

# From Pedagogy to Andragogy in Post Covid-19 ESP Courses: A Customized Blended Learning Model for English in Medicine at a Saudi University

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## Abstract

Teaching an ESP course is significantly challenging due to its practical, contextual, and communicative nature as a “language in context” and a prerequisite for acquiring professional skills and job-related functions that require real life learning situations to imitate specific professional settings and accentuates practicing the essential English language skills that students would primarily employ in their future fields. This paper presents an andragogy-based customized blended learning model for English in Medicine course introduced to students of the preparatory year program during COVID-19 pandemic. Integrating andragogical principles, the course identifies students’ access to multimodal tools for required English Language skills and medical vocabulary, including a virtual listening lab for augmenting listening skills, a virtual medical library for boosting online medical reading, a virtual hospital of different doctor-patient interaction scenarios for practicing the use of language in context, course community blogs and audio discussion forums for enhancing writing and speaking skills, an online medical dictionary for understanding and translating medical terminologies and integrated Kahoot games for testing field related knowledge. A mixed methodology of pre-test and post-test research design along with a learning satisfaction survey were used to evaluate the change in variables which were students’ English Language proficiency, cognitive competence, learning motivation, and learning styles. The study findings establish the effectivity of the shift from pedagogic to andragogic strategies in the course. It supports integrating pedagogic constructive theories along with adult learning theories and blended education theories to ensure productive teaching and learning of ESP courses in accordance with the constrictions of quality modern education.

**Keywords:** andragogy, blended learning, ESP, Medicine, Saudi, Covid-19

## 1. Introduction

Epidemics are one of the inevitable yet intimidating misfortunes that invade human existence and endorse unprecedented challenges to all public facets including health, psychology, sociality, politics, and economics. Coronavirus Disease is the recent yet most lethal pandemic that first appeared in the Chinese city of Wuhan in 2019 and was soon after coded “COVID-19” curtailing “Coronavirus Disease 2019” and was proclaimed by the W.H.O as a global epidemic. The death rate and the wild spread was fatally upsetting. (W.H.O, 2020).

All world nations began implementing effective safety measures in accordance with the World Health Organization (W.H.O) to control the speedy spread of the virus, including complete lockdowns, social distancing, and quarantines. As the case with all fields of life, this pandemic has triggered enormous universal interruptions to the sector of education influencing learners and teachers from kindergarten to higher education worldwide. As an endeavor to mitigate the endemic, all educational institutes across the globe were closed down. More than one hundred countries executed countrywide closures, according to statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), impacting over half of the world’s student population (UNESCO, 2020a). By mid-April 2020, almost ninety-four per cent of learners was affected globally by the virus, indicating 1.58 billion youth and children, from higher education to pre-primary, in two hundred countries.

Being the second-largest state in the Arab world with a population of nearly thirty-four million, Saudi Arabia is one of the foremost states that accelerated to curtail the Covid-19 outburst and was consequently ranked by WHO as the topmost country in containing Covid-19 successfully by executing initiative and unparalleled protective measures alongside considerable sustenance packages to avert the spread of the disease. In the education sector, attendance was suspended in all schools and universities and all educational activities were converted by the Saudi government to distant mode. Teaching and learning process was continued through alternate digital channels using television, online provision, YouTube and instructional packages. Continuance of the distant educational progression was ensured and sustained for over six million students in both public and private Saudi public schools and universities as per the UNESO reports. Expert committees and work teams were launched by the Saudi ministry of education to guarantee the preparedness of the education and training system to yield outcomes that promise safety to all education employees. The UNESCO admired Saudi Arabia’s switch to remote learning as an impressive “success story”, the way online classes were set up within a few hours of the decision to shut down schools in late March 2020.

Situated in the charming city of Abha in the Southern province of Saudi Arabia, King Khalid University (KKU) is among the prominent Saudi universities with over seventy thousand students and more than twenty sites. KKU offers Bachelors, Masters, PhD degrees in an

assortment of Arts & Sciences disciplines alongside many additional diplomas, training courses and short courses. The Distance Learning Education of KKU or what is known as the E- Learning Management System (LMS) is among the top existing commercially in KSA. It is inclusively supported, easily reachable, and fully powered by the Classroom Capture Application, Virtual Classroom Tools, e-Assessments, Authoring Tools, and a vastly proficient Learning Object Repository (LOR) which can share learning items derived from various international open learning resources and content providers. Both online mood and blended mood courses can be taught.

