

# Students' Perceptions of Online Foreign Language Learning during the Corona Virus

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Received: June 18, 2022

Accepted: July 18, 2022

Online Published: July 18, 2022

doi:10.5430/wjel.v12n6p155

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n6p155>

## Abstract

University closure was one of the repercussions of the COVID-19 epidemic. As a consequence, a shift to online education was mandated to concurrently sustain the learning process in the country and maintain public safety. This study aims at examining university students' perceptions of online FLL by pointing out the factors that would succeed or hinder the online FLL process, and also by assessing the influence of teacher mediation on online FLL. The study followed a mixed-method technique to design and answer the research questions: (a) What are the factors that enable online FLL to succeed at the university level? (b) What are the factors that hinder online FLL at the university level? To what extent does teacher mediation influence the success or failure of online FLL at the university level? Data was collected via two sources (surveys and focus group interviews) in which two hundred twenty-six students from both the department of English Language and Literature and the department of English Language and Translation at two private universities participated in this study. First, the findings revealed three factors that would influence the success or failure of online FLL: student motivation, engagement, and rapport building. Second, the findings also highlighted the influence of teachers' mediation in online FLL. Finally, the findings of this study offered several implications for the theory "Learning Communities," faculty members, curricula designers, and policymakers.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, educational success, online teaching, Traditional teaching, students' perception, face-to-face education

## 1. Introduction

The unpredictable spread of COVID-19 worldwide led to a sudden shutdown in the academic sector in Jordan to inhibit gatherings and consequently eliminate infections. Alternatively, a transition to online learning was mandated to concurrently sustain the learning process in the country and maintain public safety. In online education, unlike in traditional education, learning becomes more flexible (Spector et al., 2008), and learners become more liable for their learning (Koch, 2014; Peterson, 2008). As a result of this transition, the majority of academic institutions have focused on activating and improving their electronic platforms at the expense of the sound delivery methods of education. The shift to online education has generated numerous concerns and difficulties (Almusharraf & Khahro, 2020; Crawford et al, 2020). For instance, Zhong (2020) attributed learners' incapacity to engage in online learning to a lack of internet access and modern technologies.

Considering foreign language learning (FLL), online learning has become a rescue boat for many learners who would not have the opportunity to study another language due to availability limits (Garrison et al. 2000). Nonetheless, many challenges might accompany online foreign language learning, including anxiety, disengagement, isolation, demotivation, and low-rate interaction (Hurd, 2005), and teachers' lack of preparation and mediation. Alnajjar et al. (2021) suggested:

To ensure the continuous delivery of online material, teachers have to be trained in integrating technology into their teaching and be willing to adjust their teaching materials and readapt their teaching styles and techniques to cope with the requirements of the necessity (p. 1401).

Student perception is comprised of students' beliefs and views regarding the technology utilized in FLL classes. According to Abdullah, Muait and Ganefri (2019), understanding students' perceptions is critical because it

determines their tendency to accept the integration of technology in their learning process. Considering the role advanced technology has been playing in mitigating such challenges by devising learning tools and platforms (Delahunty et al. 2014; Kan & McCormick 2014), the mere dependence on technology without teacher mediation can be either a recipe for success or a hindrance to online FLL. Therefore, online education can be improved once educators consider the challenges and concerns that learners encounter (Ohene & Essuman, 2014; Perifanou et al., 2021).

### *1.2 Statement of Problem*

During the COVID-19 epidemic, educational institutions in Jordan were mandated to switch from face-to-face to online teaching to minimize human contact and eliminate the infection rate in the country. This abrupt shift raised concerns and led to many challenges for foreign language learners (FLLs), one of which is the overdependence on technology without proper teacher mediation. While several research reports reported satisfactory results of online learning (Cheung et al., 2008; Korkut et al., 2015; Schär & Krueger, 2000), no study, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, has examined the influence of teacher mediation on online FLL and also the factors that may succeed or hinder the delivery of foreign language learning (FLL) from students' perception in both the department of English Language and Literature and the department of English Language and Translation at a private university setting in Jordan.

