

EFL Distance Learners' Attitudes Towards Virtual Teaching and Learning Environment

إعداد

Ali Ahmed Suleiman

Assist. Prof., College of Languages and
Translation

Islamic University of Minnesota

gmail.com ,@Email: alyahmedo

aasuleiman@ium.edu.so

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0292-4511-0002-0000>



الجامعة الإسلامية بمينيسوتا

Islamic University of Minnesota

المركز الرئيسي IUM





Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand EFL distance learners' attitudes towards virtual teaching and e-learning environment to determine role of these factors in the academic achievement of the participants. Survey method was used to collect data about Distance EFL learners, points of views towards distance learning, towards virtual classes and towards online instruction. The research was conducted Islamic University of Minnesota in the academic year 45 .2023-2022 female e-language learners majored in English participated in the survey. 23 students from were level I and 22 were from level ٢. The results of the research revealed that there were no significant differences in students' attitude towards distance, towards virtual classes and towards online instruction between the ٢ levels.

Keywords: EFL, learners' attitudes, distance education, e-learning, virtual classes



■ Introduction

Distance learning, particularly in higher education, is not a new concept. It is the where both the instructor and the learner and the teacher are physically separated in both time and space (Anderson & Rivera Vargas, 2020). Distance learning requires a ground technological infrastructure, and well-trained human resources to mediate, support student learning and provide distance learning courses. E-learning, a modality of distance education, is manifested by complementary virtual environment where all the interactions are mediated through network technologies. E-learning in this context, then, refers to courses taken outside a formal physical classroom.

Learners around the world are looking for flexible learning opportunities (Turan et al., 2022) to meet their needs for improvement particularly when the discipline required is not available in their home country (Yadav, 2016), or it costs lots of money (Burns, 2011; Harasim, 2000). One way to achieve their goals is distance learning via Internet-based technologies. The evolution of online technologies offers educational institutes worldwide the opportunity to create online mentors to support student study in every educational field of as well as foreign languages (Finger et al., 2010). Through the use of electronic communication tools, e-instruction becomes an effective tool that aids students to learn online. Online learning, thus enhances learning and make learning more accessible to all learners across the boundaries.



Regardless the great advantages of e-learning, some learners may find distance learning programs, inappropriate and lack the liability of traditional education, though the content is the same. With the absence of face-to-face interaction and inappropriate teaching techniques some EFL students feel a bit isolated and lagging behind. This may be due to the fact that some universities are not ready to implement appropriate distance learning, both in terms of human resources and technological infrastructure. Learners' perspectives and attitudes are the most important factors that govern the relationship between the learners, instructors and the institute; moreover, they determine learning process, learning outcome, and contribute to the stability and improvement of the whole educational system.

Literature Review

Research relating to online education have increased due to the development in internet and computer technology and the rise of new online learning programmes in different educational systems, especially during and after the Covid 19 curfew. In developed countries, higher education students have different attitudes towards e-learning, mostly of have positive attitudes towards virtual education (Campbell et al., 2002).

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature conducted on learners' attitudes towards online education. Some of those studies disclosed negative learners' attitudes towards online education such as Alharthi (2020); Benadla and Hadji



(2021); Hussain (2007); Lengkanawati et al. (2021); Unger and Meiran (2020). Other studies revealed students' partial attitudes towards virtual education Benadla and Hadji (2021); Erarslan and Topkaya (2017); Ibrahim et al. (2002). While, Cinkara and Bagceci (2013); Kalayci and Humiston (2015); Omar et al. (2012); and Liaw and Huang (2011) reported positive attitudes towards e-learning and virtual classes.

Of the negative studies was Hussain (2007), who studied college students' attitudes towards virtual education in Pakistan. He found that virtual students claimed that they face some technical and health problems such as: password problems, electricity failure, computer vision syndrome, fingers' joint pain, backache, headaches and dizziness. This finding can be viewed as negative attitudes towards virtual learning since they negatively affect adaptability with online learning.

Another study conducted by Alharthi (2020) revealed that e-learners face many problems in using online learning tools due to the sophisticated technologies used in distance learning. He also found out that most activities used in e-learning courses focused on reading materials and online discussion forums rather than audio, social networking or online conferencing.

