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HYBRID ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CONTINUING EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract. The swift advancement of digital technologies has prompted a re-evaluation of educational frameworks worldwide, exemplified by Algeria's University of Continuing Education (UFC). Starting in 2021, UFC has adopted a hybrid model blending face-to-face and online learning to enhance accessibility for adult learners with professional commitments and align with international standards. While this approach offers benefits like flexibility and greater resource access, it also introduces new challenges for students and educators alike. This research examines English language students' views at the Batna center of the UFC on the hybrid approach's benefits and drawbacks. A 25-item questionnaire was distributed to 100 undergraduate students across three years of a licence program. Responses collected via Google Forms during the 2024-2025 academic year ensured timely insights. Research findings show that while learners value the flexibility of the hybrid educational model, they face challenges such as inconsistent technology access, differing online resource standards, and the need for improved pedagogical support. This highlights the importance of integrating technology and instructional design for effective hybrid education. The study concludes with strategies to enhance this system's capacity to facilitate learning, contributing to the modernization of higher education in Algeria.

Keywords: Hybrid; Learning and teaching; Digital technologies; Education

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ГИБРИДНОЕ ОБУЧЕНИЕ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ В УНИВЕРСИТЕТЕ НЕПРЕРЫВНОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ: ПРОБЛЕМЫ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ ЦЕНТРА БАТНА, АЛЖИР)

Надия Смаихи*

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Абстракт. Стремительное развитие цифровых технологий привело к переоценке образовательных систем во всем мире, что наглядно демонстрируется примером Университета непрерывного образования (UFC) в Алжире. Начиная с 2021 года, UFC внедрил гибридную модель, сочетающую очное и онлайн-обучение, с целью повышения доступности образования для взрослых обучающихся, совмещающих учебу с профессиональной деятельностью, и приведения системы в соответствие с международными стандартами. Хотя этот подход предоставляет такие преимущества, как гибкость и расширенный доступ к ресурсам, он также создает новые трудности как для студентов, так и для преподавателей. В данном исследовании рассматриваются взгляды студентов, изучающих английский язык в Батненском центре UFC, на преимущества и недостатки гибридного подхода. Опрос, состоящий из 25 пунктов, был проведен среди 100 студентов трех курсов лицензионной программы. Ответы, собранные с помощью Google Forms в 2024-2025 учебном году, обеспечили получение своевременных данных. Результаты исследования показывают, что, хотя учащиеся ценят гибкость гибридной модели обучения, они сталкиваются с такими проблемами, как нестабильный доступ к технологиям, различие в стандартах онлайн-ресурсов и необходимость улучшения педагогической поддержки. Это подчеркивает важность интеграции технологий и педагогического проектирования для эффективного гибридного образования. Исследование завершается предложением стратегий по повышению потенциала данной системы в облегчении процесса обучения, что способствует модернизации высшего образования в Алжире.

Ключевые слова: Гибрид; Обучение и преподавание; Цифровые технологии; Образование

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DAİMİ TƏHSİL UNIVERSITETİNDƏ HİBRİD İNGİLİS DİLİ TƏHSİLİ: ÇƏTİNLİKLƏR VƏ PERSPEKTİVLƏR (ƏLCƏZAİR, BATNA MƏRKƏZİ NÜMUNƏSİNDƏ)

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Həmzə Raviya**

Abstrakt. Rəqəmsal texnologiyaların sürətli inkişafı bütün dünyada təhsil sistemlərinin yenidən qiymətləndirilməsinə səbəb olmuşdur ki, bu da Əlcəzairin Daimi Təhsil Universiteti (UFC) nümunəsində öz əksini tapmışdır. 2021-ci ildən etibarən UFC peşə fəaliyyətini davam etdirən böyükklər üçün təhsilin əlçatanlığını artırmaq və beynəlxalq standartlara uyğunlaşmaq məqsədilə ənənəvi (üzbəüz) və onlayn tədrisi birləşdirən hibrid modeli qəbul etmişdir. Bu yanaşma çeviklik və daha çox resursa çıxış kimi üstünlüklər təqdim etsə də, eyni zamanda tələbələr və müəllimlər üçün yeni çətinliklər də yaradır. Bu tədqiqat UFC-nin Batna mərkəzində ingilis dili ixtisası üzrə təhsil alan tələbələrin hibrid yanaşmanın üstünlükləri və çatışmazlıqları barədə fikirlərini araşdırır. 25 maddədən ibarət sorğu lisenziya proqramının üç ili üzrə 100 bakalavr tələbə arasında keçirilmişdir. 2024-2025-ci tədris ili ərzində Google Forms vasitəsilə toplanan cavablar operativ nəticələrin əldə olunmasına imkan vermişdir. Tədqiqat nəticələri göstərir ki, tələbələr hibrid təhsil modelinin çevikliyini yüksək qiymətləndirərsələr də, qeyri-sabit texnologiya çıxışı, onlayn resursların fərqli standartları və pedaqoji dəstəyin yaxşılaşdırılmasına ehtiyac kimi problemlərlə qarşılaşırlar. Bu, effektiv hibrid təhsil üçün texnologiya və tədris dizaynının inteqrasiyasının vacibliyini vurğulayır. Tədqiqat bu sistemin öyrənməni asanlaşdırmaq potensialını gücləndirmək üçün strategiyalarla yekunlaşır və Əlcəzairdə ali təhsilin modernləşməsinə töhfə verir.

