, reducing perceived barriers, and providing better technology support. Overcoming these challenges could result in a more effective use of blended teaching in Saudi Arabia.

4. Discussion

This study explored perceived advantages and disadvantages of blended teaching according to EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. Over half the teachers (59%) embraced the flexibility and accessibility that blended teaching provided, agreeing with Hung (2021) and Almuarik and Alangari (2024). Whereas some teachers viewed blended teaching as a change for the better, 36.6% were concerned with the lack of face-to-face interaction with students, which is paramount in foreign language teaching (Skliarova et al., 2023). Other literature has similarly suggested it is difficult to achieve the same level of interaction and engagement in blended teaching models as in traditional face-to-face teaching (e.g., Feubli et al., 2024).

Other notable advantages of blended teaching were flexibility in the course schedule (according to 58.1% of respondents) and useful material and teaching guides (53.3%). These results aligned with previous findings about the benefits of integrating digital technology to make teaching more flexible and student-oriented (e.g., Darmo & Čaplánová, 2022; Fadde & Vu, 2014). For example, the fluidity of blended teaching can make it easier to address the needs of all students, which is crucial in teaching languages, where all or most students require assistance (De la Varre et al., 2011).

The use of multimedia in blended teaching was another advantage that has reportedly led to increased student engagement (cf. Garcia-Ortega & Galan-Cubillo, 2021). In the present study, teachers also saw a benefit in students' increased digital competencies that prepared them for their future careers, agreeing with Garcia-Ortega and Galan-Cubillo (2021) and Feubli et al. (2024).

On the other hand, the biggest concern about blended learning was a heavier workload and time management, as teachers had to combine online and onsite work. This agreed with studies in which teachers have expressed similar concerns and a need for support and resources to handle the duties that come with blended teaching (e.g., Kaur, 2013; Mahmood et al., 2024; Romero & Usart, 2014).

The lack of technological infrastructure and support was another perceived problem with blended teaching (Höfling et al., 2023). Although the use of technology across platforms is generally high in Saudi Arabia, 36% of teachers in the present study called for better technology use in EFL classes. Concerns highlighted by teachers included the reliability of technology and availability of resources, which are important determinants of the quality of blended teaching (cf. Pathiranage & Karunaratne, 2023).

Perceived barriers had a significant negative impact on attitudes toward blended teaching. According to the data, views toward blended teaching declined in proportion to its perceived difficulties. A clear inverse relationship showed that the attitude score fell by 0.243 units for

every unit rise in perceived obstacles. The strength of this relationship was significant ($p < 0.001$).

These results suggest that attitudes toward and willingness to participate in blended teaching are likely to decline when teachers perceive blended teaching to be challenging or run into perceived logistical, pedagogical, or technological difficulties. Thus, the very idea of obstacles could serve as a disincentive, making them think less highly of blended teaching's usefulness and efficacy.

This insight emphasizes the critical need to resolve perceived obstacles to promote favorable attitudes toward blended teaching. Offering assistance and resources to institutions using blended teaching may help them overcome these obstacles, which could result in more positive attitudes and improved performance.

In future research, longitudinal studies could draw insights into changes in L2 instructors' perceptions as they gain more experience with blended teaching. Comparative studies on the perceptions of L2 teachers in various regions or education levels would aid in identifying context-specific obstacles and opportunities for blended teaching. Researchers could also look into whether specific training modules on using digital technology, designing blended curricula, or managing student involvement in a hybrid class would result in more favorable teacher perceptions and better teaching practices.

5. Conclusion

In this study, Saudi EFL teachers reported various perceived opportunities with blended teaching, the most important being flexibility, accessibility, and differences in teaching styles. These advantages stem from tendencies in education that have shifted toward blended models combining elements of online and face-to-face classes. However, teachers also reported challenges to this approach, most notably a greater workload, an under-provision of technical support, and lower-quality interaction with students. Based on the data, institutions and policymakers could address these challenges to improve L2 teachers' attitudes toward blended teaching.

According to the results, offering better technology, training, and guidance on navigating the dual modalities of face-to-face and online learning could reduce certain pressures EFL teachers reportedly experience. Better professional development and training, in particular, could help reduce the demands of blended teaching, thereby boosting teachers' skills and confidence. Policymakers would also do well to focus on overcoming the digital divide and helping teachers manage the challenges of blended teaching.

The present study has demonstrated that blended teaching holds great promise for improving language education in Saudi Arabia. However, for the approach to be effective, a multifaceted strategy is needed that considers the factors related to technology, pedagogy, and culture affecting teachers' perceptions. By creating the right environment and tackling the challenges described above, blended teaching can become a highly effective model for L2 education in Saudi Arabia and other countries.

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