### *1.3 Aims of Study*

The present study investigates the factors that may succeed or hinder online foreign language learning (FLL) from the perceptions of students who experienced both traditional and online FLL. Additionally, this study explores the influence of teacher mediation on the success or failure of online FLL at university level through students' perceptions. Knowing students' perceptions determines their acceptance of the courses (Abdullah, Muait & Ganefri, 2019).

In line with such aims, the following research questions guided this study:

- 1- What are the factors that enable online FLL to succeed at university level?
- 2- What are the factors that hinder online FLL at university level?
- 3- To what extent does teacher mediation influence the success or failure of online FLL at university level?

### *1.4 Significance of the Study*

First, the findings of this study will support future research of students and teachers in online FLL as online learning is assumed to be a dynamic part of education in the near future (Daniel, 2020). Second, it will build a theoretical understanding of FLLs' perception of online learning. Third, this study will pave the way for future research and the theoretical framework of online FLL by applying the principles of "Learning Communities."

## **Theoretical Framework**

"Learning Communities" is a relatively new trend in education through which "students take two or more linked courses as a group and work with one another and with their professors," and its applications "engage participants at levels that elevate their performance across multiple engagement and desired-outcomes measures such as persistence" (Kuh, 2008, p. 10-14). The association between learners' successful academic achievements and their contribution to learning communities has been confirmed in research (Finely & McNair 2013; Kuh & O'Donnell 2013). Additionally, Learning Communities offer possibilities for "active and collaborative learning," prominent "student-faculty interaction," and "support for learners" (The Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2013, p. 18-9). According to Lichtenstein (2005), involvement in learning communities creates connections between stakeholders, including students, instructors, and their community, which will form "a strong sense of community, in which instructors are engaged and approachable, and where a strong and visible linkage exists between instructors, subject, and course organization" (p. 341).

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Motivation*

Students' motivation has been seen as crucial for students' academic success (Karaman & Watson, 2017). It is "the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained" (Schunk et al., 2008, p. 4). In the FLL context, motivation is defined as the degree to which a learner tries to learn a language out of willingness and the satisfaction associated with the experience (Gardner, 1985, p. 10). Keeping the students motivated in online courses poses a challenge for instructors. For example, when Gonçalves and colleagues (2020) surveyed Protégés university

students, asking about their perception of online learning, they reported a lack of motivation during the online classes. Similarly, Bataineh et al. (2020) examined Jordanian graduate and undergraduate students' perceptions of online learning and reported students' dissatisfaction due to a lack of motivation. Another study that examined undergraduate students' perceptions of online learning was Chakraborty's et al. (2020), in which they reported that students wished their online classes were more motivating. Additionally, Özdoğan and Berkant (2020) compared Turkish teachers' and students' opinions about the merits and demerits of online learning during the epidemic. They found out that students' motivation was the most demerit discussed.

The effect of student motivation in an online learning setting was studied by Holder (2007), whose findings revealed that the more motivation the students reported, the more likely they would continue in their academic majors. According to Holder's findings, students who perceive their abilities to be successful are more likely to continue and earn academic degrees. In contrast, students who perceive their abilities as unsuccessful are more likely to drop out. Academic motivation can be influenced by students' perceptions of the academic programs or the courses. For instance, Tichavsky et al. (2015) compared undergraduate students' perceptions of both traditional and online learning, and found that the students preferred traditional learning over online learning. Students felt they were learning alone without actual instructors.

### 2.2 Engagement

Engagement is often seen as an indispensable element for successful learning (Alnajjar et al., 2021; Palloff & Pratt, 2011). In online courses, unlike traditional or face-to-face courses, students and teachers are physically separated, so engagement may pose a real challenge for teachers. Therefore, it should be teachers' priority to enculturate engagement in their online courses (Alnajjar et al., 2021; Palloff & Pratt, 2011). For example, when Gonçalves and colleagues (2020) surveyed Portuguese university students, asking about their perception of online learning, they reported an absence of engagement and attentiveness during the online classes. Likewise, Bataineh et al. (2020) examined Jordanian graduate and undergraduate students' perceptions of online learning and reported students' dissatisfaction due to the lack of engagement. Another study that examined undergraduate students' perceptions of online learning was Chakraborty's et al. (2020), in which they reported that students wished their online classes were more engaging.