Equally important was Lengkanawati et al. (2021), which examined the views of Indonesian undergraduate EFL in implementing online learning during the Covid 19 curfew. He reported that students faced many difficulties to e-learning during the pandemic such as lack



computer and internet skills, unstable Internet connections, and faculty's imperfect knowledge with e-learning tools. In addition, the implementation of online learning was more conducive to learner autonomy. Benadla and Hadji (2021) revealed that graduate students have a negative attitude toward e-learning and prefer physical classroom to virtual learning.

On the other hand, Unger and Meiran (2020) assessed undergraduate student attitudes towards the swift shift to online learning setting due to corona virus outbreak. The results of the study revealed almost half of the respondents stated that they feel anxious towards distance education while the other halve were satisfied. Likewise, Ibrahim et al. (2002) surveyed virtual undergraduate students in University Tun Abdul Razak (UNITAR) and found out that the respondents had only a moderate level of readiness and a moderate level of attitude towards online learning.

Erarslan and Topkaya (2017) studied Turkish university students studying English in their preparatory year through online classes. It was found that the students have partially positive attitudes toward online course; yet, the online courses do not enable the learners in terms of their overall learning achievement in the preparatory year. Sahu et al. (2022) believed that gender and specialization affect learners' attitude towards e-learning. He stated that undergraduate female students had more positive attitude toward e-learning compared to male students.

Complementary to the previous mentioned studies, Cinkara and



Bagceci (2013) surveyed language learners' attitudes towards e-learning and correlated students' attitudes to their learning achievement. The results revealed positive correlation between learners' grades and their success in the course. Furthermore, Kalayci and Humiston (2015) investigated preparatory students' attitudes towards the collaborative tools used in Moodle and whether there are significant differences in learners' attitudes towards traditional and collaborative activities. Results showed that the collaborative tools used in the virtual learning settings have significantly positive effects compared to traditional learning. The results also showed that students have positive attitudes towards the collaborative tools even though they do not have enough experience with collaborative tools.

Omar et al. (2012) investigated learners' attitudes toward e-learning and to ensure that learners can gain the benefits of e-learning. The results showed that learners' attitude plays an important role in predicting e-learning. Besides, their study revealed that learner attitudes are a main factor in ensuring that learners remain engaged with their mentor. More precisely, Liaw and Huang (2011) explained that male students have more positive attitudes towards e-learning compared to their female counterparts. They also came to the fact that that computer-related experience is an important indicator of learner's self-efficiency and enthusiasm for online learning. Likewise, Posey et al. (2010) reported positive impacts of remote teaching on the learners' experience.

Additionally, a study conducted on EFL students at the English department at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia/ Jijel University,



Algeria revealed that students are aware of the benefits of online learning. They believed that online learning makes them more confident and responsible and self-directed. Nevertheless, they prefer physical classroom setting learning to online learning because of the difficulties they face when learning online such as poor technology skills, lack of technical support and feeble interaction with the instructors (Boumekah & Debiche, 2021). As well as, in a similar a study aimed at investigating the differences in students' attitudes towards online learning and their opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of distance education, Serbian students indicated that one of the advantages of distance education is that they acquire additional knowledge and skills in using technology and that they can choose the time and place for solving class assignments (Aleksandra et al., 2020).

In an experimental study conducted by Zainal et al. (2022), Iranian EFL students were pretested by a grammar test and a motivation survey, results reveal that the experimental group, who studied online outperformed the controlled group who received the same material through face-to-face instruction on both the grammar and motivation. Turkish EFL learners also showed positive attitudes towards technology and self-satisfaction on the academic achievement of the e-learners (Cakır & Solak, 2015).

