Exploring EFL Students' Perceptions: A Comparative Study of Online and Face-to-Face Learning Environments

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Abstract

Online learning achieved great popularity due to advancements in technology and the rising effects of digitization. The present study aims to explore Students' learning English as a foreign language (EFL) perceptions towards face-to-face versus online learning in terms of the most affecting dimensions in the learning process; in addition to assigning the most challenging problems they encountered. The mixed-method research design was employed to thoroughly investigate the issue. In the initial phase, quantitative data were gathered and analyzed to understand learners' perceptions. The second phase involved the collection and analysis of qualitative data allowing for a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by participants in both learning environments. Based on reviewing related literature, the study questionnaires were developed and distributed to (112) participants via Google Forms to investigate the students' perceptions regarding the study variables (time management, flexibility, use of technology, interaction, comprehension, satisfaction, motivation, and overall effectiveness). The statistical findings revealed that most of the students had a positive perception towards online learning concerning the dimensions of flexibility, time management, use of technology, motivation and overall satisfaction.. While they preferred the face to face learning with regard to the dimensions of interaction, comprehension, and overall effectiveness. Moreover, personal interviews with the participants revealed that there were many challenging problems in the online learning environment such as the poor internet connection, absence of support and lack of interactive

communication. Qualitative data also revealed that there are many challenges to the face to face learning such as fear of judgement, lack of confidence and distraction social anxiety. The results suggest that online learning can serve as an effective solution for teaching and learning.

Key words: English as a Foreign Language (EFL); Online learning; Face-to-Face Learning; Students' Perceptions; Challenges.

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I. Introduction

Online learning has shifted from a marginal trend to a mainstream approach for of English as a foreign language (EFL). The rise in higher education institutions offering online English courses highlights this increased popularity. This shift has caused significant changes in education, especially in language learning. As technology advances, it is crucial to enhance learning outcomes by effectively utilizing these advancements. By incorporating innovative tools and resources, educators can boost interaction and proficiency among English learners, ensuring that online platforms deliver a dynamic and interactive educational experience. Online learning (e-learning) utilizes digital technology to deliver educational content through visuals, animations, videos, and audio enhancing the learning experience and providing support. The shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic required rapid adaptation from both teachers and students offering flexibility for live sessions or self-paced access to materials (Schneider and Council, 2020; Saleem, Butt & Rafique, 2021; Sadaf et al., 2024; Siddiqui, 2025).

While online learning offers advantages like flexibility in time and location, it also poses some challenges such as potential negative effects on academic performance and mental health compared to traditional classrooms. Research is increasingly focused on improving online learning experiences, optimizing digital environments, and ensuring active support for students in both virtual and in-person settings. The growth of online learning

has led to comparisons with traditional methods, which are crucial for informing future educational strategies (Maitelo et al., 2023; Jalbani, 2023).

Advancements in information and communication technology (ICT) created effective learning solutions for university teachers and students. The number of higher education institutions adopting accredited online English courses has significantly increased. Online learning has led to several important developments. It provides new teaching methods and innovative approaches to teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) and as a Foreign Language (EFL). It supports curriculum changes particularly in language learning, prompting reforms in curriculum design and pedagogical strategies. Moreover, online learning improved teaching effectiveness through opening new avenues for investigating teaching effectiveness in language education. Overall, e- learning is increasingly recognized for its role in enhancing English language learning through the integration of educational technology (Samat, et.al, 2020; Raheim, 2020).

The shift from face-to-face to online learning has brought numerous challenges such as time management, motivation, technology usage, and internet access. Despite these obstacles, many students have experienced advantages from this transition such as time savings, increased flexibility, and the ability to work at their own pace. Consequently, e-learning has become essential in higher education today. It improves the learning experience through various tools like assignments, presentations, quizzes, and forums. This transition has created unexpected opportunities and provided unlimited access to educational resources for all learners (R & Mahajan, 2018; Sa'diah et al., 2020; Ferri, Grifoni & Guzzo, 2020; Verasingam et al., 2020; Chisadza et al., 2021; Ali & Alouraini, 2023; Pazhanivelu1, 2025).

Online learning is a necessary pedagogical shift in response to technological advancements. Interactive online learning allows

students to explore resources like digital libraries, facilitating global knowledge dissemination. This mode of learning supports self-directed education, enabling students to choose their learning pace and revisit challenging topics in a comfortable environment. Students can review lessons through recorded lectures and utilize online resources for deeper understanding. Communication between educators and students can occur via chat features on meeting platforms, messaging apps, or phone calls (Ariffin et al., 2020; Mansor et al., 2021; Raheim, 2020; Samat et al., 2020).

Equipping students to succeed in digital media has become a key priority for higher education institutions, highlighting the need for enhanced proficiency in digital technologies among educators. Online learning has become a viable substitute to face-to-face instruction. Many learners favor this mode of instruction because they feel skilled and confident in using technology which facilitates independent study (Tang and Lim, 2013).

For the purpose of this study, online learning is defined as a teaching and learning process between teachers and learners that employs different digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Google Classroom, and other meeting tools. This definition encompasses not only direct instruction but also exercises, assignments, and activities provided online by instructors.