Research on engagement suggests techniques to maintain engagement in online courses, such as course design and interaction. For instance, Angelino and colleagues (2007) stressed the significance of a well-planned course design in providing support, creating learning communities, and engaging students in learning. Others claim that the more students' participation takes place in online classes, the more engagement and, consequently, learning is achieved (Morris, Finnegan, and Wu 2005; Tello 2007).

Student-teacher interaction is vital in students' engagement (Dixson 2012). For instance, five principles of Chickering and Gamson's (1987) "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education" relate to student-teacher interaction. The strong connection between student-teacher interaction and engagement has been seen in research (Grandzol & Grandzol, 2006; Marks et al., 2005). Thus, online courses that lack interaction are more likely to lack engagement and, consequently, poor learning outcomes (Betts 2009; Boling et al. 2012). Arbaugh (2008) claims that student-teacher interaction may be a solution to students' dropout from online courses.

### 2.3 Rapport-Building

Studies on rapport building indicate a lack of research examining the role of student-teacher rapport in an online setting (Murphy et al., 2012). According to Hall et al. (2009), rapport is "a relationship that is pleasant and engaging, with a high degree of liking or positive affect, mutual attention, harmonious relationship, easy/smooth communication, and/or symmetry and synchrony in the interaction" (p. 324). Rhodes and colleagues (2004) concluded that student-teacher rapport could be built immediately at the time of encounter in face-to-face classroom setting. While in an online setting where there is a lack of "body language and visual presence as mediators, it requires e-teachers [DE teachers] to find new ways of interacting and building rapport" (p. 1061); thus, "rapport building must be premeditated, consciously promoted, and can only be achieved with more work" (p. 1068), and must be maintained (Online Training Directory, 2007).

Whereas Leeds et al. (2013) suggested teacher-student communication at the initial phase of the course, others saw student-teacher rapport as an ongoing relationship which could not be built in one or a few contacts. For example, Grandzol and Grandzol (2010) examined the influence of teachers' online availability on academic platforms on teacher-student rapport and interaction and concluded that teachers' online availability was artificial and not adequate for rapport building. Grandzol and Grandzol claimed that the online teacher's extensive feedback could be without

utility.

The literature reviewed provides a framework for this study where comparisons of (motivation, engagement, and student-teacher rapport) in both face-to-face and online learning were conducted from students' perspectives. Based on the literature, the sudden transition to online education raised concerns and led to many challenges. Simultaneously, this transition seemed to offer potential and avenues for future education. Nevertheless, online education is a relatively recent phenomenon for man, especially in Jordan, and it has to be examined thoroughly to capitalize on its merits and minimize its demerits. As the literature ignored the factors that students perceived as successful or unsuccessful in an online FLL setting at university level. And also, the influence of teacher mediation on the success or failure of online FLL at university level. Thus, this study investigates the factors that may succeed or hinder the online FLL and the influence of teacher mediation on the success or failure of online FLL at university level to fill the gap in the literature.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Study Design

This study adopts a mixed methods (explanatory design) approach to design the study and answer the research questions (Creswell, 2002). The explanatory design aims at collecting quantitative data first, then supporting it with qualitative data to elaborate on the quantitative results. For the quantitative data, a 5-point Likert scale survey was created, asking the students to select the factors needed to succeed or hinder the online Foreign Language Learning (FLL) classes at the university level. Furthermore, as the objective of the present study was to "determine the essence of a single phenomenon" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010), a qualitative, multiple case study approach was used to explore the students' responses to the influence of teachers' mediation on the success or failure of their online FFL classes, to further explore survey responses providing personal experiences, and to answer the research questions.