The unanticipated decision of the Saudi ministry of education for the shift to E-learning as a crucial measurement to control Covid-19 spread in the country has undoubtedly inflicted serious challenges the whole Saudi education community including educators, students, and parents. Nevertheless, KKU did not confront considerable problems as E-Learning was formerly recognized and practiced as an elective teaching and learning design. However, the unforeseen and rapid obligatory execution of virtual teaching of entire courses carried forth some hindrances that deterred quality learning and teaching, particularly for foundation year students at the university who are just admitted from school to university and are undergoing irrefutable academic as well as psychological distresses due to the gap between the secondary school system and the university system. The preparatory year program chiefly aims at filling this void and facilitating the smooth conversion, fostering students to thrive in the new situation, cultivating their skills and helping them in adjusting and thriving in the inexperienced and challenging university educational system which is different in its environment, teaching and learning styles and systems of assessment.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a purpose-oriented and learner-need bases kind of language teaching that meets the needs of particular learners who aim for acquiring certain professional skills and performing work-related practices. ESP demonstrates some distinctions from EGP (English for General Purposes), EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language), pertaining to its targeted focus. ESP is an approach, and not as a product, says Hutchinson and Waters, “ESP is not a particular kind of language or methodology, nor does it consist of a particular type of teaching material. Understood properly, it is an approach to language learning, which is based on learner need.” (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987)

An ESP course is daunting for instructors and learners due to its nature as “language in context” that involves factual life-like learning conditions and situations that are inclined to replicate certain professional sets that the ESP students are involved in. It is a major testing experiment for all educators in charge of it as it concentrates on the particular demands of the learners and focuses more on the students’ prerequisite of obtaining certain professional competences and career-associated functions. ESP course accentuates on the importance of applying the essential English language skills that learners would principally employ in their potential domains of occupation in preference to focusing on language rules, vocabulary, and grammatical constructions (Alvi, Bilal and Alvi,2020). Hence, Orenzo Fiorito endorses that ESP “assesses needs and integrates motivation, subject matter and content for the teaching of relevant skills” (Lorenzo, 2005). Such challenges are heightened in online learning mood which is enormously different from the face-to-face learning method. The present paper deals with the problems of teaching one of the ESP courses with the purpose of setting functional solutions to guarantee productive ESP E-learning, including an andragogical blended learning module that may help better delivery of the course during and post COVID-19.

“English in Medicine” from Cambridge Professional English series is the prescribed textbook for teaching professional medical English. The book consists of seven sections successively arranged from the initial doctor-patient interaction and history taking stage up until the final phase of treatment. Every unit is split into sections containing hospital-based conversations, language focus part which is English grammar building, medical vocabulary, speaking activities, medical reading and writing and medical case follow-ups. According to the course specification, the learning outcomes of the course are to acquire medical terminology and English vocabulary familiar and routine matters, identify the communication pattern for describing students' background, environment and their daily needs, reproduce sentences and frequently used expressions related to personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment, recognize the main ideas of a text on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, identify writing techniques in the medical field, communicate in day-to-day life and use medical terminology effectively, improve academic and social interactions among students; and their ability to use the knowledge of different skills in spoken and written discourse, develop argumentative skills, talk about topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life, use medical terminologies and summarize, apply reading strategies Previewing/ Skimming/ Scanning texts on familiar matters regularly encountered in the medical field, write a simple text on topics related to medical field, use different types of texts for different purposes/tasks, predict, draw conclusions and talk about topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life.

The challenges encountered in the online teaching and learning English in Medicine subject can be categorized into three facets: technological, pedagogical, and evaluative (Alvi, Bilal & Alvi ,2021). Challenges related to technology include instability of internet connections, lack of digital competence, computer illiteracy, technophobia, and lack of digital resources. Challenges related to Pedagogy contain traditional and teacher-centered teaching methodologies, lack of developed communicative or interactive teaching methodologies and student-centered activities, monotony, and ineffectiveness of the class due to lack of audio-visual aids, video production and digital resources, lack of active online communities and collaboration and miscommunication between the instructor and the student and between students themselves. Challenges related to Evaluation denote dependence summative test system that is restricted to on-campus midterm and final exams that are based on the regurgitation of the learner’s memorized information, besides online objective asynchronous tests with plenty of availability time and number of attempts which upsurges the enticement to cheat producing unrealistic and unfair exam results that are aloof from the true academic and linguistic level of the apprentices. There is no variety of assessment methodologies especially for practical oral skills which seriously threaten achieving the learning outcomes of this important course that mainly aims at enhancing oral professional skills.