Açar sözlər: Hibrid; Öyrənmə və tədris; Rəqəmsal texnologiyalar; Təhsil

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1.Introduction

The teaching and learning of English at the University of Continuing Education (UFC) in Batnacenter- Algeria has undergone a deep transformation with the increasing adoption of the hybrid system. For adult learners, who frequently have to balance professional obligations and responsibilities with academic commitments, this model, which merges in-person instruction with online learning, offers more flexibility. The hybrid system seeks to meet the various demands of students by fusing these two approaches and using technology to improve access to educational materials and encourage student autonomy, Wang, X. [2024].

In a context marked by increasing digitalization and the rise of artificial intelligence, it becomes crucial to analyse the impact of the hybrid system on the teaching and learning of English at the university of continuing education at Batnacenter. This approach, combining face-to-face and distance learning, redefines teaching practices by offering new opportunities while posing specific challenges, Gudoniene, D. [2025]. Understanding these dynamics makes it possible to identify the obstacles encountered by teachers and students, and to explore ways to improve the effectiveness of English teaching and learning systems.

Against this backdrop of educational transformation,, a central question emerges: What are the advantages and disadvantages of implementing the hybrid system in the teaching and learning of English at the university of continuing education in Batnacenter? What pedagogical strategies can be implemented to overcome the challenges it generates while exploiting the opportunities offered by new technologies?

2.Distance Learning and Teaching

2.1.1.Definition

With the development of digital technology, remote education has become different from all other traditional forms of distance learning. Increasingly referred to through the Anglicism e-learning, this model is characterized by the delivery of instructional content via electronic platforms, supplemented by a wide array of digital tools and applications Woo, J. H., & Choi, H. [2021]. This teaching method is therefore presented as a "teaching process where tutors and learners are geographically separated and manage their activities flexibly and almost autonomously".

According to the European Commission [2001], Online training, also known as "e-learning", is "the use of new multimedia Internet technologies to improve the quality of learning by facilitating access to resources and services, and remote exchanges and collaboration".

The term "e-learning" originated in the USA and is, however, relatively new to the literature contains the word "learning", meaning "apprenticeship"

(considered as the personal acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc.), a tool/means powered by electronics Tafazoli, D. (2023). E-learning is commonly conceptualized as “a process of instruction in which tutors and learners are geographically separated yet manage their activities with a high degree of flexibility and relative autonomy”.

The very term *e-learning* underscores its dual essence: the notion of learning, understood as the individual acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and its reinforcement through electronic means. Although of American origin, the concept remains relatively recent in scholarly discourse, continuing to evolve alongside technological innovation.

2.2.Characteristicsof Distance Education

According to Chakma, D. (2022), distance education is distinguished by several key features that set it apart from traditional modes of instruction:

Geographical Separation: The educational process is marked by a physical distance between instructors and learners. This enables access to educational opportunities for individuals situated in diverse locations.

Integration of Electronic media: Instruction is facilitated through a variety of digital resources, including virtual platforms, e-books, online lectures notes, access to tutors, videos and audiovisual materials.

Learner autonomy: Students assume primary responsibility for managing their study schedules. While certain courses may require synchronous participation at fixed times, the overall system emphasizes self-directed learning.

Flexibility of Access: Learners may engage with course content, assignments, and online activities at times that align with their personal and professional commitments

Efficient Use of time: The model allows students to structure their learning in ways that optimize both time management and individual study preferences.

3.HybridTeaching and Learning

Distance education does not merely function as an alternative to traditional face-to-face instruction; it can also serve as a complementary mode within a structured learning environment O'Byrne, W. I. (2015). For several decades, hybrid training systems have been a subject of research in educational technology, particularly in the field of higher education. Scholars have examined not only the organizational dimension of these systems but also the quality and nature of the learning outcomes they generate Munday, D. (2022).

The terminology surrounding this type of teaching and learning has never really been unanimously adopted. The expressions "hybrid courses", "blended learning", "hybrid systems", "hybrid training systems" or "hybrid teaching-learning" are all terms used in French and English literature. Regardless of the terminology adopted, hybridization, Essa, E. K. (2023) refers to the integration

of all dimensions of the teaching-learning process- including organizational structures, curricular content, and the roles of both instructors and learners.