#### Validity, Reliability and Objectivity

A test was run to find out the internal consistency of each item grade and the total grade of the scale. The analysis showed that the correlation coefficients of items ranged from (0.77- 0.94). Furthermore, the items were statistically significant at ( $\alpha \leq 0.01$ ), indicating that the scale items were internally consistent. The validity of the instruments was ensured by asking a jury of university professors of TESOL, TEFL, and Applied Linguistics to review them. The jury's comments were considered. Moreover, this study used two sources for data collection (e.g., surveys and focus group interviews). While the researchers examined the scale reliability based on Split-Half analysis methods and Cronbach's Alpha (as shown in the following table), the reliability of the qualitative data was ensured by using Yin's replication methods to analyze the collected data (Yin, 1994). Lastly, to ensure objectivity, the researchers remained unbiased towards the participants' responses during the focus group interviews.

Table 1. Cronbach Alpha and Split-half analysis

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Split-half analysis</i>	<i>Cronbach Alpha analysis</i>
Scale	0.86	0.91

As presented in the above table, the scale enjoys an excellent reliability grade, which means its suitability for the purpose of the study.

#### 3.2 Data Sources

Data was collected via two data sources (survey and focus group interviews). Using multiple data sources enhances the validity of the data (Yin, 2003). First, the survey method was utilized due to its usefulness in assessing change with large samples of research participants (Bell, 2007; Bird, 2009; Weisberg, 2008). Second, focus group interviews were utilized to validate the quantitative data and to explore in-depth details and further explain the data, which therefore enhanced the collected data (Pamela Davies, 2006).

#### 3.3 Data Collection

The survey was administered online using Google Forms to ensure safety and convenience as academic institutions were shut down during the pandemic. The survey consisted of two parts: (a) questions to collect demographic information about the participants and (b) questions to assess the factors that would support or hinder the online FLL classes. The survey followed a five-point Likert Scale format and guided the data analysis and the answers to the first and second research questions.

Once the survey was analyzed and the factors that would succeed or hinder the online FFL classes at the university level were determined, the participants in each case (case one and case two) were interviewed separately through the

ZOOM application. Each focus group interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The structure of the interviews was a focus group (Merriam, 1998). The focus group interviews not only validated the quantitative data, but also guided the data analysis and contributed to the answer of the third research question.

### Participants

Two hundred twenty-six students from both the department of English Language and Literature and the department of English Language and Translation participated in this study. The participants were in the third and fourth years of the undergraduate program at two private universities located in Amman. The researchers intended not to recruit first and second-year students as they had never experienced the transition from face-to-face to online education, so they would not be able to provide valid responses. The participants were contacted via WhatsApp and e-mail and asked to participate in the study. Once their approvals were received, the survey was sent to their WhatsApp accounts and also emailed to them. The participants were categorized into two groups based on their majors. Group one (English Language and Literature) included 93 students (51 males and 42 females), and group two (English Language and Translation) included 133 students (76 males and 57 females). The participants were informed that they would be able to withdraw from the study at any time and were assured that their identities would not be revealed as pseudonyms would be used. The descriptive characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 2. t-tests according to gender of participants

Variable	Category	N	Mean	St. dev	t	Sig
English Language and Literature	Male	76	4.11	0.50	-0.80	0.052
	Female	57				
English Language and Translation	Male	51	4.20	0.49		
	Female	42				

\* Sig at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ )

### 4. Results

As the present study aims to investigate the factors that may succeed or hinder online foreign language learning (FLL) from the perceptions of students who experienced both traditional and online FLL, Several statistical analyses were conducted to answer the first two research questions.

**RQ1:** What are the factors that enable online FLL to succeed at the university level?

One-sample t-test was run to answer the first research question. As presented in the below table (2), the results showed that "teacher's ability to motivate online students" ( $mean = 4.86$ ), "teacher's ability to engage students in the online learning process" ( $mean = 4.60$ ), and "teacher's ability to build relationships with online students" ( $mean = 4.24$ ) are the most important factors that could enable online FLL to succeed at the university level. Furthermore, the three items show a statistically significant effect at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ).