Basar et al. (2021) investigated the effectiveness of e-learning and the challenges students faced during this transition. Findings underscored the necessity for government officials, school administrators, teachers, and parents to acknowledge the importance of essential resources and perfect internet connectivity in fostering an effective learning environment.

Arumugam, Ibrahim, Hadeli, and Nasharudin (2022) explored how students feel about online in comparison to traditional learning to understand their preferences, performance, study load, interactivity, and the challenges they face in both formats.The results showed a variety of experiences among students. Many

highlighted poor internet connectivity, especially in rural areas as a significant challenge. Most students favored a blended learning approach enjoying both face to face and online sessions.

Asif, Khan, and Habib (2022) explored students' perceptions of an e-learning system used by various educational institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers conducted a web-based survey with randomly selected university students to assess the effectiveness of the e-learning approach. The findings indicated that e-learning was highly favorable and beneficial during the pandemic. Students expressed positive perception toward the online education system. Key advantages highlighted included flexibility, cost-effectiveness, opportunities for self-learning, and overall convenience.

Ahmed, Ibrahim, and Mohammed (2023) conducted a comparative study on the perception of university nursing students during the COVID-19 pandemic focusing on the two learning modality (online and face to face). The findings pointed out that students generally held a positive view of both distance learning and traditional instruction.

Bi, Javadi and Izadpanah (2023) studied the effects of face-to-face and online learning on student retention and interest in English language courses among learners. The results demonstrated significant differences in learning outcomes with the e-learning group showing greater interest in online classes. Students in this group scored higher in areas such as happiness, attention, interest, and participation.

Hung and Bao (2023) explored the rising popularity of online learning. This descriptive study examined English language learners using an online questionnaire and proficiency test scores to assess its effectiveness. Statistical findings proved that learners had generally supportive perceptions of e-learning across the areas of taught material, teachers, learning environment, and course support.

Notably, online learners achieved better results on the exams compared to their peers in traditional face to face classes. The study concluded that online learning is more effective than traditional educational landscape.

Sun (2023) explored students' experiences and attitudes towards face-to-face and online learning methods using questionnaires. The findings revealed significant differences between the two approaches, especially in terms of effective teaching, clear objectives, and suitable assessments. A crucial factor contributing to these differences was the limited social interaction on campus which necessitates the need for online platforms and instructors to enhance interaction and foster meaningful student engagement.

Ishtiaq, Shahid, Khan (2024) investigated EFL learners' perceptions of face-to-face and online learning particularly focusing on communication differences and challenges. Using a mixed-method design. Statistical results showed that most participants find communication easier in face-to-face classes compared to online formats. The study reached the conclusion that learners prefer face-to-face learning for its smoother communication.

Thus, as a result of the above discussion, it is essential to examine the perceptions of EFL students regarding the integration of e-learning in the educational environment as it became an indispensable element of the educational process. In addition to investigating its advantages and challenges.

2. Problem of the Study

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions confronted the possibility of complete closure and adapted by implementing e-learning platforms. This study quantified the impact of online learning on EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students studying at the Faculty of Arts. The researcher explored the perceptions of (112) EFL students regarding

online learning compared to traditional face-to-face instruction, as well as the challenges associated with each modality. Understanding these perceptions is essential, as they directly affect students' academic performance and overall satisfaction with the learning process.

Furthermore, addressing the identified challenges, educational institutions can maximize the benefits of both learning modalities and enhance the overall educational process ensuring better preparedness for any future disruptions similar to the this pandemic. The results of the present research paper may help concerned policy makers to make effective decisions and plan appropriate strategies for any sudden disasters that might happen in the future. Moreover, online learning became an essential component of the learning process that complements the face to face learning.

After reviewing related literature, the researcher attempted to investigate the impact of the following dimensions as the most affecting factors in the learning process as follows: comprehension, interaction, time Management, flexibility, motivation, overall satisfaction, and using technology. Despite the growing prevalence of online education, there is limited understanding of students' perceptions regarding both learning modalities particularly in the context of (EFL). That's why the present study seeks to investigate EFL learners' perceptions and challenges of online and face-to-face learning focusing on the above mentioned factors.

Thus, understanding (EFL) students' perceptions is essential, as they significantly affect the academic performance and overall satisfaction with the learning process. The study aims to identify the factors contributing to students' perceptions of online and face-to-face learning and the implications for enhancing the effectiveness of both modalities. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate the current situation by addressing the following research questions:

3. Questions of the Study

The main question of the present study was:

"What are the perceptions of EFL students studying at the Faculty of Arts regarding the face-to-face and online learning and what are the challenges and obstacles?"

- This main question can be subdivided into the following sub-questions:

1. What are the students' perceptions concerning the face-to-face and online learning modalities in terms of: comprehension, interaction, time management, motivation, flexibility, using technology, perceived effectiveness, and overall satisfaction with each teaching method?
2. What are the EFL students' perceptions of face-to-face learning?
3. What are the EFL students' perceptions of online learning?
4. What are the challenges and problems faced by the EFL students during online learning?