3.1. Definition

In the field of language education, hybrid learning is best understood as an instructional design that strategically combines face-to-face and online modes of delivery within a coherent pedagogical framework Munday, D. (2022). Unlike approaches that rely on either traditional classroom instruction or distance education, the hybrid model integrates the distinctive advantages of both modalities while mitigating their respective limitations.

At its core, hybrid teaching and learning emphasizes interaction and learner engagement across environments, supported both didactic and technological design. Scholars such as Puren highlights the importance of treating these two dimensions-pedagogical and technological- not as separate entities but as independent and recursive, forming what he terms a dialogical relationship, Kiryakova, G. (2009). In this sense, a technologically sophisticated system without pedagogical value is as ineffective as a pedagogically sound design that lacks technological feasibility. True effectiveness emerges only from the synergy between instructional principles and digital innovation.

Universities and educational institutions increasingly adopt hybrid formats as a response to growing student populations and the demand for continuous, flexible learning opportunities. For example, the University of Laval defines a hybrid course as one that "includes both face-to-face and online sessions, with the proportion and sequencing of each determined by the specific learning needs of the course". This dual structure enhances flexibility by allowing greater freedom in time, space, and method of study, while also supporting active, learner-centered pedagogy.

Ultimately, hybrid learning does more than combine two delivery formats, it reconfigures the entire teaching-learning process by embedding adaptability, interactivity, and technological integration as its foundation.

3.2.A Brief Historical Overview of the New UFC System

Since 2021, the University of Continuing Education (UFC) in Algeria has introduced a restructured hybrid learning system that integrates both face -to-face and online instruction. Under this model; approximately half of the courses are delivered on campus in evening sessions, while the remaining portion is offered through digital learning platforms [Oulebsir, 2024]. This pedagogical reform was accompanied by the adoption of the Licence-Master-Doctorate (LMD) framework, aligning the institution more closely with international higher education standards.

The first cohort of students enrolled in the academic distance-learning program in 2021 included nearly 44,000 participants across the country, a figure that highlights the scale and accessibility of the reform. Enrolment for both

undergraduate and master's programs was extended until 4 October 2023, supported by the publication of a comprehensive guide to assist candidates throughout the registration process [APS, 2023].

In parallel, UFC incorporated hybrid training schemes into its continuing professional development programs for teachers, particularly during the period of confinement associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. These initiatives, which combine remote and face-to-face learning, are designed to enhance flexibility for students while responding to the broader national imperative of modernizing lifelong education in Algeria [Ferhani, 2022].

4. Research Methodology

This study seeks to examine both the advantages and the challenges encountered by English students at the University of Continuing Education (UFC), While also exploring possible strategies to enhance the effectiveness of the newly implemented hybrid learning model. To address these objectives, a survey-based approach was adopted, using a structured questionnaire administered to students enrolled at the UFC center in Batna University. The instrument contained 25 items closed, semi-open, and open-ended questions – designed to elicit detailed insights into students' experiences and perceptions

4.1. Sample

The survey was administered to a purposive sample of 100 English students at Batna UFC center. Participants were drawn from the first, second, and third years of the undergraduate program ensuring representation across different stages of the licence cycle.

4.2. Data Collection

To facilitate efficient data collection, the questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms, which allowed for the streamlined dissemination of the survey and the secure reception of responses. Data gathering took place in March of the 2024-2025 academic year, a period selected to provide a timely and up-to-date overview of students' engagement with the hybrid system.

4.3. Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles. Participants anonymity and confidentiality were fully protected, data were handled with strict security measures. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to participation.

4.4. Methodological limitations

The primary limitation of this study lies in the relatively small sample size, restricted to a single UFC center. While this constraint was largely due to time limitations, it inevitably narrows the generalizability of the findings and calls for caution when extrapolating results to the wider student population.

5. Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Section 1: Participant Profile

