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The opportunities and constraints experienced by students and
teachers using online systems for learning English
at King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	9
DECLARATION	10
ABSTRACT.....	11
ABBREVIATIONS.....	12
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION.....	13
1.1 General introduction	13
1.2 King Abdulaziz University	13
1.3 Purpose of the study	14
1.4 Objectives and research questions	14
1.5 Significance of the study	15
1.6 Structure of the dissertation	18
1.7 Context of the study	18
1.7.1 Cultural dimensions of KSA	18
1.7.2 Education in KSA	21
1.7.3 Use of English in KSA.....	22
1.7.4 Use of the Internet in KSA	23
1.7.5 Development of e-learning in KSA	25
1.7.6 Education at KAU	30
1.7.7 The English Language Institute	31
1.7.8 Teaching methods at KAU	32
1.7.9 The preparatory year at KAU	32
1.7.10 WBDL at KAU	33
1.7.11 Students at KAU	35
1.7.12 The new curriculum at KAU	36
1.7.13 Online systems at KAU	38
1.7.13 Creating a WBDL at KAU	40
1.8 Summary of key points	41
1.9 Glossary of terms	42

CHAPTER TWO	LITERATURE REVIEW	45
2.1	General introduction	45
Part One	Theoretical issues	47
2.2	Language acquisition theory	47
2.2.1	Acquisition of L2	48
2.2.2	Inter-language Theory.....	48
2.2.3	Acculturation/Pidginization Theory.....	49
2.2.4	Multi-dimensional Model.....	50
2.2.5	Universal Grammar Theory.....	50
2.2.6	Krashen's Theory.....	51
2.2.7	Interaction Hypothesis.....	53
2.3	Pedagogic models.....	54
2.4	E-learning models.....	55
2.4.1	Conceptualization Cycle.....	56
2.4.2	Salmon's Five Stage Model.....	56
2.4.3	Laurillard's Conversational Framework.....	57
Part Two	Teaching and learning a foreign language.....	60
2.6	Teaching of English as a foreign language.....	60
2.7	Language learning methods.....	62
2.7.1	Grammar-Translation.....	63
2.7.2	Audio-Lingual.....	63
2.7.3	Direct Method.....	64
2.7.4	Language Immersion.....	65
2.7.5	Communicative Language Teaching.....	65
2.7.6	Quadrant Model.....	68
2.8	Learners' motivation & Learning style preferences..	70
2.9	Technology and language learning	72
2.10	Distance learning: VLEs, WBDL, and open learning.....	75

Part Three	Case studies	82
Part Four	Reflections	100
2.12	Opportunities.....	100
2.13	Constraints.....	102
2.14	Cultural context.....	103
2.15	Practical implications for this study.....	105
2.16	A final reflection on the literature.....	106
CHAPTER THREE	METHODS AND METHODOLOGY	109
3.2	Strategic map	110
3.3	Research questions	111
3.4	Research design	112
3.4.1	Mixed methods	112
3.4.2	Case study approach	103
3.5	Time schedule	115
3.6	Instruments	117
3.7	Questionnaire	117
3.7.1	Pilot study questionnaire	119
3.7.2	Reflections on the pilot study questionnaire	119
3.7.3	Main study questionnaire	120
3.7.4	Analysis of questionnaire responses	124
3.8	Interviews	125
3.8.1	Interview questions	125
3.8.2	Analysis of interview responses	128
3.9	Observations of online classes	130
3.9.1	Analysis of observations	131
3.9.2	Pilot study observations	132
3.9.3	Reflections on the pilot study observations	133
3.9.4	Access to the system	134
3.9.5	Content analysis of field notes	136

3.10	Reliability	139
3.11	Validity	140
3.12	Triangulation	142
3.13	Ethical issues	144
CHAPTER FOUR	RESULTS	146
4.1	General introduction	146
4.2	Questionnaire	146
4.2.1	Demographic characteristics	146
4.2.2	Use of ICT	148
4.2.3	Perceptions	152
4.2.4	Statistical association	162
4.2.5	Reflections on the questionnaire	166
4.3	Interviews	168
4.3.1	Use of the WBDL programme in practice	168
4.3.2	Opportunities	173
4.3.3	Constraints	176
4.3.4	Reflections on the interviews	180
4.4	Observations	183
4.4.1	Time, duration, and attendance	183
4.4.2	Objectives	186
4.4.3	Topics, contents, and skills learnt	188
4.4.4	Organization	192
4.4.5	Student behaviour	194
4.4.6	Pedagogic strategies	197
4.4.7	Affective strategies	203
4.4.8	Technical problems	205
4.4.9	Reflections on the observations	210
CHAPTER FIVE	DISCUSSION	212
5.1	General introduction	212