4. Hypotheses of the Study

The present study examined the following hypotheses:

1. There will be no statistical significant differences at the 0.001 level between the mean scores of the students' perception in the online and face to face learning concerning the comprehension dimension.

2. There will be no statistical significant differences at the 0.001 level between the mean scores of the students' perception regarding the online and face to face learning concerning the interaction dimension.

3. There will be no statistical significant differences at the 0.001 level between the mean scores of the students' perception in the online and face to face learning concerning the time management dimension.

4. There will be no statistical significant differences at the 0.001 level between the mean scores of the students' perception in the online and face to face learning concerning the motivation dimension.

5. There will be no statistical significant differences at the 0.001 level between the mean scores of the students' perception in the online and face to face learning concerning the flexibility dimension.

6. There will be no statistical significant differences at the 0.001 level between the mean scores of the students' perception in the online and face to face learning concerning the using technology dimension.

7. There will be no statistical significant differences at the 0.001 level between the mean scores of the students' perception in the online and face to face learning concerning the perceived effectiveness dimension.

8. There will be no statistical significant differences at the 0.001 level between the mean scores of the students' perception in the online and face to face learning concerning the overall satisfaction dimension with each teaching method.

5. Study Objectives

The present study aims at the following:

1. Exploring the EFL students' perceptions of face-to-face and online learning in terms of comprehension, interaction, time management, motivation, flexibility, technology use, perceived effectiveness, and overall satisfaction with each teaching method.

2. Investigating the challenges encountered by the English majors learners in both face-to-face and online learning environments.

6. Significance of the Study

Conducting this study may contribute to:

1. Understanding students' experiences and preferences which helps to better address their needs.

2. Improving educational practices by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of both learning methods which allows improving students' learning and interaction which ultimately leads to a more effective educational environment.

3. Adapting to digital transformation through integrating digital technologies to   develop effective digital resources and curricula.

4. Improving learning outcomes through refining instructional design to boost students' motivation, satisfaction, and academic performance in EFL courses.

5. Informing policymakers as they make decisions about incorporating online learning into the learning process.

7. Methodology of the Study

7.1. Design

The present study employed the mixed-method research design. Gathering data passed through two phases: quantitative data were gathered and examined first, then the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the second phase to gather comprehensive data on the EFL students' perceptions of online and face-to-face learning methods. The study was conducted during the first semester of the academic year (2024/2025). The data were gathered using questionnaires which were distributed online via Google Forms to collect quantitative data. This phase focused on gathering numerical data related to students' perceptions and experiences regarding the two teaching methods. The quantitative data were analyzed statistically to identify perceptions and opinions in students' responses. The second phase focused on the qualitative data through the researcher open ended interviews with the participants to

investigate their perceptions regarding the challenges of both learning methods (online and face to face). This allowed for deeper insights into students' thoughts and feelings concerning their learning experiences. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically to extract meaningful insights and understand the student perspectives.

7.2 Participants

The current study participants are (112) students studying at the English Department, Faculty of Arts, Delta University for Science and Technology. The sample depended mainly on the fourth year students in particular in order to examine their accumulated experience along their four years of study at the university. Those students enjoy the most accumulated experience with regard to the two types of learning modalities (online and face to face).

7.3. Instruments

The study instruments were developed by the researcher after reviewing previous studies and related literature. The study adopted structured questionnaires to assess the effect of the independent factors on the dependent ones. Based on a review of the literature on both learning methods and students' perceptions, the questionnaires were developed and distributed. This study instruments aimed to gather data on learners' perceptions and challenges toward online and face to face learning environments. The participants' responses to the questionnaires follow the five point Likert-scale as follows (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree).

The questionnaires consists of (8) sections. Section (1) examines the students' perception of both learning modalities (online and face to face) with regard to the comprehension factor. Section (2) checks the participants' perception of both learning modalities with regard to the interaction factor. Section (3) checks the participants' perception of both learning methods with regard to