Gender	Male	Female
Number and percentage	46 46 %	54 54 %

Table 1: Distribution of Participants by Gender

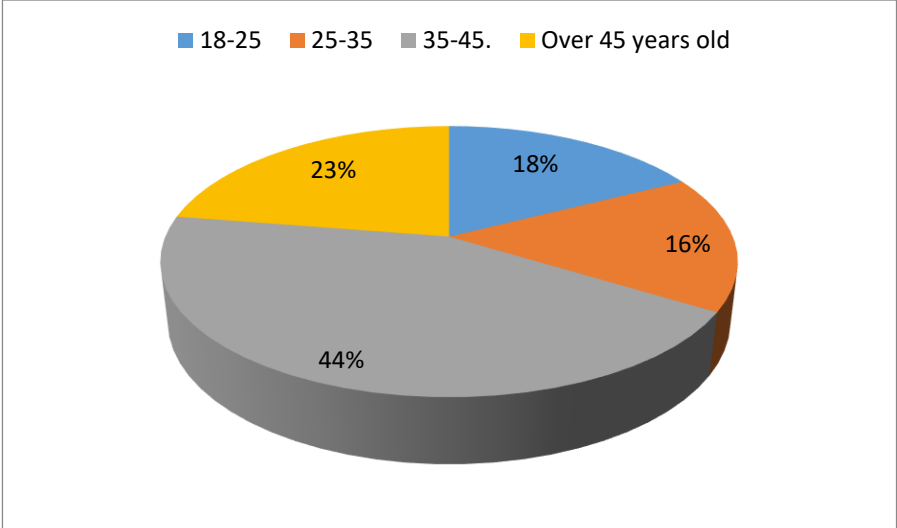


Figure 1: Distribution of Participants by Age

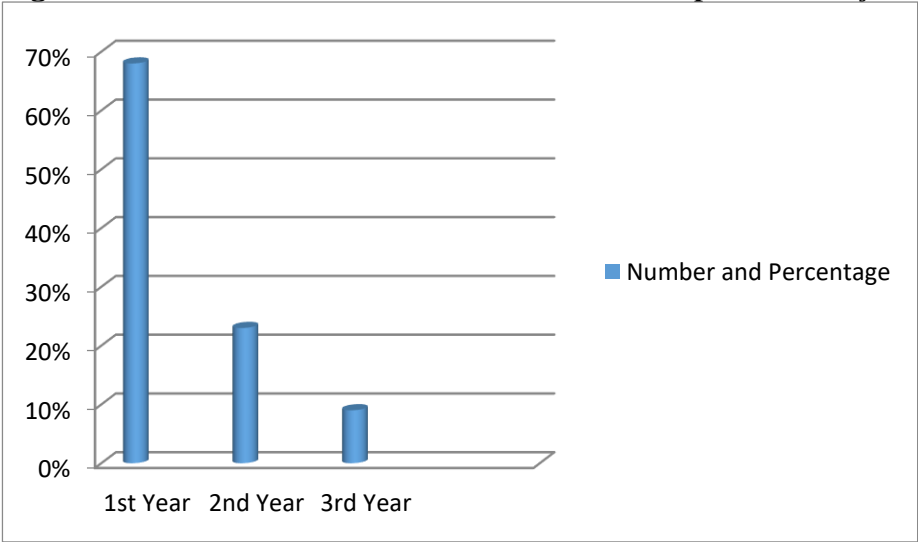


Figure 2: Distribution of Participants by Year of Undergraduate Studies

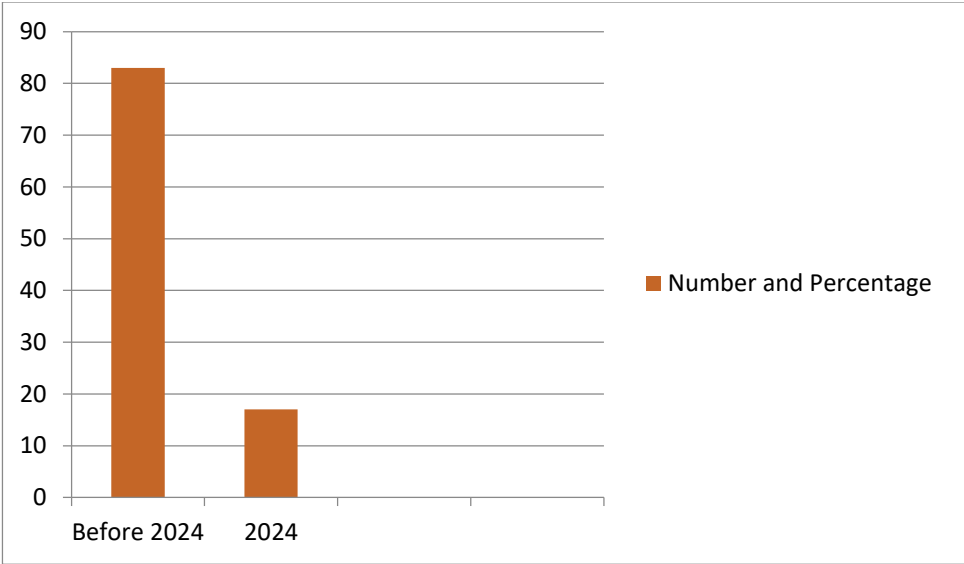


Figure 3: Distribution of Participants According to the Year of the baccalaureate