5.2	Research questions	212
5.2.1	Use of the WBDL programme in practice	213
5.2.2	Opportunities	219
5.2.3	Constraints	221
5.3	Comparison with other case studies	224
5.4	Reflections on opportunities	228
5.5	Reflections on constraints	231
5.6	Reflections on theoretical issues	233
5.7	Reflections on context.....	239
5.8	Limitations of this study.....	240
5.9	Reflexivity	244
5.10	Summary of key points	245
CHAPTER SIX	RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	248
6.1	General introduction.....	248
6.2	Recommendations.....	248
6.2.1	Learners	248
6.2.2	Teachers.....	249
6.2.3	Institution.....	250
6.3	Future research.....	252
6.4	General conclusions.....	254
6.4.1	Contribution to knowledge on e-learning	254
6.4.2	Contribution to research methodology	256
6.4.3	Contribution to educational theory.....	257
6.4.4	Personal contribution	258
REFERENCES	259
APPENDIX	273
I A	Arabic Questionnaire.....	273
I B	Numerically coded questionnaire items.....	284
II	Structured interview questions for teachers	289

III	Structured interview questions for students	291
IV	Coding of interview responses	292
V	Check list for observation of online classes	305
VI	Coding of observations	307

Table

LIST OF TABLES

1.1	Growth of Internet users in Saudi Arabia	24
1.2	Summary of barriers to internet use.....	26
1.3	Three types of students KAU.....	35
2.1	Classical theories of L1 acquisition.....	47
2.2	Pedagogic models.....	54
2.3	Maye's & Fowler's Conceptualization Cycle.....	56
2.4	Salmon's five stage model.....	57
2.5	Student-teacher interactions.....	59
2.6	Traditional and communicative methods	62
2.7	Distance learning and face to face teaching: a matrix	77
2.8	Case studies on online language learning.....	83
2.9	Case studies on e-learning.....	93
3.1	Time schedule of research activities.....	116
3.2	Student population in the WBDL programme	118
3.3	Purposes of questionnaire items.....	122
3.4	Correspondence of research questions and items	123
3.5	Links between research questions and interviews..	127
3.6	Links between research questions and interviews..	128
3.7	Reliability analysis of questionnaire items.....	140
4.1	Cross-tabulation of gender and age.....	147
4.2	Cross tabulation of gender and occupation.....	147
4.3	Cross tabulation of major and place of residence...	148
4.4	Cross-tabulation of computers and Internet	149

4.5	Cross-tabulation of computers and experience.....	150
4.6	Cross-tabulation of place and time of use	151
4.7	Aspects of the programme that were liked the most	152
4.8	Aspects of the programme that were liked the least	153
4.9	Features that were of most use and benefit.....	154
4.10	Preferences for methods of interaction.....	154
4.11	Preferences for Centra and/or EMES.....	154
4.12	Most useful skills.....	155
4.13	Aspects of English developed the most.....	156
4.14	Most useful language content.....	156
4.15	Layout of course website.....	157
4.16	Ease of access of course website.....	157
4.17	Items concerned with constraints	158
4.18	Items concerned with opportunities	160
4.19	Items concerned with delivery	162
4.20	Association of responses with characteristics	163
4.21	Associations of constraints with characteristics.....	165
4.22	Associations of opportunities with characteristics...	165
4.23	Attendance at online classes.....	184
4.24	Objectives of online classes.....	187
4.25	Topics and contents of online classes.....	189
4.26	Organization of online classes.....	193
4.27	Observations of student behaviour.....	195
4.28	Observations of pedagogic strategies.....	198
4.29	Observations of affective strategies.....	204
4.30	Frequency of disconnections	206
4.31	Examples of technical problems	208
5.1	Comparison with Laurillard's Framework	233
5.2	Key points of discussion	247

Figure**LIST OF FIGURES**

1.1	Growth of Internet users in Saudi Arabia	23
1.2	Location of King Abdulaziz University.....	30
1.3	Operation of Centra over the Internet.....	39
2.1	Laurillard's Conversational Framework in practice..	59
2.2	Quadrant Model.....	69
3.1	Strategic map of research activities.....	110
3.2	Example of online chat	136
3.3	Example of triangulation	143
4.1	Word document used in an online class	201
4.2	PDF file used in an online class.....	201

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is the candidate's own work, and has not been submitted for a degree at any other University. This dissertation contains no material which has been used or published before.

ABSTRACT

This case study used a mixed method approach to explore the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language through the medium of a new online synchronous programme (CentrEM) at King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. Information was collected using questionnaires (240 students) personal interviews (8 students and 4 teachers) and observations (30 online classes). A case was identified in which technology supported a restricted approach to online English language learning based mainly on grammar, listening, reading, and writing. Female learners were disadvantaged because they were not encouraged to speak in English. The Internet was used mainly as a platform for instruction and to provide access to limited learning materials (mainly the online course book). Most participants expressed optimism for the potential opportunities of e-learning; however, student attendance was relatively low and active participation was limited. Encouraging student participation was a major issue. The teachers used numerous affective strategies to persuade the students to participate; however, technological difficulties intruded at regular intervals, disrupting the flow of communication and preventing the teachers from knowing who was present. Some students were less skilled in computing and English language than others, further disrupting the classes. A traditional teacher-centred face-to-face classroom strategy was adapted for online instruction. The flow of information was mainly from the teacher to the student, with emphasis on low level recall, encouraged by prompts. The students did not engage in deep learning. There were few opportunities for the students to enter into extensive dialogues with the teachers or to be reflective. The teachers did not use feedback adaptively to plan a differentiated approach. The curriculum was not flexible enough take into account the different abilities, learning styles, and preferences of each individual student. Recommendations are provided for learners, teachers, and the institution to help develop the online programme in the future.