the time management factor. Section (4) checks the students' perception concerning the motivation factor. Section (5) deals with the participants' perception regard to the flexibility factor. Section (6) checks the students' perception concerning the "using technology" factor. Section (7) evaluates participants' perception regarding the effectiveness of both learning modalities. Finally, the last section (8) of the questionnaires investigates the participants' responses concerning their overall satisfaction of both learning methods. The questionnaires were designed by the researcher after reviewing related literature. The study instruments can be illustrated in the following figure (Figure 1):
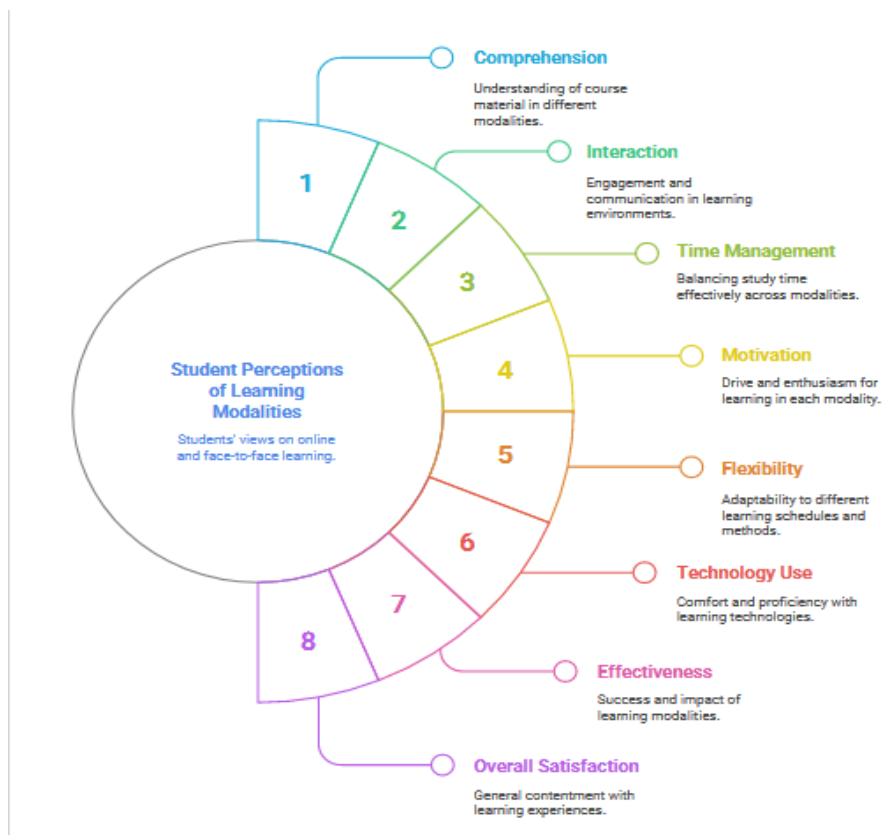

Figure (1): Exploring Students' Perceptions towards the Study Variables

- Validity

A structured approach was employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the study data collection instruments. The questionnaires were judged by five professors to evaluate the validity. Two professors suggested some modifications on the number of statements and the wording used in the questionnaires and the interviews. All modifications were considered.

- Pilot Testing:

- The questionnaires were piloted with (30) students to identify any issues and refine the items.
- The interviews were piloted with (20) students to ensure clarity and effectiveness in eliciting meaningful responses.

- Reliability:

The Cronbach's Alpha was applied to check the reliability of the questionnaires, it was ($\alpha= 0.92$). The questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive analysis, and the interview was analyzed using thematic analysis.

8. Results and Discussion

8.1 The Results

- Results of the quantitative analysis:

The first phase involved quantitative data analysis through the statistical examination of the study questionnaires. The results of each questionnaire were displayed and discussed statistically. Means, standard deviations, and t-test values were calculated to examine the study hypotheses and assess students' perceptions of the two learning modalities (online and face-to-face) concerning the study variables as outlined below:

- Examining the first hypothesis concerning students' perceptions regarding the comprehension dimension:

Table (1): The T-test values for the mean scores of the students' perception towards the comprehension dimension in the online and face to face learning

Dimension	Learning modality	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Freedom Degrees	T -Value	Signif. level
Comprehension	Face to face	112	4.4933	.30101	111	28.554	<.001
	Online	112	1.9129	.90774			

As shown in the table above, the calculated t-value was (28.554) which suggests a highly statistical significant differences between the two means. This t- value is significant in favor of the face to face teaching, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. These results indicate agreement among students regarding the superiority of this mode in enhancing understanding.

- Examining the second hypothesis concerning the students' perceptions regarding the interaction dimension:

Table (2): The T-test values for the mean scores of the students' perception towards the interaction dimension in the online and face to face learning

Dimension	Learning modality	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Freedom Degrees	T - Value	Signif. level
Interaction	Face to face	112	4.5129	.30135	111	22.249	<.001
	Online	112	3.4028	.38695			

As illustrated in the table above, the calculated t-value was (22.249) which indicates a highly statistical significant differences between the two means. This t- value is significant in favor of the face to face teaching which leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Thus, students prefer the traditional face to face

learning on the online modality concerning the interaction dimension.

- Examining the third hypothesis concerning the students' perceptions regarding the time management dimension:

Table (3): The T-test values for the mean scores of the students' perception towards the time management dimension in the online and face to face learning

Dimension	Learning modality	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Freedom Degrees	T - Value	Signif. level
Time management	Face to face	112	2.0509	.60983	111	37.078	<.001
	Online	112	4.5045	.27159			

The table shows that the calculated t-value was (37.078) which indicates a highly significant statistical differences between the two learning methods. These results prove that the differences between the two modes is not random but reflects a real variation in student opinions, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Thus, students prefer the online learning method to the face to face one in terms of the time management dimension. This result may be due to differences in the students' ability to adapt to fixed schedules or pressures associated with physical attendance.