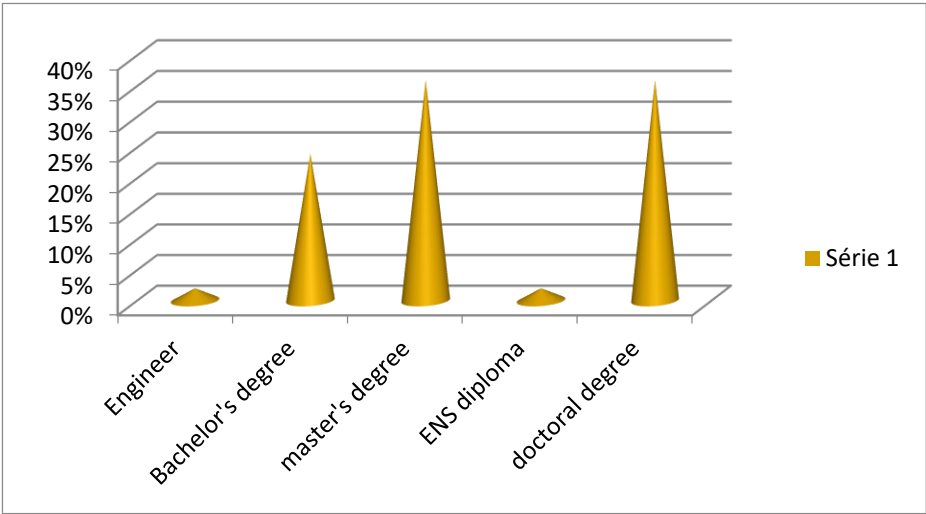


Figure 4: Distribution of Participants According to the Diploma Obtained

We can see from the above table and figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 that there are 100 participants in our sample, with a slight majority of women (54%). The age group with the highest representation is 35-45 years old (35%), followed by 25-35 years old (33%). 83% of participants earned their baccalaureate degree prior to 2024, and 68% of participants are in their first year of undergraduate studies. In terms of educational background, engineers and ENS graduates are the least represented (2% each), while master's and doctoral degree holders are the most numerous (36% each). These participants have enough academic

background to evaluate the UFC's hybrid system and respond to inquiries about its advantages and disadvantages.

Section 2: University Course

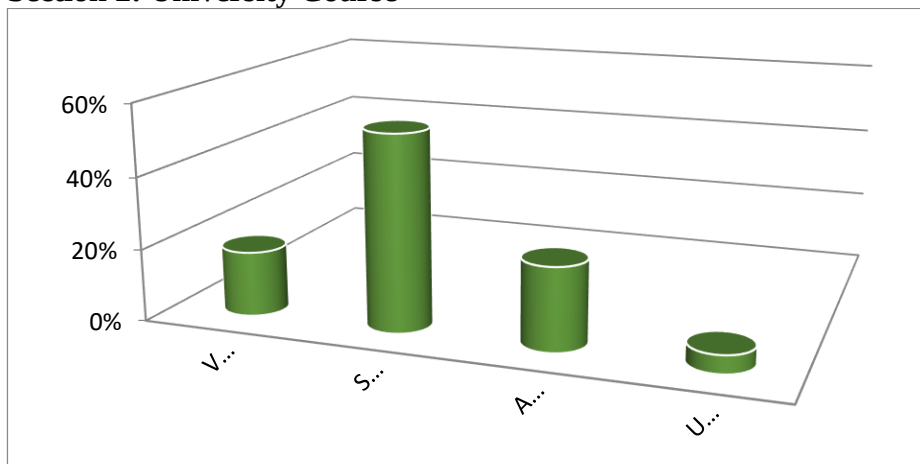


Figure 5: Evaluation of the Hybrid System Applied at the UFC

The majority of the participants (18% and 54%) find the hybrid system satisfactory, while 23% consider it somewhat unsatisfactory and 5% not satisfactory. These results reflect a general approval of the hybrid system, although some shortcomings remain and deserve attention in order to improve students' experience.

To reinforce the results obtained, participants were asked to justify their answers. The collected justifications can be summarized as follows:

Advantages of the Hybrid System

- ✓ Enables employees to obtain a degree while working.
- ✓ Offers flexibility between face-to-face and online learning.
- ✓ Compatible with work schedules and facilitates self-learning.
- ✓ Allows students to learn at their own pace.

Disadvantages of the Hybrid System

- ✓ Lack of interaction and limited availability of instructors.
- ✓ Difficulty in understanding without teacher guidance.
- ✓ Discrepancy between face-to-face and online courses.
- ✓ Inadequate evaluation methods and absence of practical workshops.

In summary, the hybrid system is flexible and well-suited to employees, but it suffers from a lack of supervision and interaction. Improvements are needed to strengthen pedagogical support and enhance the effectiveness of assessment.