ABBREVIATIONS

CALL	Computer assisted language learning
CLT	Communicative language teaching
CPH	Critical period hypothesis
DL	Distance learning
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELI	English Language Institute at King Abdulaziz University
EMES	Education Management Electronic System
ESL	English as a second language
ESP	English for specific purposes
F2F	Face to face
FAQs	Frequently asked questions
ICT	Information and communications technology
IDV	Individualism
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
KAU	King Abdulaziz University
L1	First language or native tongue
L2	Second language
MAS	Masculinity index
PDI	Power distance
SLA	Second language acquisition
SLTL	Second language teaching and learning
UAI	Uncertainty avoidance
VLE	Virtual learning environment
WBDL	Web based distance learning

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General introduction

In the last thirty years, the theory and practice of teaching and learning in higher education institutions have evolved rapidly. The reasons for this recent paradigm shift include (a) the changing political and economic landscape which has forced universities to become more stakeholder and market-oriented; (b) the expanding number of students studying off campus by distance learning (DL) and (c) the development of information and communication technology (ICT) associated with online or web-based distance learning (WBDL) also called e-learning (Nicholson, 2009; Williams & Goldberg, 2005). E-learning uses the power of networked computers to deliver customized learning materials to diverse local and distant communities, and is currently in widespread use all over the world, including developing countries, such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) where the case study presented in this dissertation was located.

1.2 King Abdulaziz University

This study focuses on the current e-learning system at King Abdulaziz University (KAU). KAU was one of the first universities in Saudi Arabia to develop WBDL. The University did so for many reasons: (a) to overcome the obstacles of on-site or campus learning, mainly time and location; (b) to introduce the country to the latest technology innovations in education; (c) to keep up with educational developments in the rest of the world, and (d) to give more high school graduates and working people the opportunity and flexibility

to study for an academic qualification. Recently, the Ministry of Higher Education in KSA established the National Centre for E-Learning and Distance-Learning at KAU, to develop a range of research and development agendas aimed at facilitating next generation e-learning across higher education sectors (National Centre for E-Learning and Distance Learning, 2009).

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this case study was to explore the instructional methods and the satisfaction levels, perceptions, and attitudes of teachers and students with respect to the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language through the medium of the new online programme, called CentrEM in this thesis, introduced at KAU in 2009. CentrEM is an acronym from a combination of two educational management electronic systems (EMES and Centra). The study concentrates on the opportunities and constraints of using CentrEm to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) to students in their preparatory year.

1.4 Objectives and research questions

The main objectives of this study were:

1. To determine how teachers and students used CentrEM in practice for English teaching and learning at KAU.
2. To determine students' and teachers' attitudes towards the use of CentrEM when learning and teaching English.

3. To identify how, if at all, CentrEM supported the learners involved in the study and how they benefitted from it.
4. To investigate students' and teachers' levels of satisfaction with the WBDL programme.
5. To uncover the main constraints students and teachers faced when learning and teaching English.

The research questions for this study are:

RQ#1: How do both the teachers and learners at KAU use the new WBDL programme in practice?

RQ#2: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the opportunities afforded by the new WBDL programme (i.e., the attributes of the programme that are most helpful in achieving its educational objectives)?

RQ#3: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the constraints of the new WBDL programme (i.e., the attributes of the programme that generally prevent or limit the achievement of its educational objectives)?

1.5 Significance of the study

This case study has academic, practical, and personal significance. Primarily it will contribute to the expanding literature on e-learning. Open access to case studies is important to ensure the effective adoption of new technologies for learning in local contexts. Case studies on successful and even unsuccessful training practices in language learning serve as useful guides to others who are planning similar initiatives (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Secondly, it

will provide practical recommendations to help improve the quality of English language learning at KAU. Thirdly it will create a platform from which further research on e-learning at KAU may be pursued.

This study also has profound personal significance, since it is rooted in my lifelong interest in ICT. I was born in KSA but my curiosity in ICT was awakened when I was a little girl living abroad. At that time, my father used a computer for completing his PhD in the USA. I played with his computer in the early 1980s using the MS DOS operating system. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, when arcade games were introduced, I spent hours playing with my cousins and siblings, even though many people found it strange that a young girl chose computer games over playing with dolls. My interest in the Internet began in 1995 when I was living in Canada. Commercials on television publicized how to stay connected with people, which led me to buy my first laptop. At that time, I used my computer as a means of communication and meeting new people in chat rooms through AOL and CompuServe. I have always been curious to understand how information could be transmitted electronically, which led me to reading, exploring and investigating the Internet. Using the Internet has always been to me an invaluable means of communication with people in other countries, and a way to bring families and friends together. For example, when I returned to Saudi Arabia from Canada it was easy for me to keep in touch with my Canadian friends by using emails and MSN and Yahoo messenger.