- Examining the forth hypothesis concerning students' perception regarding the motivation dimension:

Table (4): The T-test values for the mean scores of the students' perception towards the motivation dimension in the online and face to face learning

Dimension	Learning modality	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Freedom Degrees	T - Value	Signif. level
Motivation	Face to face	112	3.4219	.39625	111	24.512	<.001
	Online	112	4.4135	.30412			

The results from the previous table show that the calculated t-value was (24.512) which indicates a highly significant statistical differences between the two learning methods. These significant differences affirm that students perceive online learning as more effective in enhancing their motivation to learn in comparison to traditional learning, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

- Examining the sixth hypothesis concerning students' perception regarding the flexibility dimension:

Table (5): The T-test values for the mean scores of the students' perception towards the flexibility dimension in the online and face to face learning

Dimension	Learning modality	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Freedom Degrees	T -Value	Signif. level
Flexibility	Face to face	112	2.0381	.71150	111	33.571	<.001
	Online	112	4.5170	.26847			

The table above shows that the calculated t-value was (33.571) which indicates highly significant statistical differences between the two mean scores of the online and face to face learning methods. This means that the differences between the two modes is not random but reflects a real variation in student opinions and perceptions. Thus, students prefer the online learning modality over the traditional one in terms of the flexibility dimension. These statistical results lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis that denies the significant differences.

-Examining the seventh hypothesis concerning students' perceptions regarding the use of technology dimension:

Table (6): The T-test values for the mean scores of the students' perception towards the use of technology dimension in the online and face to face learning

Dimension	Learning modality	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Freedom Degrees	T -Value	Signif. level
Use of Technology	Face to face	112	2.5824	.57894	111	31.653	<.001
	Online	112	4.4883	.26013			

As illustrated in the table above the calculated t-value was (31.653) which proves a highly significant statistical differences between the two learning methods. This confirms that the differences are not random but reflects a real variation in student perception, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. These results confirm that the students prefer the online learning modality over the face to face learning in terms of the use of technology dimension.

- Examining the eighth hypothesis concerning students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness dimension:

Table (7): The T-test values for the mean scores of the students' perception towards the effectiveness dimension in the online and face to face learning

Dimension	Learning modality	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Freedom Degrees	T -Value	Signif. level
Effectiveness	Face to face	112	4.4795	.26750	111	33.054	<.001
	Online	112	2.1812	.67324			

The previous table showed that the calculated t-value was (33.054) which signifies a highly significant statistical difference between the two learning modalities. This confirms that the difference between the two modes is not random but reflects a real

variation in student perceptions, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. These statistical results prove that the study participants prefer the face to face method to the online leaning method concerning the dimension of effectiveness.

-Examining the ninth hypothesis concerning the students' perceptions regarding the overall satisfaction dimension:

Table (8): The T-test values for the mean scores of the students' perception towards the overall satisfaction dimension in the online and face to face learning

Dimension	Learning modality	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Freedom Degrees	T -Value	Signif. level
Satisfaction	Face to face	112	4.4273	.49138	111	2.143	<.001
	Online	112	4.5132	.22965			

As shown in the table above, the calculated t-value was (2.143) which reflects a statistically significant difference between the two learning methods. These statistical results point out that online learning achieves higher satisfaction than the face to face. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. These results confirm that students prefer the online learning method on the face to face learning modality concerning the satisfaction dimension.

Thus, it could be concluded that there are statistical significant differences between students' perceptions regarding the study variables which represent the most affecting factors in the learning process. The participants prefer the online learning modality with regard to the dimensions of flexibility, motivation, time management, technology, and the satisfaction. Meanwhile, they prefer the face to face teaching method in the dimensions of interaction, comprehension and overall effectiveness. These preferences can be attributed to many factors which will be illustrated in the "Discussion" section. The study results can be depicted as shown in figure (2):
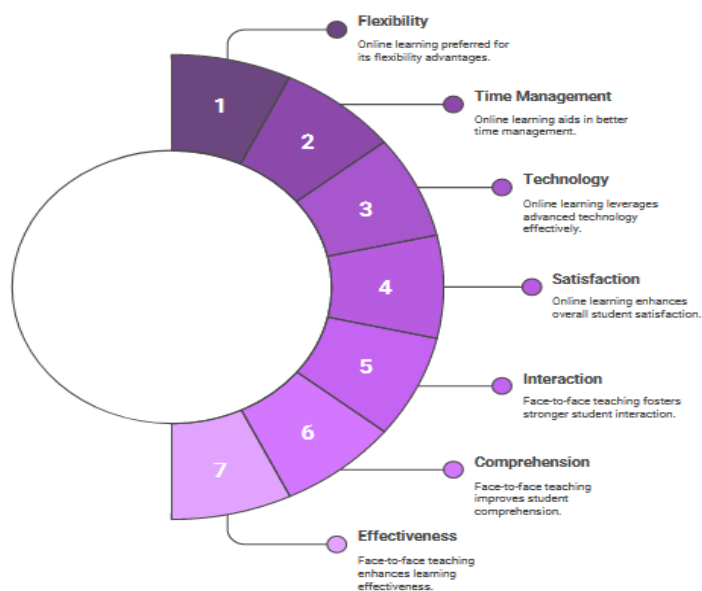
Figure (2): EFL Students' Learning Preferences (Developed by the researcher)