When comparing the experiences of online learners to conventional distance learning students, the online students felt that they gained valuable experience in using the Internet and related tools (Carswell et al., 2000), and they showed deep satisfaction with



online courses and methods of online instruction (Campbell et al., 2002)et al). Conventional distance learning student believed that using the Internet contributed to learning about the course content. Fini (2008) indicated that factors such as independence, guidance from professors, and multimedia instruction are the most effective variables in using virtual learning

Attitudes, which are «a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards significant objects, groups, events or symbols» (Vaughan & Hogg, 2005), whether it negative, positive, explicit or implicit can guide and influence learner's decisions and behavior. The sturdier the attitude learners have, the more likely it should affect learners' behavior. Knowing a learner's attitude helps repeaters predict their behavior and find possible solutions. "Instructor characteristics and teaching materials are the most apparent predictors for usefulness of e-learning. besides, learners' active engagement in learning activities increases learners' motivation" (Suleiman, 2022), and therefore positive attitudes as well.

2.1 Problem of the Study

The Islamic University of Minnesota (IUM) offers two routes of learning, in-class and virtual distant learning. For distant learning it adopts Zoom technology as a learning platform. From the researcher's experience as a lecturer at IUM, he observed that some students checked out and didn't attend the online-class at all and some logged in but do not engage in class discussion or

refuse to participate in class. Such learners' behaviour reflects their attitudes towards distance learning which, in turn, affects their success and progress. Consequently, some students may drop some courses or even withdraw and quit university. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate this issue by asking the following question: What is the EFL students' attitudes towards distance learning at the Islamic University of Minnesota?

2.2 Significance of the Study

This study tries to find out EFL students' attitudes towards distance learning at Islamic University of Minnesota. It could be worthy to the concerned authorities and stakeholders of the university as one of the few studies if not the only study in this field up to the researcher's knowledge. The study could provide valuable information by identifying students' perspectives and attitudes towards the university, e-learning method and the virtual language instruction. Additionally, the researcher it could be a kickoff for further and deeper studies in the field in the future.

2.3 Aims of the Study

This study, thus, is trying to investigate EFL undergraduate learners' attitudes towards e-learning and distance education in general. The present study attempts to answer the following questions:



- I What are EFL learner's at IUM attitudes towards distance learning?
- II What are EFL learner's at IUM attitudes towards virtual classes?
- III What is EFL learners' attitudes towards online instruction?

III Methodology

In this research, a quantitative research survey was administered by using Likert-scale response choices. Therefore, an online questionnaire was developed as a tool to measure the student's point of view towards distance education. A 5-point Likert scale was used to rate the items since the participants were obliged to have an opinion ("1" = Strongly disagree, "2" = disagree, "3" = not sure, "4" = agree, and "5" = Strongly agree). The terms "Strongly Agree" as well as "Agree" are used to mean a positive attitude whereas the terms "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" are considered to mean a negative attitude.

3.1 Participants

The targeted population in this study are 40 online undergraduate female students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) at the College of Arts and Humanities at Islamic University of Minnesota. The participants were selected randomly from level 1 and level 2. Those who responded to the data collection tool with valid responses is (45) students with a response rate reaching to (%79.2). The questionnaire was delivered via WhatsApp to the

targeted population and the students were asked to participate to respond to the questionnaire. 45 questionnaires were completed and submitted successfully. For the participants characteristics, 51.1% of the respondents were level 1 (n=23), while 48.9% were level 2 (n=22). All participants were female.

Table I. General Characteristics of Respondents

	No	%
Level 1	23	51.1
Level 2	22	48.9
Total	45	100.0

3.2 Research Instruments

In this study, the researcher used an online questionnaire to collect the data. The researcher designed the questionnaire based on the literature review and the research questions. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: demographic questions and attitudes questions. The second part consists of 20 items across three domains: (1) students' attitudes towards distance learning, (2) students' points of views towards virtual classes, and (3) students' evaluation of online instruction.