This research is based upon the theory of Andragogy. Andragogy (Andra = adult and gogy = leading) means the understanding of the science and practice of adult learning, contrarily to pedagogy that is the understanding of the science and practice of children learning. Andragogy is the art and science of adult learning; thus, andragogy refers to any form of adult learning. (Kearsley, 2010). The term “andragogy” was coined by Malcolm Shepherd Knowles, an American educator. Knowles’ introduced 5 Assumptions of Adult Learners. Firstly, maturing adults’ self-concept enables them to become dependent personalities rather than being self-directed human beings. Secondly, when adults mature, they gather a developed reservoir of experience which proves a vital growing resource for knowledge and learning. Thirdly, the more adults mature their readiness to learn, the more they progressively focus on the developmental tasks of their social characters. Fourthly, as they grow, the time perspective of adults’ changes from deferred application of knowledge to immediacy of application. Consequently, their orientation toward learning changes from subject- centeredness to problem centeredness. Finally, as an adult matures, the motivation to learn becomes internal (Knowles 1984). Knowles further recommended four principles that are applied to adult learning. These principles include adults’ involvement in the planning and evaluation of their instruction, experience as an important base for the learning activities, immediate relevance, and impact of subjects on adults’ jobs and personal lives and problem-centered learning rather than content-oriented leaning. (Kearsley, 2010)

To cope with the challenges that were faced by in teaching and learning English in Medicine at the preparatory year students at king Khalid University, there was a dire need for a blended learning system that utilizes a combination of both face to face and online teaching and learning techniques based on the andragogic principals to ensure quality learning setting that ensure quality sustenance for students to become the drivers and proprietors of their own learning. Blended learning is characterized as “the mixing of two teaching modes; a mixing of two pedagogical approaches; and the combining of two technological tools” (Alaidarous & Madini, 2016). Blended learning denoted the combination of face-to-face interactions and the use of technology-based learning. Blended learning approach features student-centered teaching where students are dynamically engaged in the content, active interactions between student-instructor, student-student, content-student, and feasible collaboration of formative and summative assessment to improve course offerings (Watson, n.d.). Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the culture of blended learning especially in the remote teaching of intensive English courses.

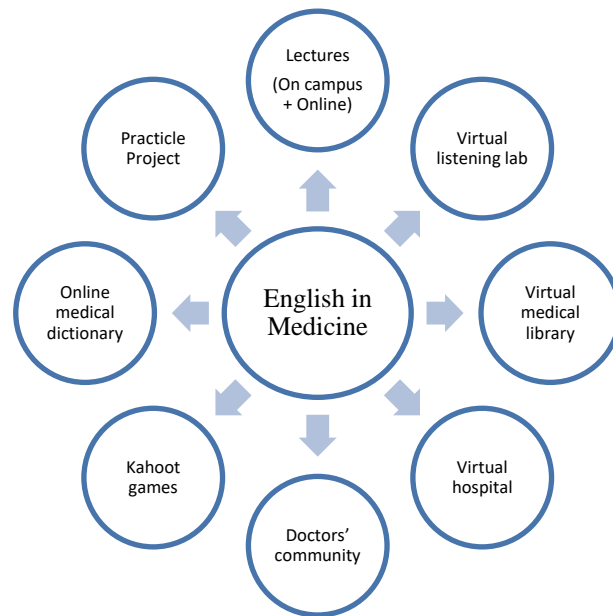


Figure 1. English in Medicine Blended Course Components

As figure 1 displays, the customized blended model for English in Medicine course starts up with lectures as a basic component to ensure students’ engagement with the conceptual information from spoken communications and experience of the subject as a whole via both traditional face-to-face classroom and online virtual synchronous and asynchronous classroom moods. Combining both methods facilitate both real-time, human-presence, and social context of formal lectures as well as self-educating from impersonal media at students’ own pace and convenience. Next comes the virtual listening lab where students can access multiple curricular and extracurricular medical videos and audios as well as listening quizzes and practices any time they want. The lab aims to enhance students’ listening skills that are essential for the medical field in future. The virtual medical library includes hundreds of medical books, blogs, articles, magazines, and documents that the students may access anytime to develop their medical reading comprehension. Following comes the virtual hospital, an online generated e-hospital simulating a real hospital where different medical departments and wards are created to produce a hospital-like situations for doctor-patient conversations. The activities in the hospital boost the text-book activities and help students to get practical practices for English language use in the medical context. Doctors’ community is another content in the model where the section students get a platform to share blogs and forums in an interactive way allowing their writing skills to develop and polish. The online medical dictionary is a vocabulary boosting feature in the model where world renowned English-to-English dictionaries are digitally available. After that comes