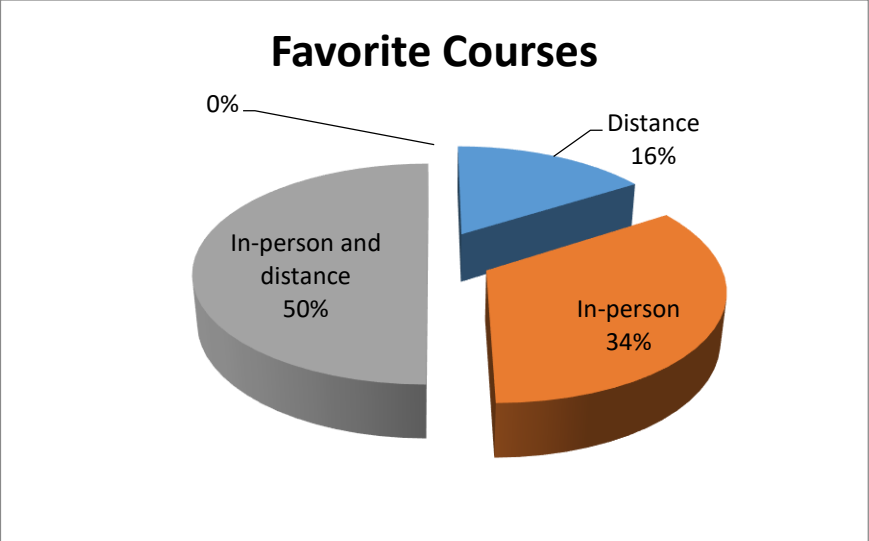


Figure 6: Students’ Preference for Course Types in a Hybrid System

From the above figure, we can say that flexibility is crucial because most students (50%) prefer a mix of face-to-face and online instruction. (34%) prefer face-to-face instruction, which emphasizes face-to-face communication with teachers. Due to availability, only sixteen percent choose online learning exclusively. These findings demonstrate that the best way to better satisfy students' expectations is to balance the two modes.

5.1.Difficulties Encountered

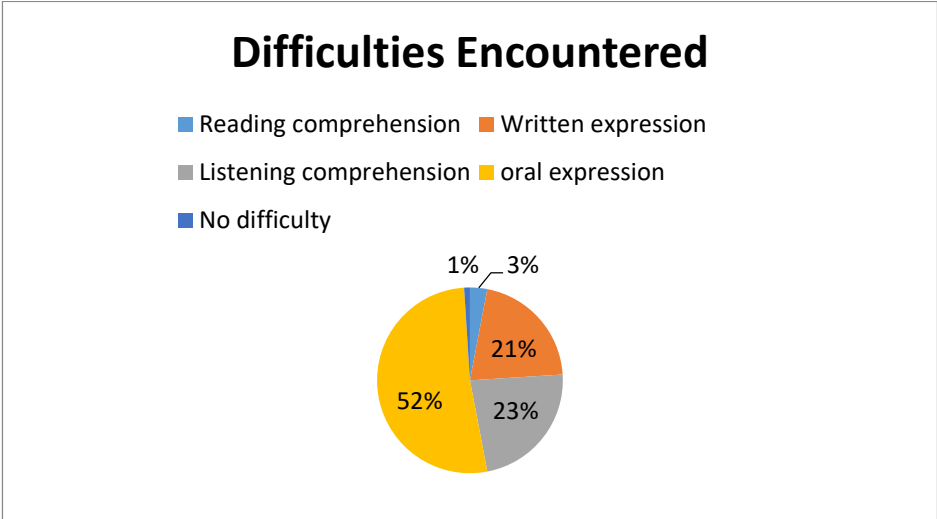


Figure7: Students’ Difficulties in English Language

The results clearly show that the most significant difficulty for students is oral production, followed by listening comprehension. These findings reflect the criticisms previously mentioned by students (Figure 5, Section 2), which

highlight the lack of interaction and the need for teacher support. According to specialists in this field, these shortcomings must be addressed for the proper implementation of the hybrid system. At the same time, oral difficulties are among the inherent elements in the process of learning a foreign language.

5.2.Grades Obtained

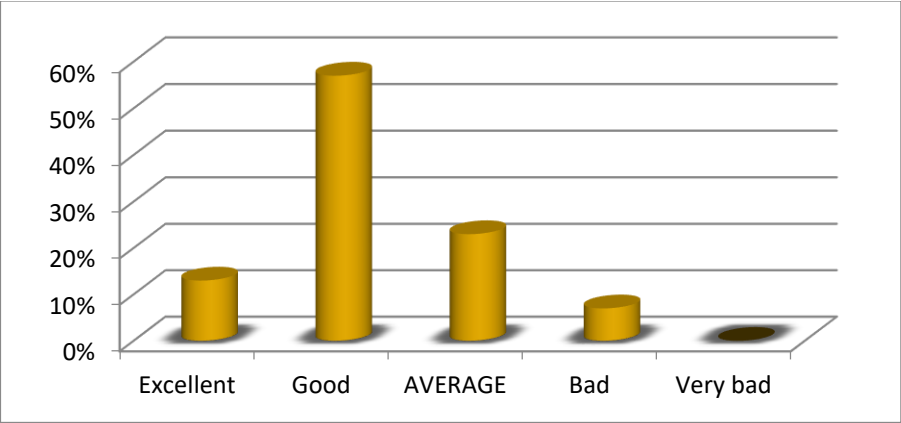


Figure8: Evaluation of Grades Obtained During the First Semester of the Current Academic Year

The assessment of students’ grades clearly shows that the results are satisfactory despite the difficulties encountered. According to the figure, 70% of the grades range from excellent to good, 23% are average, and only 7% are considered poor. This reflects the effectiveness of the system in place.