When I began teaching English to medical and nursing students at KAU in 2004, I took them to the computer lab once a week to complete activities on grammar and reading. Although the students were motivated at the beginning

of each year, I noticed that they began to lose interest and ignored computer activities because they were busy with their main subjects. During this time, we gave them online activities on grammar, reading, listening, and vocabulary. Students were required to complete independent work online once a week, and then the teachers monitored and graded their logs. I noticed a lack of interest from some students towards learning online because they had limited knowledge of computing which was a frustrating obstacle to those who could not operate a computer or a mouse. Students spent a lot of time just trying to open or save files and understand how to use Microsoft and other applications.

When I moved to the UK in 2006 to study for a Master's degree at Newcastle University I was immediately impressed by the technology used in the classrooms. Smart boards, podcasts and virtual learning environments (VLEs) such as Blackboard and Moodle were used to enhance my learning experience. At first it was a difficult adjustment, but after practising with the tools they became essential aids to my education. Meanwhile, I discovered that KAU was making moves towards using e-learning, which inspired me because I knew that I could apply what I learned during my Master's programme and contribute to creating a better online education system in Saudi Arabia. This was my main motivation for conducting a case study at KAU.

1.6 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the aims and objectives of the study, as well as an overview of education in KSA and the development of e-learning for teaching English as a foreign language. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on the theoretical and pedagogical issues that underpin foreign language and e-learning and its practical applications around the world, with special reference to KSA and developing countries. Chapter 3 describes the methods and methodology used to collect and analyze the data. The analysis of the findings is presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 discusses the results. The conclusions of the study with recommendations for learners, teachers, the institution and future research are presented in Chapter 6.

1.7 Context of the study

The context of this study is discussed with reference to the culture and educational system in KSA including the development of e-learning.

1.7.1 Cultural dimensions of KSA

A cultural dimension reflects the distinct patterns of behaviour and belief which classify and characterize a specified group of individuals. Cultural dimensions pervade all staff and students in e-learning communities, so they are relevant to this study. Hofstede (2001; 2009) identified four cultural dimensions that serve to distinguish one nation from another, namely Power Distance (PDI), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Masculinity Index (MAS) and Individualism (IDV). Hofstede's research was based on employees of a

multinational company, so that patterns of differences between national cultures were identified, uncontaminated by differences between corporate cultures. Hofstede scored each country using a scale from 0 to 100 for each dimension. The higher the score, the more that dimension is exhibited. Hofstede's work is open to criticism for stereotyping and failing to engage deeply with local contexts. However, it may provide a useful frame of reference. Hofstede's analysis for the Arab World, including Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, demonstrates that the Muslim faith plays a central role in the lives of the people. Large Power Distance (PDI = 80) and Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI = 68) are the predominant characteristics of the Arab World. The high PDI ranking is indicative of a high level of inequality. Muslim caste systems that do not facilitate the upward mobility of people are constructed. The high UAI ranking reflects the Arab world's low level of tolerance towards uncertainty. Many laws, rules, regulations, and controls are exerted in order to reduce uncertainty. It appears that the ultimate goal of the Arab world is to control everything in order to avoid the unexpected. The Arab world does not readily accept change and is averse to risk. The combination of high UAI and high PDI creates a situation where leaders have ultimate power and authority to develop rules, laws and regulations in order to reinforce their own leadership and control. As a consequence, large inequalities in power and wealth have been allowed to grow within Arab societies. Arabs expect their leaders to separate themselves from the rest of the population. This condition is not subverted but rather accepted by the society as their cultural heritage. Hofstede's Masculinity Index (MAS) refers to the distribution of roles between

genders, ranging from an assertive masculine pole to a modest, caring feminine pole. MAS = 52 for the Arab World is above the world average of 50, indicating that Arabs experience a higher degree of differentiation between gender roles than average. The male pole dominates a significant portion of the society and power structure whilst Arab women are limited in their rights. The lowest Hofstede Dimension for the Arab World is for Individualism (IDV = 38) compared to a world average of 64. This very low IDV ranking reflects a collectivist society as compared to an individualist culture. Collectivist in this context has no political meaning; it refers to the group, not to the State. The low level of individualism in the Arab World is manifested by an overwhelming long-term commitment of each individual to their in-group. From birth onwards, Arabs are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, consisting of nuclear families (parents and siblings) and extended families (uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and grandparents) as well as extended relationships with friends and other families, which continue to serve and protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Loyalty to the in-group is of a paramount importance in a collectivist culture, and over-rides most other rules of their society. In comparison, amongst highly individualistic societies such as the UK (IDV = 89) and the USA (IDV = 91) the ties between individuals are looser. People in the Western world are expected to be self-reliant, to express themselves as unique individuals, and to be responsible for and look after themselves, rather than, as expected in the Arab world, to conform to and depend upon their in-group for stability, security, and well-being.