Kahoot games with fun, interactive games-based quizzes are generated to help students practice their English and build their language skills with special focus on Medical English. Different language quizzes are created on regular bases for each unit as excellent stress busters to keep students conditioned for competition and enabled to think quick and develop students' capability to compartmentalize their knowledge of medical language. Finally comes the subject projects to benefit students intensively in terms of depth of knowledge, critical thinking, self-confidence, creativity, and collaboration. The projects included Technology-based asynchronous writing and speaking with Blogger (B-writing) and VoiceThread (VT-speaking) on Black Board, presentation program with written and oral activities, and social media campaigns in English related to the medical field. All the features in this model are employed in a blended way where the online activities are supported by the off-line activities and altogether, they create a strong course design to ensure a flexible, enjoyable, and successful delivery of the course where students remained engaged, motivated and responsive to an effective learning climate which guarantees achieving higher levels of performance.

## 2. Study Questions

The study seeks addressing the following questions:

1. What are the existing difficulties confronting preparatory year students in the E-learning of English in Medicine course at KKU?
2. What andragogy-based E-learning models can be constructed to overcome the challenges of E-teaching and E-learning of English in Medicine course at KKU?
3. Is the proposed blended E-learning model successful in the effective delivery of English in Medicine course at KKU?

## 3. Study Objectives

The study aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. To identify the current problems facing preparatory year students in the E-learning of English in Medicine at KKU.
2. To introduce a customized blended learning that incorporates assumptions to meet the challenges of E-teaching and E-learning of English in Medicine at KKU.
3. To evaluate and validate the proposed blended E-learning model in the effective delivery of English in Medicine at KKU and its effect on students' satisfaction and achievements

## 4. Literature Review

Since the emergence of Covid-19, the global research body witnessed an immense impetus concerning the impact of Covid-19 predicament on Teaching and learning English language. Educators and researchers have been incessantly encouraged to delve deeper into the endemic-imposed challenges debilitating the effective delivery of English language courses in distant education mood. Much research associated with the English language teaching in the Saudi Higher Education scenario emerged where various perspectives of the contemporary situation are discussed, and appropriate suggestions are proposed.

On one hand, a couple of studies dealt with the challenges of teaching English courses online in Saudi Arabia from the perspectives of lecturers and language instructors. Al-Ahdal and Al-Qasham (2020) examined a set of lecturers at the Saudi Electronic University and Qassim University to inspect the condition of online learning and assessment. All faculty members admitted having an average digital competence levels in online learning assessment. They occasionally use online tests, discussion post, assessment, and analysis; and they constantly practice exit tasks as online assessment techniques. Consequently, cheating is effortless and challenging to identify; and the productivity is further hard to attain online. The research emphasizes more organized framework for students and more support for teachers. Similarly, Hakim (2020) examined the difficulties facing EFL teachers' virtual classrooms in King Abdul Aziz University, Saudi Arabia during Covid-19 epidemic. Centering on a study sample of fifty English Language instructors, the study reveals that the most shared challenges were the low digital competence, unstable or weak internet connections, learners' demotivation, and dissuasion. Nevertheless, the study informed a constructive proclivity of most of the language instructors towards the deployment of technology in EFL online classes. The study urges the need of focusing on tactical skill-built learning and determining a robust virtual connection between the teachers and students. Also, Mahib ur Rahman (2020) designed a questionnaire for fifty English as a foreign language faculty member of various Saudi Arabian universities. The study positively reflected teachers' satisfaction with virtual English language learning courses during the COVID-19 epidemic in Saudi Arabia and revealed auspicious outcomes of the utility and efficiency of teaching English as a foreign language online if appropriate preparation and training programs for instructors and learners are executed, and up-to-date online language learning platforms and tools are guaranteed.

On the other hand, multiple studies explored students' point of view regarding the challenges of online English courses in Saudi universities. Akhter (2020) explored the problems triggered by the online teaching of English Listening skill on a sample of one hundred EFL Saudi students from different collages during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study observes that virtual learning is disappointing owing to the absence of preparation and training of teachers. The researcher suggests intensive training for instructors to enhance their virtual teaching skills and improve their computer literacy and resolve their misunderstandings about electronic education which will eventually make learners comfortably benefit from online learning. Mahyoob (2020) examines 184 learners' responses to a questionnaire to highlight the difficulties and hurdles encountered by English language learners (EFL) in Science and Arts College, Alula, Taibah University, Saudi Arabia, during