3.3 Validity and Reliability of the research tool

To test validity, the questionnaire was administered to a number of judges majoring in EFL. Based on the judges' comments and observations, the researcher modified the questionnaire and



rephrased the questions requiring more clarity and relevance to the intended objective. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test the consistency and reliability of the research instrument. Cronbach's alpha for all items of the questionnaire is 0.899, which is a high reliability value. The reliability score for each of the items if item deleted ranges between 0.90 and 0.898, which showed excellent reliability (Field, 2013, p. 675). Thus, the questionnaire is considered a reliable instrument (Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

Results

a. Attitudes towards distance learning

To answer the first question of the study, «What are EFL learner's at IUM attitudes towards distance learning?», the researcher used means scores, standard deviation and degree level for each item and for the total degree for the questionnaire. In the analysis of the research survey, the five-point Likert scale is considered an interval scale where the mean score is highly significant. Accordingly, combined mean scores interval from 1 to 1.8 means: strongly disagree; from 1.81 to 2.60: disagree; from 2.61 to 3.40: neutral; from 3.41 to 4.20: agree; from 4.21 to 5: strongly agree. Data were computed using one-way ANOVA to examine differences of attitude dimensions between level 1 on and level 2.

Table 2 presents the statistical results of the first part of the questionnaire which measures learners' attitudes towards distance learning. Results reveals that the highest mean score was 4.18, indicates that student agreed that distance learning



enabled them to pursue their high education. Distance learning system has a reliable administrative system was ranked second, with a mean score of 4.02, as participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Distance learning system has a flexible educational system was ranked third, with a mean score of 4.00, where participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The lowest score was assigned to the distance learning system overcomes social barriers with a mean score of 3.62 which mean that participants were not sure about the item. The weighted mean for the first part of the questionnaire which investigates learners towards distance learning is 3.9079 with the standard deviation of 0.72149. this result reveals that EFL students at Islamic University of Minnesota were in favour of distance learning. It is apparent from this table that level I students have higher motivation towards distance learning with overall mean 3.9689 and the standard deviation of 0.74225 compared to level II which got overall mean of 3.8442 and standard deviation of 0.71075.

Table.2 Learners attitudes towards distance learning

Item	level 1		level 2		Total				
	Mean	Std. D	Mean	Std. D	Mean	Std. D	Rank	Attitude	
1	Distance learning is the best choice to proceed with my education.	4.17	0.96	3.52	1.18	3.87	1.08	5	Agree
2	Distance learning uses educational technologies that help me improve my educational abilities.	4.08	1.10	3.38	1.18	3.76	1.17	6	Agree
3	Distance learning system has a flexible educational system	4.12	1.06	3.86	1.04	4.00	1.04	3	Agree
4	Distance learning system has a reliable and flexible administrative system	4.04	0.96	4.00	0.84	4.02	0.89	2	Agree
5	Distance learning tuition fees is affordable	3.88	1.29	3.95	0.93	3.91	1.16	4	Agree
6	Distance learning system enables students in remote areas to pursue their high education	4.17	1.20	4.19	1.23	4.18	6	1	Agree
7	Distance learning system overcomes social barriers	3.63	1.279	3.62	1.04	3.62	1.21	7	Agree
Weighted mean		3.4762		3.4694		3.4730		Agree	
St. deviation		0.74489		0.68533		0.70961			

Table 3 presents the one-way ANOVA results on students' attitude towards distance learning. The result reveals that the significance was $0.05 < 0.975$, which means that there were no significant differences in students' attitudes towards distance learning IUM due to the academic level.

Table.3 One-way ANOVA results on the differences in the students' attitude towards distance learning due to academic level



	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	.Sig
Between Groups (Combined)	.001	1	.001	.001	.975
Within Groups	22.155	43	.515		
Total	22.156	44			

b. Attitudes towards virtual classes

Regarding IUM students' attitudes towards virtual classes, statistical data of participants responses to the second part of the questionnaire were presented in Table.4 showed that the item "Virtual classrooms make me feel more motivated to participate in discussions" has got the highest mean of 3.98 With standard deviation of 1.097. The second highest response was allotted to 'Virtual classroom makes me feel more comfortable participating in classroom discussions" with the mean of 3.96 and standard deviation of Virtual classrooms play a significant role in improving my oral communication skills has got the third highest mean of 3.93 and the standard deviation of 1.156. The lowest mean 3.53 was devoted to 'In virtual lessons, it is easier to interact with my instructors and peers'. the overall mean of the second part was 3.8381 and the standard deviation .86929 which means that IUM EFL learners presented positive attitudes towards virtual classes. A comparison of level I and level ٢ mean scores, it is clear that level 2 students scored means in all items is above 4.00 except in item 14 "In virtual lessons, it is easier to interact with my instructors and peers". The overall meaning shows that level I students are highly motivated towards virtual classes with mean score of 4.1429 and the standard deviation of 0.72721 than level 2 students who got the

total mean score of 3.4898 and the standard deviation of 0.90302.