Table 3. One-sample t-test for the items

Items	Mean	St.dev	t	Sig
Teacher's ability to manage online discussion.	3.54	0.88	44.19	0.127
Teacher's ability to use and integrate technology in online classes.	2.97	0.79	41.01	0.254
Teacher's ability to provide effective online feedback.	3.83	0.70	48.74	0.091
Teacher's ability to build online teams.	3.62	0.66	48.18	0.088
Teacher's positive attitude towards online teaching.	3.46	1.21	28.99	0.102
Teacher's online classroom management skills.	3.20	1.75	19.55	0.307
Teacher's ability to motivate online students.	4.86	1.26	49.50	00.0*
Teacher's ability to listen to what I say.	3.68	1.68	23.42	0.064
Teacher's readiness and preparation for online classes.	2.87	1.86	16.51	0.439
Teacher's ability to engage students in the online learning process	4.60	1.56	38.42	0.00*
Teacher's ability to build relationships with online students.	4.24	1.69	26.78	0.00*

\* Sig at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ )

**RQ2:** What are the factors that hinder online FLL at the university level?

One-sample t-test was run to answer the second research question. As presented in the below table (3), the results showed that the items: "my teachers hardly motivated me during online teaching" ( $mean = 2.57$ ), "my teachers never engaged me in the online learning process" ( $mean = 2.53$ ), and "my teachers never tried to build relationship with me during online classes" ( $mean = 2.36$ ) are the least important factors that could hinder online FLL at the university level. Furthermore, the three items did not show any statistically significant effect at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ).

Table 4. One-sample t-test for the items

<i>Items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>St.dev</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Motivation was always missing in online classes	3.2087	1.87	18.39	0.00
I rarely had computer and internet coverage problems.	4.22	1.45	38.45	0.00
I rarely had technical difficulties with online teaching tools.	3.57	1.83	20.66	0.00
Usually, I lacked attention during online classes due to the lack of engagement.	4.09	1.38	39.34	0.00
Online teaching was cumbersome and time-consuming.	3.00	1.68	18.97	0.00
Classroom management had been one of my teachers' biggest problems.	4.20	1.50	37.20	0.00
Digital learning had transformed me into a 24/7 student.	4.52	1.33	44.19	0.00
Despite my best efforts, I was so worried about my comprehension and achievement	4.15	1.38	40.06	0.00
It was easy to establish teacher-student relationship through online teaching	4.24	1.63	27.63	0.00
Attendance and availability always concerned me.	4.06	1.52	35.49	0.26
My teachers hardly motivated me during online teaching.	2.57	1.28	46.53	0.381
My teachers never tried to build relationship with me during online classes.	2.36	1.92	18.78	0.072
My teachers never engaged me in the online learning process.	2.53	1.56	24.19	0.109

\* Sig at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ )

Independent sample t-test was run to examine the effect of FLLs' majors (English Language Literature or English Language and Translation) on the factors that would succeed or hinder online FLL at the university level. The t-test failed to detect any statistically significant differences between the participants based on their majors at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ), as shown in the below Table (4).

Table 5. results of t-tests based on the major of the participants

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>St. dev</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Scale	Literature	93	3.35	0.53	1.37	0.14
	Translation	133	3.44	0.40		

\* Sig at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ )

Moreover, another independent sample t-test was run to examine the effect of FLLs' gender on the factors that would succeed or hinder online FLL at the university level. The t-test failed to detect any statistically significant differences between the participants based on their gender differences at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ), as shown in the below Table (5).