shifting to virtual learning in the second semester of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study finds that most EFL learners are not contented with continuing online learning as they are not achieving the anticipated improvement in language learning performance due to major technical, academic, and communication challenges. Similar findings were detected in Dahmash (2020) that also explored the difficulties of online learning during COVID-19 from the standpoint of EFL students at King Saud University. The findings recognize that the challenges EFL students encountered involved technical issues, flaws of the instructor's presentation, struggles with the electronic exams, approaches to virtual learning, inadequate resources and university council's decisions. Al-Nofaie (2020) assessed the synchronous and asynchronous characteristics of Black-Board in teaching the subject of English Morphology to identify the pros and cons of online learning from the perception of EFL students at Taif University, Saudi Arabia from students. The study shows that students favored the asynchronous mood to the synchronous one because of its flexibility. However, the research shows that distant learning is not forever fascinating for students. The study suggests additional pragmatic instructive policies in the situation of emergencies and inform the measurements of university lecturers and constructors of career promotion programs in the time to come.

Alvi, Bilal & Alvi (2021) combines both teachers' and students' perspectives on the aspects of the teaching and learning process of ESP at one of the Saudi public universities and the difficulties met in the online teaching and learning of English in Medicine subject to foundation year students at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. Data is collected via semi-structured interviews and questionnaires and upon analysis, it reveals many challenges connected to technology, pedagogy, and assessment. The study suggests operative solutions to guarantee productive online learning and teaching comprising exceptional and innovative teaching practices that integrate conformation of the online teaching and learning with active delivery of curriculum and objectives, synchronous and asynchronous interaction between teacher and student, reassuring the development of higher-order thinking skills, active learning, and self-directed learning in students. Furthermore, online teaching practices should have an integral component of feedback and deliver for active time management, respect for diverse talents and ways of learning with constant monitoring and mentoring of the learners. Online assessments, both formative and summative should seek to guarantee student engagement in the procedure. Paramount attention and care was suggested to be given to faculty's social, pedagogical, managerial, and technical competencies.

On the whole, all the above-mentioned studies demonstrate a sort of shared disappointments with the post Covid-19 online teaching of English Languages courses and suggest solutions for them. However, they have dealt with EFL and GE courses in general. Only one study has attempted ESP courses which are highly distinct in their focus, nature, and importance. The present study aims at extending the literature body interrelated to the post Covid-19 teaching and learning of ESP courses within the context of Saudi higher education and validates a practical customized blended model for teaching ESP courses to address the challenges and help in the effective delivery of the ESP lessons with more focus on the andragogical perspectives of bettering students' engagement and enhancing their linguistic competencies in their specialized arenas.

## 5. Methodology

This research paper seeks analyzing the effectivity of an andragogy-based blended course model to overcome the challenges of teaching English in Medicine course to PY students.

### 5.1 Participants

The study participants include one hundred students from foundation year students at King Khalid University, the Joint Programs, AlSamir Female Campus, Abha, during the academic year 2020-2021. The Joint Programs or Preparatory year program aims at establishing the educational foundation and the principles for affiliating and nurturing all subsequent education for candidates to the Bachelors degree in different fields. The participants are students of Health Sciences enrolled in the Intensive English Course (019-Njl) with six credit hours and twenty contact hours, learning three main subjects: Reading & Writing, Listening & Speaking and English in Medicine. The focus of this research is English in Medicine which aims at teaching Professional English for Medical purposes.

### 5.2 Research Design & Procedure

This research adopts quasi-experimental method by comparing pre-test and post-test the results of two groups with different treatments, namely experimental group, and control group, beside the learning satisfaction survey from students. The groups are two batches of 019 Intensive English course students that underwent different treatments as they were taught Professional English in Medicine in diverse ways. The control group is fifty students from the first semester who were taught in the traditional method while the experimental group is fifty students from the second semester who were taught with the andragogy-based blended model.

The data was taken from pre-test and post-test scores and grades that were compared and concluded to prove the research hypotheses. On the other hand, a survey or questionnaire is an effective research instrument that consists of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents (Kabir, 2016). The survey was conducted by sending an online Google survey to fifty students from the experimental batch. The survey comprises four parts: demography, pedagogy, technology, and assessments with ten core questions and many associated questions related to the central question. The students' responses were analyzed and concluded to validate the hypotheses of the paper.