1.7.2 Education in KSA

Fifty years ago, it was nearly impossible to find a Saudi household whose members had been educated formally. It was not until 1952 that formal education began for men. Women started to become educated in 1960. Today the situation has changed. It is now difficult to find a household without members who have formal academic qualifications. In 2007, 98.1% of male youths (aged 15 to 24) and 95.9% of female youths were classified as literate (World Bank, 2008).

In KSA, education is segregated by gender. Article 155 of the Policy of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (1969) prohibits the mixing of males and females throughout the different stages of their education. Segregation of the sexes is prescribed in Article 160 of the Labour Code (1969) which prohibits the co-mingling of men and women in the workplace. Education is therefore partitioned into three separately administered systems: general education for boys, general education for girls and traditional Islamic education for boys. The Ministry of Education presides over general education for boys and girls; both sexes follow the same curriculum and take the same annual examinations (Sedgwick, 2001). The educational system in KSA has five divisions: kindergarten for children from three to six years old, elementary/primary (ages 6-11), intermediate (ages 12-14), secondary level (15-18), and university, typically ages 19-24, depending on the subjects studied and the form of education (Alshumaimeri, 2001). KSA has over 50 universities and colleges, which are both governmental and private. The main

eight universities are under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education whereas the others are run by government agencies or ministries.

1.7.3 Use of English in KSA

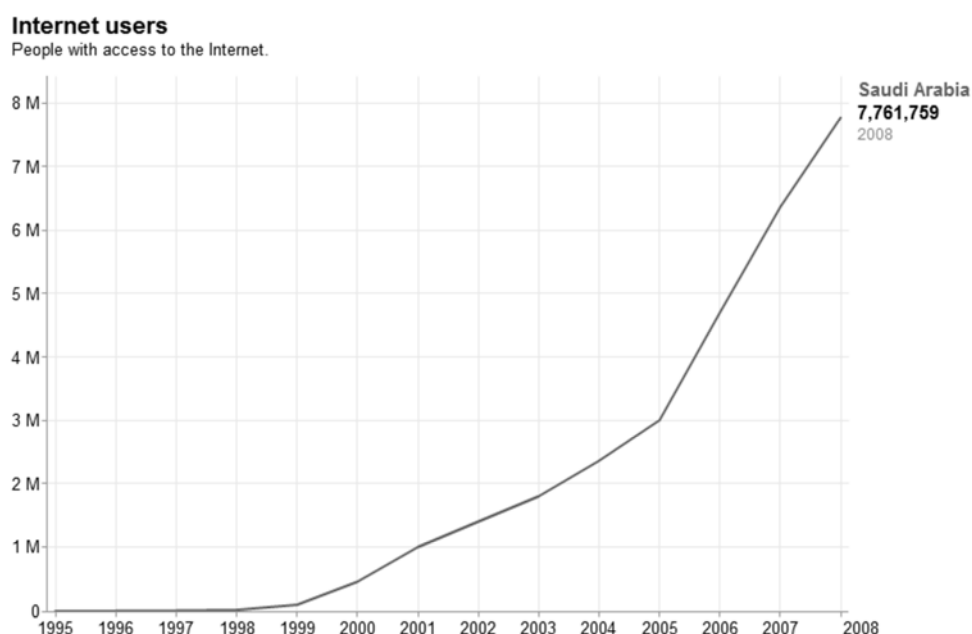
The use of English as a second language (ESL) in communities where it is in common use by the population as a whole is commonly distinguished from the use of English as a foreign language (EFL) in communities where it is not widely used for communication, such as KSA; however, this distinction is an oversimplification. Jenkins (2006) pointed out that EFL could also be referred to as English as an International Language (EIL). Alshumaimeri (2001) suggested that the use of English is partitioned into three circles. The first comprises those countries that speak English as a native (L1) language, e.g., the UK, USA, and Australia. The second includes those countries which have historically been dominated by countries in the first circle, where English is one of the official languages, e.g., in the Philippines, where a bilingual policy is instituted by law and the teaching of English as a second language (TESOL) begins in pre-school (Borlongan, 2010). The KSA falls into the third and rapidly expanding circle, where English language is taught to better prepare its people for broader international opportunities. The teaching of English was officially introduced to the Arab world in the early fifties, to produce culturally competent citizens, through an ability to understand, speak and write English efficiently. Subsequently, there was a rapidly increasing demand for EFL in KSA, so that English is widely used by many institutions and companies as a communicational tool for tourism, business, trade, and education (Alshumaimeri 2001). Moreover, some universities and schools

depend on English to teach students, so that EFL is a compulsory subject, beginning in the sixth grade at the age of 11 or 12.

