

## **Saudi University Students' Perceptions towards Virtual Education During Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of Language Learning via Blackboard**

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### **Abstract**

Following the spread of COVID-19, many parts of the world have fully shifted to virtual education. Issues regarding students' readiness for this mode of education have been the main concerns in countries where students are not used to virtual classes. This article presents a case study that investigated the perceptions of Saudi university students towards learning via Blackboard, during the unusual mode of delivering education caused by Covid-19. The aim was to identify the merits and challenges of online learning in order to understand the students' learning experiences during the pandemic period and suggest practical solutions. The participants were 25 university students majoring in the English language at the bachelor of arts level. The instructor (the author) taught them classes on morphology. Based on an analysis of the students' learning logs, the students preferred the asynchronous environment to the synchronous one due to its flexibility. However, unlike research findings identified in relevant studies on virtual education for language learning, the present study reveals that virtual education is not always appealing for students. This study is one of the few studies that compare the synchronous and asynchronous aspects of BB in the Arabian contexts. It is hoped that this study will help university authorities to set out more practical educational plans in the case of emergencies. Also, this study will inform the practices of university instructors and designers of professional development courses in the near future.

**Keywords:** blackboard, language learning, perceptions, Saudi university students, virtual education

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