## 6. Findings

The gathered information has revealed vital indications of specific facts regarding the blended model for English for Medicine at the ELC, KKU that was experimented as an endeavor to overcome the challenges of teaching the course during COVID-19. In the pre-test and

post-test analysis, the results of two sections who were taught differently were compared. According to the result analysis that figure 2 demonstrates, the section who were taught English in Medicine using the blended model (n=50) got higher grades in the final results than the section that was taught traditionally (n=50). The post-test group displayed 33.33% of the whole class scoring A grade while in the other group that were taught traditionally only 10.14% students got A grade. The failure rate in the pre-test group was considerably noticed as 18.75 students could not achieve passing marks while in the post-test group, only one student failed in the course. The difference between both results indicates the undeniable role the blended model had in making course delivery more comprehensible, pleasurable, and profitable which resulted in better academic achievement. This result illustrates that via the blended course model, students comprehensibly met the benchmark expectations of the course objectives and got the aimed preparation for taking the next step in their medical careers with their important skills of language skills, self-learning, research, and critical thinking well-developed.

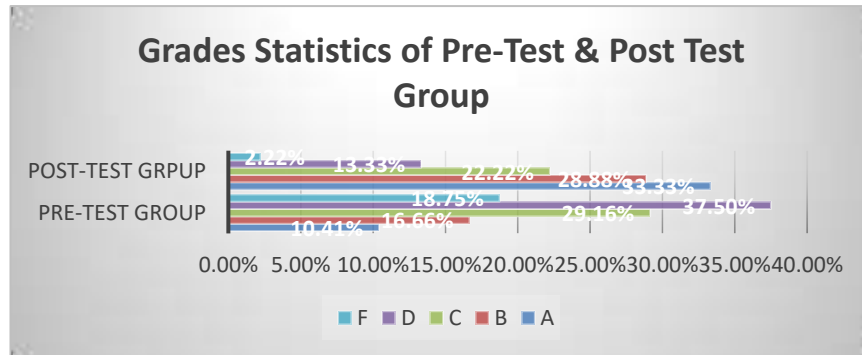


Figure 2. Pre-test and post-test results

On the other hand, and as figure 2 shows, the students’ satisfaction survey was conducted to assess students’ satisfaction with the blended course to construct of students’ attitudes that affectively measures students’ satisfactions who usually have positive experience towards online learning (Harsasi, et al., 2018). According to Dziuban et al. (2015); Rios, Elliot & Mandernach (2018), students’ satisfaction with the learning method is crucial to the success of online learning. In this study, satisfaction and students’ perception towards the learning experience was one of the vital measures to establish the value of the blended model.

Table 1. Students’ response to the learning satisfaction survey (Quantitative part)

Question	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Interpretation
1. Course objectives were clearly stated from the beginning.	0	0	0	0	45 100%	9	Excellent
2. The course is connected to my prior knowledge in the field.	0	0	1 2.22	4 8.88	40 88.88%	9	Excellent
3. The access to and navigation of the course material is flexible and convenient.	0	0	0	0	45 100%	9	Excellent
4. The course was well-organized and delivered	0	0	0	2 4.44	43 95.55%	9	Excellent
5. Course materials were available in a suitable format.	0	0	0	2 4.44	43 95.55%	9	Excellent
6. Learning activities inspired me to use the available learning materials and resources.	0	0	0	6 13.33%	39 86.66%	9	Excellent
7. The online activities made studying the course interesting and engaging	0	0	0	1 2.22	44 97.77%	9	Excellent
8. Sufficient time and space were given for discussions	0	0	0	2 4.44	43 95.55.5	9	Excellent
9. Adequate variety of online course resources assisted me to accomplish the online activities. (e.g., web links, videos & audios, PDF books articles, etc.)	0	0	0	0	45 100%	9	Excellent
10. Learning activities encouraged me to search for additional material.	0	0	4 8.88%	6 13.33%	35 77.77%	9	Excellent
11. The course has encouraged me to manage my own learning.	0	0	1 2.22%	6 13.33%	37 82.22%	8.8	Excellent
12. The course included activities that promoted my self-learning and problem-solving abilities	0	0	2 4.44%	5 11.11%	38 84.44	9	Excellent
13. The course included activities promoted mutual group works and cooperation	0	0	0	2 4.44	43 95.55%	9	Excellent
14. I was motivated to learn throughout the course	0	0	1	5 11.44	39 86.66%	9	Excellent
<b>Average</b>						<b>8.98</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

The open-ended questions were:

- (a) The positive aspects of the course were \_\_\_\_
- (b) The negative aspects of the course were \_\_\_\_

The survey questionnaire contained fourteen Likert scale questions and three open-ended questions to substantiate and explain the selected scale and identify other variables which may have not been covered in the close-ended part. Data from the fourteen close-ended questions served as the quantitative data while the answers to open-ended questions served as the qualitative data for the study. Table 1 shows students' responses to the close-ended questions. There is a sweeping satisfaction as most of the students' responses were between strongly agree and agree while none has gone for disagree or strongly disagree. The data interpretation reflects that the average mean of students' satisfaction is 8.98 which is high and reveals that majority of the students are greatly satisfied and contented with the blended course design.