1.7.4 Use of the Internet in KSA

Before 1997, fewer than 30,000 Saudis accessed the Internet through international land lines via Bahrain or Kuwait. In 1997 a local area network (LAN) was established, designed for Jeddah and Riyadh. Slowly, the Internet service expanded to other cities in the KSA. It was widely recognized that “the Internet has the potential to bridge the cultural gap between the Arab world and the west” (Masmoudi 1997 cited by Abdulla 2007:23) and Internet access has increased exponentially in the last decade. There was an approximately fourfold increase in Internet users between the years 2003 and 2008 (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Growth of Internet users in Saudi Arabia



Source: Alriyadh Newspaper (2008)

The number of Internet users more than doubled from 4.7 million (19.5% of the population) in 2007 to 9.8 million (38.1% of the population) in June 2010 (Table 1.1). Alebaikan & Troudi (2010) pointed out that one reason for such rapid growth is that about 60% of the Saudi population is 20 years old or younger, and that young people are adapting to new technologies faster than expected. The majority of Saudi teachers and students are already acquainted with email and have a positive attitude towards email due to the benefits they believe it offers (AlDawood 2009). Accordingly, for practical purposes, full computer literacy is assumed automatically for all students enrolled at KAU and other Saudi universities. The increasing number of students at KAU who carry their own laptops around the campus is a visible sign of the recent growth in computer use.

Table 1.1 Growth of Internet users in Saudi Arabia from 2000 to 2010

Year	Users	Population	% of Population.
2000	200,000	21,624,422	0.9 %
2003	1,500,000	21,771,609	6.9 %
2005	2,540,000	23,595,634	10.8 %
2007	4,700,000	24,069,943	19.5 %
2009	7,761,800	28,686,633	27.1 %
2010	9,800,000	25,731,776	38.1 %

Source: <http://www.Internetworldstats.com/me/sa.htm> and Alriyadh (2008)

1.7.5 Development of e-learning in KSA

The recent rapid growth in internet use in KSA has coincided with rapid developments in e-learning. In a recent review of the status of e-learning in Saudi Arabia, Al-Khalifa (2009) provided three examples. The first was the establishment of WBDL at KAU in 2007-2008, the base for this case study. The second was the Al-Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, authorized by the Ministry of Higher Education in 2008 to offer distance education courses leading to bachelor degrees. The third example, demonstrating how distance learning methods and technology are used to improve higher education opportunities and facilities for female students, was the implementation in 2008 of very small aperture terminal (VSAT) broadcasting technology and the internet to teach more than 300 Master's degree students in 36 Girls Colleges.

KSA hosted its first international conference on e-learning in Riyadh, 16-18 March 2009. The conference was organized by the Ministry of Higher Education in KSA under the patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. Many researchers from all over the world attended this conference as visitors or to present papers. Nevertheless, despite the considerable interest and commitment, KSA faces many challenges to take advantage of e-learning resources including cultural, socio-economic, language, infrastructure, copyright and intellectual property issues, and the adequate training of online teachers (Abdelraheem, 2006; Abouchedid & Eid, 2004; Alebaikan & Troudi, 2010; Alqurashi, 2010; Al-Raway, 2006; Al-Wehabi et al., 2008; Al-Khalifa, 2009; Bates, 2009).

In a study of the barriers to internet adoption amongst faculty members in Saudi Arabian universities Al-Wehabi et al. (2008) classified the obstacles into three levels: the individual level, the organizational (university administration) level and the infrastructure (technical) level. Within each level, several barriers were identified, summarized in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Summary of barriers to internet use

Level	Barriers
Individual	Language
	Lack of technical skills
	Lack of time
	Incompatibility with cultural and religious beliefs
	Perceived risks (intellectual property, loss of privacy, plagiarism)
Organizational	Reward and recognition
	Training
	Policies and planning
	Student connectivity and skills/training
	Technical support
Infrastructure	Connectivity
	Availability of technology
	Filtering and blocking websites

English is the dominant language of the Internet, and the limited amount of Arabic content means that non-English speaking University teachers in KSA have been slow to use Internet technologies. Lack of Arabic content is partly due to the limited availability of local skills in digitizing and coding web pages, and the high costs of local web-hosting services. The means of producing,

distributing, and accessing local content in KSA are comparatively few (Abdelraheem, 2006). Inadequate technical skills to master Internet technologies associated with the lack of time to acquire and develop such skills have been serious barriers preventing some University teachers using the Internet. The incompatibility between certain types of Internet content and the conservative cultural and religious beliefs and values of Saudis has also been perceived as a constraint. The difficulty in confronting perceived risks is of concern to many University members, including the loss of intellectual property rights and privacy when disclosing information online, and the possibility that students may plagiarize by copying web based information. There is a comparative lack of awareness of copyright issues in KSA. Not only is there a lack of awareness about using existing web pages, there is also the concern that online materials created by educators could be used illegally. Any uploaded materials can be copied and used, thus degrading the effort that has gone into producing it. Greater understanding of copyright issues, whether as a web user or author, may not to date have hindered e-learning progress in practical terms, but it is an area that should be addressed if e-learning is to be fully integrated into educational initiatives (Abdelraheem, 2006).