Table 6. results of t-tests according to gender of participants

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>St. dev</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig</i>
scale	male	127	4.11	0.50	-0.80	0.052
	female	99	4.20	0.49		

\* Sig at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ )

### Qualitative Data

Participants in each case were interviewed collectively once, right after analyzing the descriptive data. Besides further identifying the factors that would succeed or hinder the online EFL classes at the university level, the interviews explored how the students perceived the influence of their teachers' mediation on the success or failure of the EFL online classes. The purpose of the interviews was to validate the quantitative data and to explore in-depth details and further explain the data. The focus group interviews were conducted via the Zoom application, videotaped, and each lasted approximately 30 minutes. The number of participants in each focus group interview was (93) in case one, and (133) in case two.

The topics explored in the focus group interviews included: factors that would succeed or hinder online FFL classes; the influence of teachers' mediation on the success or failure of the online FFL classes; the challenges of the transition to online education; and how to improve online FFL classes. The interviews were transcribed, and the transcripts were analyzed in two phases. First, a within-case analysis for every focus group interview was conducted to validate the established themes within each case. According to Berg (1998), analyzing data from interviews may be done in five ways, one of which is the thematic way. Second, a cross-case analysis was conducted to classify similarities and differences among the two cases (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

**RQ 3:** To what extent does teacher mediation influence the success or failure of online FLL at university level?

### Student engagement

The majority of the participants in the two cases believed that most online EFL classes were not engaging as teachers rarely called their names and asked eliciting questions, unlike in face-to-face classes. This was a result of social absence and lack of contact as students did not turn on their cameras. One participant noted that *"the professors keep talking and talking, most of the time we lose track... (Case one)"*. Others stated

The professors read the text and ask who wants to translate it, and that is it. Sometimes, no one pushes the participation button, so the professors translate... Since they are recorded, there is no use in attending the classes. We can listen to them whenever we want (Case two).

Few participants believed that some of their online EFL classes were as engaging as they were in face-to-face classes, yet they preferred face-to-face classes (Cases one and two).

### **Motivation**

The participants in the two cases almost reached a consensus that online classes were monotonous and not as motivating as face-to-face ones. One participant said, *"The classes are boring; I get sleepy most of the time"* (Case two). Others expressed how motivating the online classes could be if the teachers put more effort into them. Another participant stated, *"The professors seemed to be distracted all the time, and they kept throwing tasks at us without providing directions. They just want to finish the classes (Case one)." Moreover, the social absence was indicated in the participants' responses as one participant claimed that his learning style did not match the professors' ways of teaching. She noted, "In the past, we used to work in groups, and we used hands-on tasks; now things have changed for the worse"* (Case two).

### **Rapport Building**

The participants in the two cases agreed that building rapport with their teachers or with their peers was impossible in online EFL classes. They also described how effective it was to build meaningful student-student or student-teacher relationships in face-to-face education. One participant stated, *"How can I make a friendship with someone if we do not see each other (Case two)?"* Another participant believed that due to the time constraint and the large number of students, the teachers were unable to bond with the students. He said, *"We have around 70 students in each class; I bet the teachers do not know our names... (Case one)"*.

A cross-case analysis of the three themes, centering on Yin's (1994) replication method of analysis, was conducted to show similarities and dissimilarities between the two cases and examine the findings. Accordingly, similarities between the two cases were found in terms of the factors that succeed or hinder online FFL classes, and how the participants perceived the influence of their teachers' mediation on the success or failure of online FFL classes. Literal replication was attained (Yin, 1994).

## **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

The Covid-19 epidemic has necessitated a shift to online education to concurrently sustain the learning process in the country and maintain public safety. This study was designed to identify the factors that would succeed or hinder online FLL during the COVID-19 epidemic, and to explore the students' perceptions of the influence of teacher mediation on the success or failure of online FLL at the university level.