In addition, figure (3) illustrates the statistical results of the students' perceptions concerning each teaching method as follows:
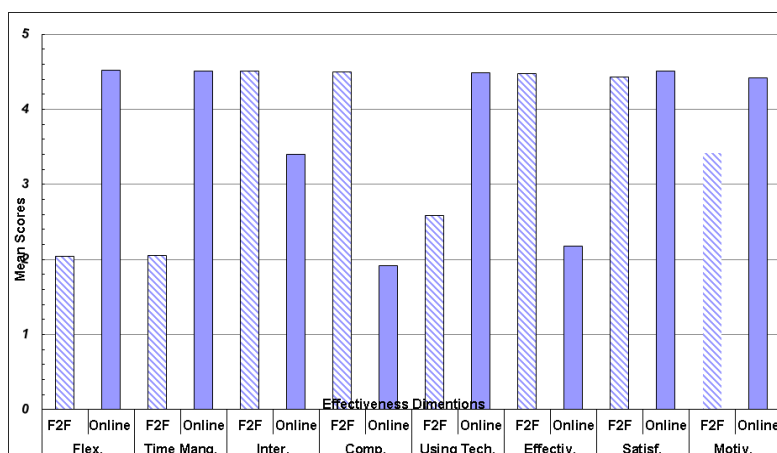

Figure (3): Statistical Results of the Students' Perceptions

- Results of the qualitative analysis:

- Challenges in Online Learning

In order to check the challenges and difficulties related to the online learning, the researcher conducted several open ended interviews and discussions with the participants. They reported many problems concerning both teaching methods. As for the online learning, students expressed various concerns particularly regarding internet connection which acts as a barrier to comprehension. They suffered from poor connection and poor voice quality. Other students reported the interrupted schedules that in turn affect their comprehension. In order to overcome this problem some students suggested making recorded lectures to be available any time for the students.

Besides, participants suffered from the irregular schedules in online learning. Students used to attend their lectures at a fixed time according to a fixed schedule. Moreover, students suffered from the lack of interaction and communication both among the students themselves and between them and their teachers. Participants expressed that they miss the facial expressions, body language and hand gestures. The lack of mutual interaction and discussions was the most demotivating aspects of online learning. They lack the opportunity to ask questions, they just sit and listen. Meanwhile, many participants prefer face to face learning environment because they struggle to concentrate during online sessions, often distracted by excessive use of the social networking websites such as what's app and Facebook. Unlike face to face classes, students in online settings work independently, which needs higher self-motivation. Furthermore, gestures, body language, and vocal cues greatly enhance interaction and help establish the pace of face-to-face classes. Figure (4) shows the challenges to online learning.
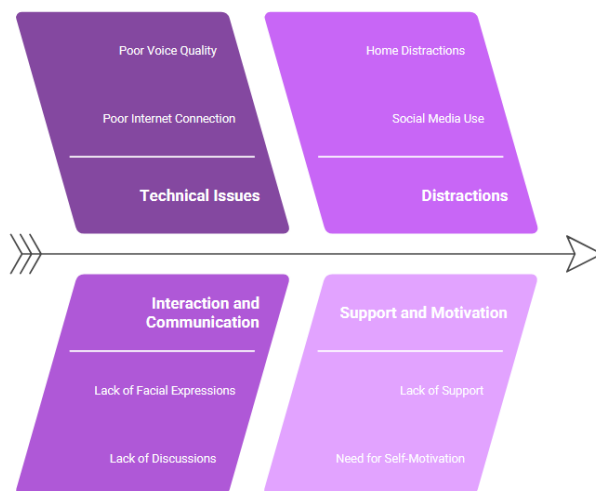
Figure (4): Challenges to Online Learning (Developed by the researcher)

- Challenges in Face-to-Face Learning

The study participants reported many problems concerning online learning. These problems and challenges can be summarized in the following points:

- Lack of Confidence: Participants reported that the lack of confidence is the most crucial challenge in face-to-face learning. Many students expressed fear of speaking English and the reactions of their peers.

- Fear of Judgment: students worry about their peers reactions which discourage students from interactive activities in class.

- Language Barriers: Students with limited language proficiency may hesitate to communicate leading to frustration.

- Inadequate Interaction: Some students are afraid of making mistakes which results in less participation and students remain with unanswered questions.

- Demotivation: Negative reactions and experiences in face-to-face interactions can diminish motivation to engage in learning.

- Distractions: Classroom atmosphere may cause distractions and noise that hinder concentration and learning.

- Limited Individual Attention: students reported that in larger classes, instructors cannot provide adequate support to all students.

- Social Anxiety: Some students are hesitant and feel anxious in social settings which affect their ability to interact in face-to-face setting.

- Cultural Differences: Differences in cultural backgrounds affect communication styles and interactions between students in classroom setting.