Table 4 Attitudes towards virtual classrooms

Item	level 1		level 2		Total				
	Mean	Std. D	Mean	Std. D	Mean	Std. D	Rank	Attitude	
8	Virtual classrooms play a significant role in improving my oral communication skills	4.25	1.07	3.57	1.17	3.93	1.16	3	Agree
9	Virtual classrooms make me feel more motivated to participate in discussions.	4.42	0.78	3.48	1.21	3.98	1.10	1	Agree
10	Virtual classroom makes me feel more comfortable participating in classroom discussions	4.29	0.81	3.57	1.03	3.96	0.98	2	Agree
11	Virtual classrooms help me overcome my oral communication difficulties	4.04	0.96	3.57	1.25	3.82	1.11	4	Agree
12	I feel more confident when I speak in virtual classrooms.	4.12	0.99	3.29	1.27	3.73	1.16	5	Agree
13	In virtual lessons, it is easier to interact with my instructors and peers.	3.67	1.44	3.38	1.20	3.53	1.33	6	Agree
Weighted mean		4.1319		3.4762		3.8259		Agree	
St. deviation		0.70878		0.92988		0.8259			

Table 0 presents the one-way ANOVA results on the differences in the students' attitude towards virtual classes. The results reveal that the significance was $0.05 < 0.10$, which means that there were no significant differences in students' attitudes towards virtual classes at IUM due to the academic level.

Table 5 The one-way ANOVA results on the differences in the students' attitudes towards virtual classes due to academic level



	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	.Sig
Between Groups (Combined)	4.816	1	4.816	7.179	.010
Within Groups	28.848	43	.671		
Total	33.664	44			

c. Attitudes towards online instruction

To examine EFL learners' attitudes towards online instruction, the participants were requested to state their point of views towards online instruction. data of the second section was presented Table.6. According to the results, the highest mean score was given to item 15 "The instructors motivate me to use e-learning" 3.69 with standard deviation of 1.019 which means that student agreed to their online instructors motivate them to study online. The instructors provide me with information on my learning progress was ranked second, with a mean score of (3.60) standard deviation (1.095) which indicate that the participants agreed with the statement The instructors' measurement of student performance is fair was ranked third, with a mean score of (3.60) standard deviation (0.939). This result indicate that which means that the participants were in favour of instructors' method of measuring and assessing learners' academic performance. The lack of face-to-face communication makes it difficult to participate in discussions received the mean score of 3.27 and the standard deviation 1.268 which respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement. The lowest score was assigned to the statement 'There is no difference between traditional and online instruction', with a mean score of 3.02 and the standard deviation 1.340. the weighted mean

score revealed that both level 1 and level 2 have almost the same mean score 3.4762 and 3.4694 and the standard deviation 0.74489 and 0.68533 respectively which mean that students at both have positive attitudes towards online instruction. The overall mean score was 3.473016 and the standard deviation was 0.709610.

Table 7 learners' attitudes towards online instruction

Item	level 1		level 2		Total				
	Mean	Std. D	Mean	Std. D	Mean	Std. D	Rank	Attitude	
14	The instructors provide high-quality instruction	3.67	1.20	3.43	1.03	3.56	1.12	5	Agree
15	The instructors provide me with information on my learning progress	3.46	1.26	3.76	0.94	3.60	1.06	2	Agree
16	Online instructors motivate me to pursue my distance education.	3.71	1.04	3.67	1.02	3.69	1.02	1	Agree
17	The instructors deliver lectures and learning materials clearly	3.63	0.97	3.69	1.02	3.58	1.01	4	Agree
18	The instructors' measurement of student performance is fair	3.71	1.04	3.52	1.08	3.60	0.96	3	Agree
19	The lack of face-to-face communication makes it difficult to participate in discussions.	3.25	1.39	3.48	0.81	3.27	1.27	7	Agree
20	There is no difference between traditional and online instruction	2.92	1.27	3.29	1.15	3.02	1.34	6	Agree
	Weighted mean	3.4762		3.4694		3.473016		Agree	
	St. deviation	0.74489		0.68533		0.709610			

Table.7 presents the one-way ANOVA results on the differences in the students' attitude towards online instruction. The significance value was $0.05 < 0.975$ which means that there were no significant differences in students' attitudes towards online instruction at IUM due to the academic level.