At the organizational level, distance education is perceived by many teachers in KSA to be unscholarly, unrewarding, and offering few career advantages. In addition, inadequate training and the lack of personal development programmes does not encourage faculty members to develop their skills as online teachers (Al-Khalifa, 2009). Organizational problems are related to the lack of clear policies in using Internet technologies and ways of integrating

them into the curriculum. There has been a lack of direction in e-learning initiatives so that when individual teachers or groups of teachers instigated e-learning activities, these activities had no secure base, and were not durable enough to build a momentum necessary to transform the community into one that accepted e-learning as a natural part of education (Abdelraheem, 2006).

Many e-learning problems in KSA have been associated with poor infrastructure. There is frequent need to endure busy signals, dropped connections, and slow downloads. Despite rapid infrastructure developments in recent years, connectivity problems and the limited availability of technology continue to be reported. Internet censorship in KSA has also been cited as a problem, particularly to those involved in medical research (Al-Wehabi et al., 2008)

Bates (2009) presented a brief overview of the development of e-learning in Saudi Universities. The approaches that he observed varied considerably between the four institutions he visited to run seminars and workshops for faculties planning e-learning programmes. At the Northern Border University there was almost no use of e-learning. At King Fahd University, e-learning was blended with F2F teaching, but the senior management was reluctant to offer fully online programmes. The main use of e-learning in Umm Al-Qura and King Abdulaziz Universities was also to support F2F teaching, but KAU is the only institution where fully online WBDL programmes have been developed. Bates commented that there was no general policy regarding the use of learning management systems, and each institution used a different Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). There was almost no professional support base

for e-learning, since educational theory and programme design is not taught in Saudi universities, so that outside help is essential.

Alebaikan & Troudi (2010) also confirmed the challenges of e-learning in Saudi Arabia, and emphasized the need to develop instructional design frameworks that reflect Saudi culture. The cultural issues considered to be important included: (a) the relatively low level of Saudi students' self-discipline and responsiveness towards e-learning; (b) the inherent resistance of Saudi teachers towards using new technological methods as a replacement for F2F instruction; and (c) the conservative elements in Saudi Arabia who perceive the Internet to be a danger to society norms and values due to its unethical or risky content.

Despite the many barriers and constraints there is still optimism for the future of e-learning in KSA. In a review of the state of distance learning in Saudi Arabia, Al-Khalifa (2009) assistant professor at the Information Technology Department, King Saud University, Riyadh, commented "I would expect these constraints to diminish over time as more students reap the advantages of distance education, and the government and universities appreciate the need to extend and improve tertiary education opportunities and take advantage of technology". Bates (2009) commented "It will be an interesting next few years for e-learning in Saudi Arabia".

1.7.6 Education at KAU

KAU is considered to be a leading university located in one of Saudi's main cities, Jeddah (Figure 1.2). KAU was founded in 1967, and was the third university established in the KSA after King Saud University and the Islamic University of Medina. KAU was the first Saudi university to employ a VLE to support the teaching of Bachelor's degrees by online learning (Alebaikan & Troudi, 2010).

Figure 1.2 Location of King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi-Arabia



KAU has over 10 faculties that teach all majors to males and females. Among the many subjects KAU offers, Arabic, Islamic Culture and English are compulsory to all faculties. Since English is a medium for many subjects at the tertiary level, it is a prerequisite for acceptance into schools and college, and a good level of English is one of the essential conditions to be accepted.

1.7.7 The English Language Institute

The English Language Institute at KAU (ELI) was established in 1975 but was known as the English Language Centre until 2008. The ELI teaches English to almost 20 different colleges at the university, including medicine, science, economics, arts and humanities. The ELI is the largest language centre in the Gulf region, serving more than 6,000 regular students, 17,000 external students, 1,500 qualifying students, and 1000 e-learning students. In 2008, the ELI obtained the acceptance and recommendation of the University Council to upgrade from a centre to an institute after receiving the final approval of the Supreme Council for Universities. The language centre used to teach English over two years, but starting in 2007/2008, English was taught intensively only to first-year students who entered the university. The centre also differentiated teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) at some colleges, such as medicine, economics, home economics, and engineering. However, in 2007/2008, the language centre stopped teaching ESP. Instead, some teachers teach scientific terms to science students from different majors, while the arts students focus on general English. Regardless of the discipline, English course materials currently used are known as interactions access, to teach speaking and listening, writing and reading, grammar and vocabulary. The university has placed much attention on the ELI and has awarded many teachers a scholarship to pursue their studies and return to the centre with a higher degree (Master's or PhD). More than ten teachers from the female English Language section have been awarded scholarships from the centre. The same applies to the male section. KAU has also hired many qualified teachers from inside and outside KSA to teach English at the ELI.

1.7.8 Teaching methods at KAU

The teaching methods at KAU were entirely F2F and didactic when I studied there as an undergraduate student. The teaching approach, at least in my experience, was to treat students as *tabula rasa*, as Saengboon (2006) referred to them, which implies they were receptors of whatever their teachers said, absorbing information and storing it in their minds. In other words, they were passive learners. When an instructor gave a lecture, students were not allowed to interrupt; they were required to sit and listen to whatever was being said and take notes. There was no interaction between the students through peer or group work. I worked as a teacher at KAU from 2004 to 2006, when the system started to change towards a more communicative approach. The teachers began to act more like facilitators of learning, rather than being authority figures. The single most dramatic effect has been learner independence. Students now experience more opportunities for autonomy over their learning, in terms of when, where and how they learn.