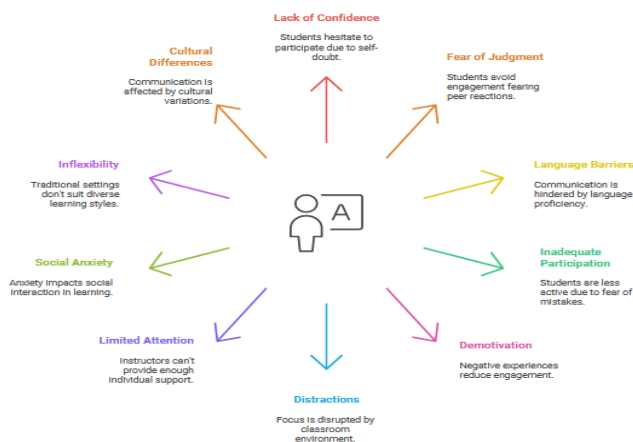Figure (5) illustrates the challenges to face to face learning.

Figure (5): Challenges to Face to Face Learning (Developed by the researcher)

8.2 Discussion

The quantitative results indicated that most participants preferred online learning over face-to-face learning in terms of flexibility, time management, technology use, satisfaction, and motivation dimensions. The mean scores for online learning were higher than that of face-to-face learning. However, face-to-face learning achieved more positive perceptions regarding the dimensions of interaction, comprehension, and perceived effectiveness, the mean score exceeding that of online learning in these areas.

Online learning offers a unique and innovative platform for education enhancing the learning experience for both learners and instructors. While there is generally a positive outlook toward online education, it is clear that further improvements are necessary to maximize its effectiveness. Online learning has many benefits such as:

Accessibility: as it allows learners to access the learning material from any place and anytime.

Flexibility: students can learn at their own pace and schedule, accommodating diverse lifestyles and commitments.

Diverse learning resources: online learning offers a variety of multimedia resources, such as videos and interactive content that cater to different learning styles.

Cost-Effectiveness: online learning is generally more affordable than traditional face-to-face learning. It provides access anytime and anywhere, making it accessible to a wide range of learners.

Increased engagement: many online platforms incorporate interactive elements which fosters greater interaction and engagement among students.

Online learning has greatly reshaped education and contributed to higher global literacy rates. However, ongoing improvements are necessary to maximize its benefits. Participants favored online learning over traditional face-to-face instruction, citing advantages in flexibility, time efficiency, technological integration, satisfaction, and motivation. Additionally, online learning methods can improve students' language acquisition, aided by contemporary pedagogical and interactive approaches that engage learners more effectively. In comparison, conventional in-person classrooms tend to follow more traditional formats.

The findings of this study go in line with the results of Shahi (2016) and Costado Dios and Piñero Charlo (2021) who argued that e-learning enhances the overall English proficiency of EFL university students while alleviating stress and anxiety. The integration of new technologies acts as a catalyst in stimulating students' curiosity, thereby enhancing their interaction and motivation. Learners were observed to exhibit favorable attitudes toward innovative educational approaches and demonstrated eagerness in adopting e-learning for task completion and expressed strong appeal toward its use (Giday & Elantheraiyan, 2024). Tang and Lim (2013) further supported this observation noting that many students favor online learning due to the confidence and autonomy it provides. Additionally, Croxton (2014) and Serttaş and Kasabal (2020) emphasize the flexibility of time and location as significant benefits of online digital learning environments.

The use of digital technologies such as smartphones, laptops, and internet connectivity has become indispensable in modern education. Institutions worldwide have adopted Learning Management Systems (LMS) as primary platforms for delivering instruction, leading to a significant shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to e-learning modalities. This transition has fundamentally reshaped pedagogical approaches altering educator and learner roles, instructional strategies, and evaluation mechanisms (Gherheș et al., 2021; Lolic et al., 2022). Online

learning improves English language learning and develop the learners achievement and overall satisfaction with the learning process (Moser et al., 2021; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020; Nashruddin et al., 2020; Rojabi, 2020; Tian et al., 2022; Tratnik et al., 2019; Mohammaddokht & Fathi, 2022; Ninsiana et al., 2022; Rajabi et al., 2021; Eidenberger & Nowotny, 2022).

Online learning and use of technology offers enhanced flexibility and accessibility for learners particularly those who report lower satisfaction levels in traditional classroom settings. This distinction holds particular significance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where the comparative efficacy of face-to-face versus online instruction carries substantial pedagogical implications. The unique communicative competencies required for language acquisition necessitate careful integration of different instructional modalities and their respective impacts on learning outcomes (Ali, Khan, & Alouraini, 2023; Chisadza et al., 2021; Sa'diah et al., 2020),

On the other hand, some learners demonstrate a preference for face-to-face instruction over digital alternatives, particularly in the dimensions of interaction, comprehension, and effectiveness. However, technological advancements in e-learning, traditional classroom settings maintain distinct advantages through their capacity to facilitate immediate verbal and non-verbal feedback, including nuanced communication through verbal and visual feedback (Janmaimool & Nunsunanon, 2021; Sofer & Nachmias, 2018). Students preferred face-to-face interactions in the EFL context. This preference was influenced by several factors including a community setting, interaction dynamics, technological limitations, engagement modalities and individual differences (Xiaoping and Shi, 2023; Siddiqui, et al. 2024, Ahmed, 2025 ; Abd El-hamied et al. ,2025).