## 7. Discussion

Realizing the potential of blended learning as the most operative educational alternative to usher in more innovative and versatile instructional methodologies, and considering the diversity of adult learners' needs and experiences, this paper proposed and evaluated the application of a customized blended course for English in Medicine that was designed to offer a distinct paradigm for instructional design and delivery of content that is needed to combat the obstacles hindering quality delivery of ESL subject to an important level as that of the preparatory year. From the aforementioned findings of the study, we can summarize the findings of the students' final results and satisfaction survey and the efficacy of the proposed blended model based on the following andragogical assumptions:

### 7.1 Orientation to Learning

This notion indicates that adults need to know the 'why' of learning the subject and to be actively involved in the learning process before it actually starts. They need to know what the subject is and how it is going to solve problems that they regularly encounter. In a focus-oriented subject like English in Medicine, students not only want to know why they need to acquire this subject but also how it can be employed in the future. From this andragogical perspective, when learners pre-identify why the subject matter is significant for them, and the course content further boost up this perceived value, interest and overall commitment to the learning process is highly generated. The close-ended survey represented this notion in the statement "Course objectives were clearly stated from the beginning" where 100% of students strongly agreed that they pre-identified the purpose of the subject and importance to their future specializations. In the open-ended questions, answers like "I understood and loved the subject from the very start" and "everything about the course was clear from the beginning" clearly show that students had ample prior knowledge about the importance of the course and its value to their specialization.

### 7.2 Adult Learner Experience

Distinct from children who are learning things for the first time without previous experience, adult learners bring the richness of past education and life experiences to the new learning practices to which they can relate to enrich their growth. Hence, there should be a wide range of approaches, instructional models and theories that incorporate their experiences and appeal to their diverse backgrounds to ensure effective learning. For this purpose, the blended model for English in Medicine included a well-planned accessible instructional design that aimed to meet both the course objectives and pedagogical needs. In the quantitative part of the survey, statements like "The online course was easy to navigate," "The course was well-organized" and "The online activities made studying the course interesting and engaging" represented this assumption where students were highly satisfied. This was interpreted and seen in their written response from the open-ended questions. "The course was comfortable and easy to follow" which reveals that the course display vitally impacts the way learners interact with it. Another application of the learner's experience assumption in the blended model was the discussion panels and the Doctors' Society where students availed a chance for sharing their experiences and exchanging their perspectives on different course related topics in a socially active atmosphere. This was an incredibly important aspect that almost 95.55% strongly agree to the statement "Sufficient time and space were given for discussions" and "The course included activities promoted mutual group works and cooperation." Some responses to the qualitative part of the survey supported this where answers like "the discussion board has benefitted me a lot" and "the Doctors' Society was my most favorite part" which proves social interactions and discussions that are rooted in a thorough andragogical design as an effective method to promote student understanding of the subject, facilitate social engagement among students or between students and instructor, promote meaningful learning and enable adult learners to be constantly engaged and to achieve their learning outcome.

### 7.3 Readiness to Learn

Knowles encapsulates this principle of andragogy in his statement "Adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations" (Knowles, 1984, p. 67). According to this statement, adult learners prefer learning things that are relevant to them, and they can actually use immediately. Hence, suggestive course materials like illustrations, articles, videos, online links, articles, and games help in improving students' willingness to learn and orientation for learning. Also, engaging task, assignments and projects stir up students to learn effectively, so they can practically apply what they learnt on these activities. The following statements characterized this notion in the quantitative section of the survey. "Course materials were available in a suitable format," "Learning activities inspired me to use the available learning materials and re-sources," "The online activities made studying the course interesting and engaging" and "Adequate variety of online course resources assisted me to accomplish the online activities. (e.g., web links, videos & audios, pdf books and articles, etc.)" In the written feedback from the open-ended questions majority of the students appreciated the variety of learning material in the course that have deepened their understanding of the course such as:

“Videos helped a lot in memorizing and remembering the medical terms”, “the online dictionaries were important in improving my medical vocabulary and understanding the lessons”, “I especially like the weblinks that helped me to find the same information in different styles”. Hence, the less that the course material applies to students’ current role and the quicker they utilize the knowledge, the more attention they will be prepared to deliver to the course.