Section 3: Evaluation of face-to-face and Online Activities

5.3.The Evaluation of In-Person Exams

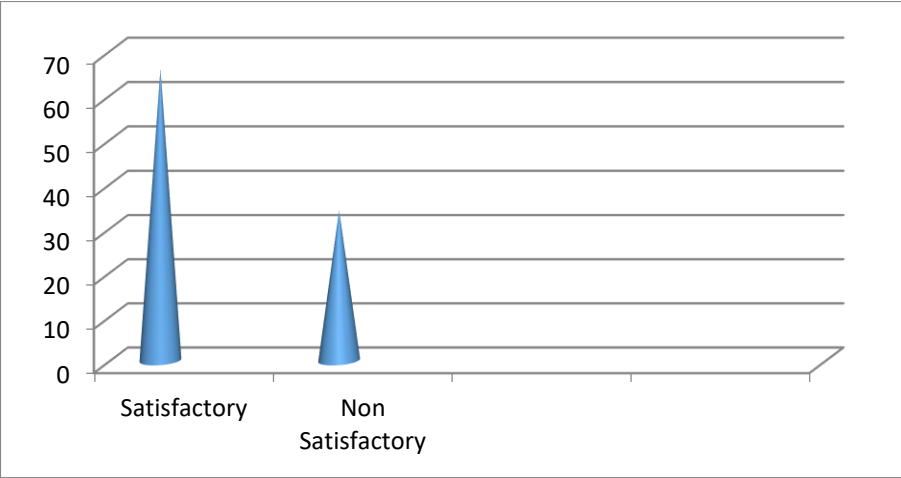


Figure9: Participants’ Opinions on the Evaluation of face-to-face Exams

With regard to the evaluation of face-to-face exams, the majority of participants (66%) expressed satisfaction, while 34% stated that this evaluation

was not satisfactory. This rate reflects the reality of the complexity of the evaluation process and the problems associated with it.

5.4.Evaluation of Continuous Assessments Conducted Online (via the Moodle Platform)

Question 3.2. Do the grades of online continuous assessments reflect the student's effort?

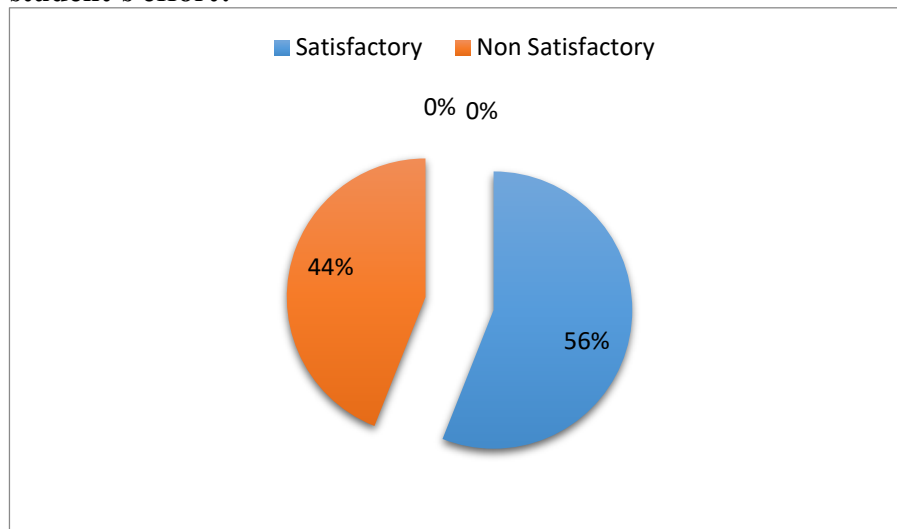


Figure10: Participants' Opinions on the Evaluation of Assessments on the Moodle Platform

In response to this question, 56 participants (56%) believe that these grades do not truly reflect the effort made by the student, while 44 participants (44%) consider them to be representative.

To better understand the reasons behind the negative responses, participants were asked to justify their choice. The main justifications collected are as follows:

- Students resort to artificial intelligence (AI) to complete activities on the platform.
- Activity solutions are frequently shared on English students' Facebook pages.
- Evaluation grades are sometimes awarded randomly, without proper correction.
- Evaluation methods vary from one assessor to another: some give the maximum grade (20) for a correct answer, while others limit it to 16.