Table.7 The one-way ANOVA results on the differences in the students' attitude towards online instruction due to academic level

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	.Sig
Between Groups	.001	1	.001	.001	.975
Within Groups	22.155	43	.515		
Total	22.156	44			

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to investigate undergraduate EFL learners' attitudes towards distance education. The researcher posed several questions grouped into three major classifications/subdivisions: attitudes towards distance learning, learners' attitudes toward virtual classes, and learners' attitudes towards online instruction. Responses from 45 undergraduate female EFL students were surveyed by the mean of an online questionnaire. Participant responses disclosed different expectations and experiences, ranging from satisfaction to dissatisfaction with distance education

a. Attitudes towards distance learning

From the findings above, the results revealed that the participants, who were distance female EFL learners, reported positive attitudes towards distance education. The EFL learners in IUM perceived that online education is the best choice for them pursuing education.



This result indicates that some distance learners have difficulty to joined in campus or formal education due to many reasons such as work, age inability to bear tuition costs, and health problems. The flexibility of the educational and administration system also be a major reason for students to pursue their studies online. These findings are similar to Turan et al. (2022) who noted that learners around the world look for flexible learning opportunities. Harasim (2000) also agrees that for many learners distance learning is affordable, practical, and easy to access. It is also believed that distance learning systems enabled students in remote areas to pursue their high education across borders, which could be impossible for many learners to study on campus abroad. Some students believed that distance learning had shortened the distance and boundaries between countries. Similarly, Yadav (2016) demonstrated the benefit of virtual classrooms in removing geographical barriers. Distance education courses have proven to be, for many learners, the only feasible and the least expensive (Burns, 2011); therefore, a satisfactory way to study.

b. Attitudes towards virtual classes

The results revealed that the participants, who were distance female EFL learners, reported positive attitudes towards virtual classes. Respondents believe that the virtual classroom setting makes them feel more motivated and comfortable participating in classroom discussions. This finding is in line with Boumekah and Debiche (2021) who believed online learning makes them more confident and responsible and self-directed. The same results are supported by other researchers like Cakır and Solak (2015) who

reported positive attitudes of Turkish EFL e-learners' towards technology along with their self -satisfaction on the academic achievement.

In virtual classroom settings, learners are usually involved in live interaction between instructors and participants. Participants also agree that make them feel confident and help them overcome their oral communicative skill. Many researchers such as Harasim (2000) and Suleiman (2022) argue that virtual classes encourage active learning where learners are actively engaged in learning activities which increases learners' motivation . Shy learners were found to be interacting more frequently than in the face-to-face mode (Montgomerie & Harapnuik, 1997)

c. Attitudes towards online instruction

The results of the research found that the attitudes of the student are favorable towards online teaching. Students believe that the instructors provide them with information on their learning progress and motivate them to use e-learning. This finding was also reported by Fini (2008) who indicated that guidance from professors is one of the most effective variables in using virtual learning. One important finding is that participants believed that lack of face-to-face communication makes it difficult to participate in discussions. This result is in agreement with that obtained by Benadla and Hadji (2021) who reported that graduate students have a negative attitude towards e-learning and prefer physical classrooms to virtual learning. In this respect, online instructors blame a student for not turning on the camera in virtual classrooms which make communication between them and their students



even more difficult (Dung, 2020). However, results also revealed that participants affirmed that there is no difference between traditional and online instruction. From the researcher's point of view, this drawback could be attributed to learners, lack of social and technical skills in a virtual learning environment some other learners only depend on the recorded lectures because they were busy during class time. Besides, some students are often late for class while others leave class in the middle of the lesson (Dung, 2020). In general, therefore, it seems that IUM EFL students are satisfied with online instruction.