As for the qualitative analysis, it revealed that the majority of respondents perceived traditional face-to-face instruction as less

problematic compared to digital alternatives. The primary challenges emerged consistently in the participant narratives regarding online learning were the infrastructural limitations particularly unreliable internet connectivity. In addition, they reported the reduced opportunities for meaningful interpersonal and instructional interaction. These technological and social-interactive barriers were identified as critical factors diminishing the perceived effectiveness of online learning environments.

Qualitative data analysis revealed several key perceptions regarding instructional modalities. Conversely, face-to-face learning was shown to foster better comprehension and concentration, attributed to direct student-teacher engagement. Furthermore, face to face learning was found to facilitate valuable peer interactions, strengthening collaborative learning experiences. These observations align with the outcomes of the present research (Norhasikin et al. 2021; Pazhanivelu et al., 2025). While participants acknowledge that both learning modes have their challenges, they assert that face-to-face learning is generally less difficult. They highlighted only two challenges associated with face-to-face learning which are the psychological barriers stemming from learners' self-confidence issues, and organizational challenges related to effective time management. These findings suggest that while each modality presents unique constraints, students perceive traditional classroom settings as more conducive to effective learning experiences.

The study concluded that while e-learning offers distinct advantages concerning the dimensions of flexibility, technological integration, learner motivation, and satisfaction; traditional face-to-face instruction remains superior in facilitating meaningful interaction, content comprehension, and overall pedagogical effectiveness. Consequently, online learning modalities should be strategically employed to supplement rather than supplant traditional face to face classroom instruction.

9. Conclusion

This study adopted the mixed-methods research design to examine the EFL students' perceptions regarding online versus face-to-face learning modalities. The investigation specifically targeted a random sample of the fourth year students studying at the Faculty of Arts, Delta University for Science and Technology, as they have a rich and accumulated experience on both online and face to face learning along their four years of study at the university. This population was deemed particularly suitable due to their extensive, four-year experiential knowledge with both instructional formats during their academic study.

The research context was significantly influenced by the global COVID-19 pandemic which necessitated an unprecedented institution-wide transition to fully online instruction across all educational sectors. This sudden pedagogical shift motivated the researcher to apply the current study aiming to: (1) systematically document learner perception and experience with both learning modalities, (2) analyze comparative perceptions of each modality effectiveness, and (3) generate insight for any possible sudden future problems or pandemics to find solutions for improve the experiment of online learning.

The study focused on advanced EFL learners stems from their unique position as having experienced the complete spectrum of instructional delivery methods .Their accumulated experience provides valuable empirical data for addressing critical questions about pedagogical efficacy and student preferences.

The study employed online questionnaires to gather quantitative data on EFL learners' perceptions and to assess whether there are significant differences between students' perceptions towards face-to-face (F2F) and online learning modality with regard to the most important affecting dimensions in the learning process in light of reviewing related literature which are (flexibility, time

management, using technology, motivation, interaction, comprehension, satisfaction, and overall effectiveness).

The findings suggest that course designers should enhance interaction between students and instructors, as well as among students themselves. Additionally, instructors should maintain clear communication with students to ensure they understand their learning goals and feel satisfied. The results proved that most participants had a positive perception of the online learning experiences. This suggests that as EFL learners, the majority were able to accommodate to the online mode of instruction. However, the study also highlighted significant challenges, particularly issues related to interaction, comprehension and overall effectiveness in digital learning environments.

In conclusion, this study highlights the complementary nature of online and face-to-face learning in EFL contexts with each modality presenting distinct pedagogical advantages and challenges. As educational paradigms continue to shift, instructors must adopt a learner-centered approach when selecting instructional strategies, carefully considering students' diverse needs and learning preferences. Such insights will be crucial for refining and enhancing online pedagogical strategies.

10. Recommendations

In light of the study results, the following recommendations can be proposed:

1. Improving online learning environments: Educator can leverage available resources such as chat rooms, and blogs to motivate students and foster engagement in online language learning.

2. Investigating influential factors: Studies should examine various factors that may affect students' perceptions and success in online environments such as gender, academic major, prior technology experience, and internet connectivity.

3. Creative interactive teaching materials: Instructors should design interactive learning materials and activities for each session which can enhance the learning experience and foster positive peer interactions.

4. Technological integration: EFL teachers and policymakers should reconsider the teaching strategies and integrate e-learning technologies into curricula ensuring they meet students' needs and keep pace with modern advancements.

11. **Suggestions for Future Studies**

1. Broader Sample Selection: Future research should consider including participants from multiple universities and faculties to enhance the diversity of the sample.

2. Exploring Specific Language Skills: Future research should investigate the impact of both instructional methods on various language skills including grammar, speaking, reading, and writing abilities.

3. Various Data Collection Methods: Employing different data collection methods such as observations can provide more comprehensive insights and validate the findings.

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