#### *7.4 Self-Concept*

This assumption indicates that adult students’ self-concept matures from being dependent on others to being self-driven and autonomous. In this level of maturation, student prefer taking the initiative in identifying their learning demands, creating learning objectives, recognizing human and material resources for learning, selecting, and employing suitable learning approaches, and assessing learning results. Here, it is the responsibility of instructors to design learning experiences that provide minimum instruction and maximum autonomy. Working autonomously and exploring new topics on their own make students obtain new knowledge and construct upon existing information more efficient and successful. According to Tough (1978), adults learn effectively when they spend a significant quantity of time on “learning projects” with the aim of obtaining and sustaining particular qualities and skills or changing in one way or another. In the blended model for English in Medicine course, this notion was employed through reading, listening, observation, course participation, reflection, exercise, and most importantly the activities of group collaboration projects that involve minimal instructor intervention and more students indulgence and independence. This aspect of self-directed learning was denoted in the close-ended part in the statements “The course included activities and projects that promoted my self-learning and problem-solving abilities” and “The course included activities that promoted mutual group works and cooperation” where students dominantly agreed that they enjoyed this element in the blended modal. In the open-ended questions, many students stated that they “benefitted from the projects,” “the course projects were interesting,” “The group tasks were amazing and useful.” This signifies that such activities help the students to mature their self-concept and transfer the knowledge earned in the course to future situations and decipher the latest information to utilize it to several contexts. This indicates a superior sense of profound and effective learning where students cooperate in the construction of knowledge to solve problems and make sense of future experiences.

#### *7.5 Motivation to Learn*

Motivation is crucial and matters a lot to adult learners. Whereas children’s motivation to learn is typically external, adults are motivated to learn internally. Adult learners, according to this assumption, need to expand their self-development and desire to move ahead towards their careers and acquire required skills that assist them achieving their dreams and goals. Hence, instructors need to motivate students to learn by presenting them a good sense for every activity, assessment, or module they need to fulfill that they start feeling more engaged in the process of learning. Because preparatory years students at medical colleges are genuinely and priorly self-motivated and career-driven towards excelling and carrying on their studies in their chosen fields, the virtual hospital in the blended learning model of English in medicine was a good example of a further incentive that endeavored to provide preparatory year students of medical sciences an environment and experiences that support their own motivational constructs and help in increasing medical students’ sense of self-esteem and pleasure. The result of the survey indicates students’ satisfaction with the internal motivations that the blended course could provide as 86.66% strongly agreed to the quantitative statement “I was motivated to learn throughout the course” while in the qualitative section, answers like “The instructor always valued and motivated me”, “the virtual hospital made us feel enthusiastic”, “I liked the way our names used to appear in the virtual hospital by putting (Dr.) before them”. This demonstrates the importance of internal motivators in adult learners in leveraging them to advantage and achieving results where learners show greater dedication, determination, and eventually better achievement.

### **8. Conclusion**

The sudden sweeping shift in the use of technology to learn due to Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in broadening the recognition of blended learning approach as the best provider of the prospects and elasticity required for the future of education. The present study intended to introduce and evaluate a customized blended course design of English in Medicine subject taught to medical college preparatory year students to ensure an efficacious learning that includes unconventional teaching practices and incorporates conformation of the blended teaching and learning with dynamic delivery of curriculum and objectives, asynchronous and synchronous interaction between instructors and learners and between learners themselves, assuring the expansion of higher-order rational skills, and dynamic self-directed learning, along with an integral constituent of feedback, active time management, respect for various learning styles with continuous monitoring and mentoring. Data analysis revealed fruitful outcomes of the course on students’ academic performance and satisfaction level with the course delivery. The study recommends taking unprecedented innovative steps to develop and improve course designs aloof from the traditional methodologies towards sustainable changes in the future of learning. The study features a solution to the major challenges of learning and teaching of English for Specific Purposes at a Saudi public university and implies the utter demand of abrupt improvements on the course delivery design with main focus on characteristics that boost students’ positive gratification that inevitably leads to better academic achievement. Further exploratory research is endorsed for deeper consideration of the topic, alongside other associated aspects, from the standpoint of the chosen university as well as other universities from diverse stances to assert the potential of blended course models in transcending geographical borders as flexible student-centered channel for increasing the self-directed learning skills of students and putting solutions to the problems that hinder its efficacious execution in all arenas of life. The study hopes that the blended course design it validates will participate in reversing the tide of post-COVID-19 E-teaching and E-learning by guiding instructors to upgrade the existing courses via integrating e-tools and instilling a sense of responsibility in learners allowing them to adopt a more dynamic part in maximizing its potentials.



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