5.5.The Use of AI by Students

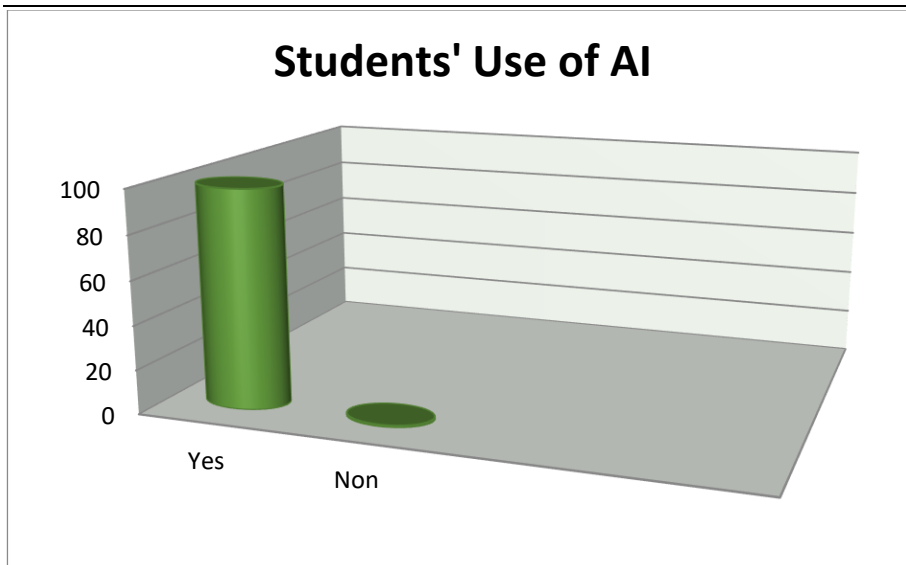


Figure 11: Students' Use of AI to Respond to Activities on the Moodle Platform

According to the results shown in the table, almost all participants (99%) believe that students resort to artificial intelligence (AI) tools and social networks to complete the activities posted on the Moodle platform. This statement highlights the problem of students' dependency on AI tools and their excessive use in carrying out the required tasks. It raises questions about the usefulness of evaluating activities that do not truly reflect the student's effort.

Question 3.3. Do you have any proposals to solve this problem of evaluating activities submitted on the Moodle platform?

Participants who indicated that students rely on AI and on shared solutions of activities through social networks suggested several solutions to address this challenge related to online activity assessment. Among these proposals, we can mention:

- ❖ Organizing activities exclusively in person.
- ❖ Designing activities in the form of quizzes.
- ❖ Diversifying activities for each group on the platform to limit student collaboration.
- ❖ Providing model answers accompanied by an evaluation rubric for assessors.
- ❖ Integrating an AI-based automatic correction method.

The participants' proposals reflect their awareness of the risks associated with excessive reliance on AI tools for learning English through activities. Among their suggestions, students emphasized the need for activities to be assessed in synchronous mode. This solution can limit the use of AI because

of the time constraints. In addition, participants expressed a preference for quiz-based assessments, which allow them to be evaluated objectively by tools functioning on the basis of AI.

Question 3.4. If you have other problems regarding the platform, please mention them.

The aim of this final question was to identify difficulties that had not been raised in previous responses. Participants reported the following issues:

- ❖ Lack of response to students' grade appeals on the platform.
- ❖ Errors present in certain questions.
- ❖ Absence of model answers enabling students to self-evaluate.
- ❖ Automatic assignment of a zero grade due to answers deemed similar.

The answers to this question reveal major shortcomings in the functioning of the platform. Participants point to a lack of transparency and communication, particularly the absence of responses to grade appeals, which creates a sense of injustice. In addition, the presence of errors in some questions undermines the credibility of the evaluation. The absence of model answers prevents effective self-assessment, depriving students of constructive feedback. These elements indicate the need to improve the reliability and interactivity of the platform.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of the results of this survey highlights students' perceptions of the hybrid system applied at the UFC in Batna Center- Algeria. The profile of the participants, consisting mainly of first-year students and holders of advanced degrees, reveals a relatively experienced sample capable of objectively evaluating the pedagogical modalities in place. Overall, the hybrid system is perceived as satisfactory by the majority of respondents due to its flexibility and its adaptation to the constraints of working students. However, several limitations persist, including the lack of interaction, limited availability of instructors, and an evaluation process sometimes seen as unfair or insufficiently rigorous.

With regard to course type preference, the combined option of in-person and online learning is favored, showing that a balance between autonomy and guidance is essential. In terms of performance, most students report an improvement in their level, despite significant difficulties in oral production, which underscores the need for more intensive support in this area.

The analysis of evaluations, particularly online, raises concerns about the massive use of AI and social networks to answer activities, which calls into question the reliability of the results. Students' proposals, such as returning to synchronous activities and adopting automated quizzes, reflect a desire to improve fairness in assessment. Finally, criticisms concerning the platform (lack of response to appeals, errors, absence of model answers) call for an

urgent reform of the digital tool to strengthen its transparency, efficiency, and credibility among learners.

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