Conclusion

The current study aimed to assess online EFL students' attitudes towards online education, virtual classes, and online instruction. Though this research is limited to undergraduate female students at the Islamic University of Minnesota. The findings of the study demonstrated positive attitudes towards distance education. Distance learners thought of online learning as a meaningful learning method that empowers students' self-reliance, develops their technological skills, and enables them to take more initiative to solve their problems positively.

With the huge Internet technology innovations, distance education is witnessing a giant growth and lots of learners are seeking ways to find seats in one of those institutes. It's less expensive, flexible, and self-paced than traditional education. Nevertheless, some students find many reasons to be against distance learning, while

others are in favour of it.

Some students believe that distance education may not be the best choice for many students seeking a college degree. Moreover, they believe that distance education does not have the credibility as traditional one and that it does provide a recognized degree. Even though online education is beginning to gain recognition, still there are many fraudulent institutions that offer unaccredited degrees. Other students find online classes incompatible and difficult to pursue online classes due to the instability of internet connection. However, it cannot be denied that the lack of face-to-face interaction with the instructors and the absence of classmates in the physical setting as are main drawbacks of distance learning. On the other hand, some other students are in favour of distance education. For they argue any learner, particularly those who study at higher education institutions, can attend classes from any location worldwide. Moreover, employed students can also find some flexibility which enables them to pursue a job along with studies. Distance learning can also lead to a partial reduction of tuition fees for students from remote locations who are not obliged to travel abroad and live on campus or rent an apartment near the university. Roughly speaking, online students can actively participate in online learning activities as often as possible like regular traditional classes. Thus, the main characteristic of distance learning programs is that they offer students the opportunity to learn and improve their abilities in an effective and adequate learning atmosphere at their own pace.

Although this study was limited to EFL undergraduate students



at the Islamic University of Minnesota, the results are obviously in favour of distance learning. In general, this shows that there are far more people who are in favour of distance learning than those who have negative attitudes and are unwilling to take advantage of this trend. These results are a clear indication of many advantages and benefits of distance learning in contrast to the few limitations it brings. However, this study will go a long way towards highlighting the huge contribution to e-learning society in general and distance education in particular. A generally positive attitude towards distance education is a clear indicator of broader social acceptance of this type of education. It supports the concept of e-learning and increases trust in virtual world intercommunication. Further studies can tackle how to promote activate instruction in virtual language classes and how to assure credibility of distance education.

References

- Aleksandra, A. V., Stanković, S., Golubović-Ilić, I., & Herodek, K. (2020). The Differences in Students' attitudes About Online Teaching During Covid19- Pandemic. *Pedagogika-Pedagogy*, 210-205 ,92.
- Alharthi, M. (2020). Students' Attitudes toward the Use of Technology in Online Courses. *International Journal of Technology in Education*, 23-14 ,(1)3.
- Anderson, T., & Rivera Vargas, P. (2020). A critical look at educational technology from a distance education perspective. *Digital Education Review*, 2020, num. 37, p. 229-208.
- Benadla, D., & Hadji, M. (2021). EFL Students Affective Attitudes towards Distance E-Learning Based on Moodle Platform during the Covid19-the Pandemic: Perspectives from Dr. MoulayTahar University of Saida, Algeria. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on Covid*, 19.
- Boumekah, C., & Debiche, I. (2021). EFL Learners' Attitudes Towards the Use of Online Learning During COVID19- Pandemic. The Case of EFL Undergraduate Learners at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University-Jijel University-Jijel].
- Burns, M. (2011). Distance education for teacher training: Modes, models, and methods.
- Cakır, R., & Solak, E. (2015). Attitude of Turkish EFL learners towards e-learning through tam Model. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 601-596 ,176.
- Campbell, M. C., Floyd, J., & Sheridan, J. B. (2002). Assessment of student performance and attitudes for courses taught online versus onsite. *Journal of Applied Business Research (JABR)*,



2)18).