Administering an online survey to 226 EFL students from two private universities in Amman, and conducting two focus group interviews, the findings revealed that students had overall poor perceptions of online FLL during the COVID-19. First, the findings of the quantitative data, indicated several factors that contributed to their negative perceptions. Students felt demotivated during the online FLL. Such a finding agrees with (Bataineh et al., 2020; Holder, 2007; Gon çalvez et al., 2020; Özdoğan and Berkant, 2020), who found that lack of student motivation during the online classes was a major reason for students' dissatisfaction and, consequently, dropouts. Students also felt disengaged in online FLL classes, which corresponds with (Alnajjar et al., 2021; Bataineh et al., 2020; Chakraborty et al., 2020; Palloff & Pratt, 2011), who found that student engagement was the most effective factor whose presence would succeed FLL classes and whose absence would do otherwise. Moreover, students felt isolated and disconnected from their peers and teachers, which echoed (Grandzol & Grandzol, 2010; Leeds et al., 2013; Rhodes et al., 2004) who found that rapport building in an online classroom setting was not an easy task due to the lack of body language, visual presence, and availability as mediators. Second, the analysis of the qualitative data not only validated the findings of the quantitative data but also highlighted the important role of teacher mediation in the success or failure of online FLL. As such, similarities between the two cases were found in terms of the factors that succeed or hinder online FFL classes, as well as how the participants perceived the influence of their teachers' mediation on the success or failure of online FFL classes. The more the students were motivated, engaged, and involved in professional relationships with their classmates and teachers in online FLL classes, the more successful

they perceived their online FLL classes to be. The less the students were motivated, engaged, and involved in professional relationships with their classmates and teachers in online FLL classes, the less successful they perceived their online FLL classes to be; therefore, literal replication was attained (Yin, 1994). It is also worth noting that research has shown that the link between students' engagement, motivation, and the development of teacher-student relationships leads to involvement in "Learning Communities" (Finely & McNair 2013; Kuh & O'Donnell 2013).

One aspect that may contribute to students' negative perceptions of online FLL is the absence of experience with online education. All participants in this study had never taken an online course before. According to Astani et al. (2010), students' contentment with online courses is influenced by their prior exposure to online education. The more students participate in online education, the happier they are likely to become. Thus, the overall dissatisfaction with online FLL may be attributed to their lack of online FLL involvement. If academic institutions in Jordan further mandate online education, students are likely to report positive perceptions of online FLL. Another aspect that may contribute to students' negative perceptions of online FLL is being isolated from their peers and instructors which could have been disturbing feeling. Boling et al. (2012) observed that even under normal circumstances, students' enjoyment with online courses was impaired by disconnection. To prevent such an isolation, Dixson (2010) proposes that instructors who develop online courses should incorporate student-to-student and student-to-instructor interaction into course design. Moreover, the nature of assignments and activities may also contribute to students' negative perceptions of online FLL. Dixson's (2010) recommended integrating more motivating and engaging assignments and activities within online education. Thus, instructors should subtly reconsider designing their online curricula.

## 6. Conclusion

The study's findings have several ramifications for theory Learning Communities, academics, and policymakers. This research redefined (Learning Communities) from the perspective of online education and a strong linkage was found between motivation, engagement, rapport building, and "Learning Communities" (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Institutions, faculty members and students collaborated via the use of technology to deliver the greatest online educational experience (Zoom, Microsoft teams, Moodle, WhatsApp, etc.). Following the theory enabled the researchers to "enter the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 341) in order to realize how EFL students perceived their online EFL classes based on the factors that could succeed or hinder the online learning experience at university level in Jordan during the time of the Corona Virus. Second, students reported that their professors lacked expertise in integrating technology into their lessons, necessitating the implementation of ongoing training and professional development programs to enhance faculty teaching techniques. Therefore, Ministry of Higher Education in collaboration with the universities in Jordan are recommended to cease no effort to train teachers and enculture online online-driven abilities such as motivation, engagement, and rapport building in online EFL classes.

However, the study has a number of limitations. First, the sample size was modest and limited to two locations; it would be beneficial to explore a larger sample size of FLLs from other locations. Another drawback was the interviews; each participant was only interviewed once in a focus group format, which may not have been sufficient for them to articulate how they regarded their online EFL. Therefore, more focus group interviews with participants should have been undertaken

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