- Carswell, L., Thomas, P., Petre, M., Price, B., & Richards, M. (2000). Distance education via the Internet: The student experience. *British journal of educational technology*, ,(1)31 46-29.
- Cinkara, E., & Bagceci, B. (2013). Learners' attitudes towards online language learning; and corresponding success rates. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 130-118 ,(2)14.
- Dung, D. T. H. (2020). The advantages and disadvantages of virtual learning. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 48-45 ,(3)10.
- Erarslan, A., & Topkaya, E. Z. (2017). EFL students attitudes towards e-learning and effect of an online course on students success in English. *The Literacy Trek*, 101-80 ,(2)3.
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*. sage.
- Finger, G., Sun, P.-C., & Jamieson-Proctor, R. (2010). Emerging frontiers of learning online: Digital ecosystems, blended learning and implications for adult learning. In *Web-Based Education: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools and Applications* (pp. 1695-1684). IGI Global.
- Fini, A. A. S. (2008). Survey on professors and student's attitude about virtual learning in Iran universities. *International journal of education and information technologies*, 35-31 ,(1)2.
- Gliem, J. A., & Gliem, R. R. (2003). Calculating, interpreting, and reporting Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for Likert-type scales.
- Harasim, L. (2000). *Shift happens: Online education as a new*

paradigm in learning. The Internet and higher education, -1)3
61-41 ,(2).

- Hussain, I. (2007). A study of student's attitude towards virtual education in Pakistan. Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education, 79-69 ,(2)8.
- Ibrahim, D. Z., Silong, A. D., & Samah, B. A. (2002). Readiness and attitude towards online learning among virtual students. 10th Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities, Nueva Delhi, India,
- Kalayci, S., & Humiston, K. R. (2015). Students' attitudes towards collaborative tools in a virtual learning environment. Educational Process: International Journal, 6 ,(1)4.
- Lengkanawati, N. S., Wirza, Y., & Alicia, D. (2021). EFL Learners' View on Online Learning Implementation During Covid19- Outbreaks. 4th Sriwijaya University Learning and Education International Conference (SULE-IC 2020),
- Liaw, S.-S., & Huang, H.-M. (2011). A study of investigating learners attitudes toward e-learning. 0th international conference on distance learning and education,
- Montgomerie, T. C., & Harapnuik, D. (1997). Observations on Web-based course development and delivery. International Journal of Educational Telecommunications, 203-181 ,(2)3.
- Omar, N. D., Hassan, H., & Atan, H. (2012). Student Engagement in Online Learning: Learners Attitude Toward E-Mentoring. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 475-464 ,67. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.11.351>
- Posey, G., Burgess, T., Eason, M., & Jones, Y. (2010). The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Virtual Classroom and



the Role of the Teacher. Southwest Decision Sciences Institute Conference,

- Sahu, N., Meher, V., Sahu, S., & Dash, N. (2022). Undergraduate Students' Attitude Toward E-Learning: Gender and Stream of Education Perspectives. *The Online Journal of Distance Education and e-Learning*, 425 ,(3)10.
- Suleiman, A.A. (2022). Active Learning Strategies Administration in English Language E-Learning Environments in Saudi Universities. *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR)*, 220-212 ,(12)8.
- Turan, Z., Kucuk, S., & Cilligol Karabey, S. (2022). The university students' self-regulated effort, flexibility and satisfaction in distance education. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 19-1 ,(1)19.
- Unger, S., & Meiran, W. R. (2020). Student attitudes towards online education during the COVID19- viral outbreak of 2020: Distance learning in a time of social distance. *International Journal of Technology in Education and Science*, 266-256 ,(4)4.
- Vaughan, G., & Hogg, M. A. (2005). Introduction to social psychology.
- Yadav, G. (2016). Reflection on virtual classes: Spirit of the time. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 1167-1162 ,(4)4.
- Zainal, A. G., Ismail, S. M., Tagibova, A. A., Al-Sayyed, S. i. W., Wekke, I. S., Sofyawati, E. D., Islam, M. Z., & Haidari, M. M. F. (2022). An Account of EFL Learners' Grammatical Knowledge and Motivation toward Learning in an Online Instructional Environment. *Education Research International*, ,2022 8099222. <https://doi.org/8099222/2022/10.1155>



الجامعة الإسلامية بنيسوتا
Islamic University of Minnesota
المركز الرئيسي IUM