1.7.9 The preparatory year at KAU

In 2008/2009, King Abdulaziz University started using a new system which introduced a preparatory year for all incoming students. During this year, students study communication skills, English, and computing, in addition to their scientific or arts subjects, depending on what they studied in secondary school. All students must pass this preparatory year, and are no longer accepted directly to the colleges. Once they have completed this year, they are accepted to the colleges according to their GPA (grade point average). The preparatory year educates students according to their abilities and their

scientific and academic interests (Okaz Newspaper, 2008). It is important to mention that this procedure is not new in KSA, as it has already been enforced at King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran. Since its inception, English Language teaching has played an important role in undergraduate education (Alriyadh Newspaper, 2006). The system was changed because the university felt that students were not fully prepared to take advantage of higher education, and that a preparatory year might help prepare them for academic life through intensive modules. The theory is that a general orientation might help them to choose the right faculty for later study. The same idea applies to teaching English for general purposes. The director of the ELI explained that "The core curriculum of the English language intensive course prepares students for a number of professional majors and helps them to play a successful role in society."

1.7.10 WBDL at KAU

According to an online press release at <http://www.ameinfo.com/50497.html> King Abdulaziz University was the first to deploy e-learning in KSA to benefit its distance education students as well as those attending classes. KAU is home to the largest electronic library in the Kingdom with 16,000 e-books. In 2005, KAU sent about 60 male and female staff members to Virginia Tech University in the USA to obtain three months of training in e-learning. KAU paid Virginia Tech \$246,000 to organize classes for its faculty members, and according to the agreement between KAU and Virginia Tech, it was planned to serve over 50,000 students through distance learning by the year 2010.

KSA is experiencing higher education institutional capacity issues. Many high school students are graduating from secondary school with very high percentages, increasing the demand for places in colleges and universities (MOE 2006/2007). At present, the KSA higher education system can accommodate only 75,000 of its 200,000 high school graduates on campus. Consequently there is a very high demand for distance learning

As KSA's first university to use WBDL as an instructional strategy, KAU began to serve over 20,000 home-study students with Virginia Tech's assistance in developing an e-Learning strategic plan and structuring a "Deanship for Distance Learning". WBDL at KAU was initiated in June 2004, operating on a trial basis. It officially launched in 2007/2008, accepting approximately 200 male and female students in the first year. The system currently used is an interactional system where the teacher interacts with the students online through virtual classrooms. The new system is currently used in two faculties, Economics and Administration and Arts and Humanities, though it is expected to expand in the next few years to different faculties. KAU currently has about 1,000 fully online students taking WBDL courses out of a total of 26,000 distance learning students. KAU's current goal is to become one of the best universities worldwide to use online learning.

Two e-learning systems, EMES (e-Learning Management Electronic System) and Centra (a Saba product) have been developed to allow students to have the opportunity to study off campus.

1.7.11 Students at KAU

Table 1.3 outlines the three types of students at KAU. Students are not able to enter the college they desire unless they pass the preparatory year of general subjects, including English, Arabic, Computer Skills, and Islamic Culture.

Table 1.3 Three types of students at KAU

Aspect	Full time F2F students	External students	WBDL students
Attendance	Attend classes on a daily basis according to the timetable	Students study independently. They are offered a two-week intensive course on campus as an alternative during each semester.	Attend online classes voluntarily according to the time table. Online classes are recorded and can be reviewed at any time.
Admission	A large number of students are accepted into all university faculties.	Over 20,000 students accepted into Arts and Humanities, Economics, Science, Medicine, Engineering, Dentistry, Geology, Home Economics, & Pharmacy.	Over 200 students accepted in Arts and Economics faculties. More are expected in future.
Learning Method	Interaction is required between the student and teacher (F2F)	Interaction is not required, but teachers and students may interact e.g., via email.	Interaction in virtual classrooms.
Assessment	Assessment depends on the teacher or coordinator. Depends on assignments, mid-term examinations, participation in class, attendance and final examinations.	The only assessment is the final examination.	20% to 40% based on online assignments. Examinations at the end of each semester are calculated to reach a final percentage of 60% to 80% of the total.

During the foundation year, students are divided into two main sections, Arts and Science. A student who wishes to enter medical school has to take all the compulsory general subjects given in the first year and needs to gain a certain average to enter and be accepted to the faculty of medicine. If they do not earn the required percentage, they will have to choose a different faculty.

Many of the new students enrolled at KAU are not being offered places as regular campus students due to the high demand. As an alternative, distance learning is being offered to students so they have the opportunity to study at their own pace, without being forced to attend classes. Commuting is eliminated for students who travel from cities outside Jeddah where KAU is based, such as Makkah, Yanbu' and Madinah. Travelling from those cities previously required students to wake up very early and return home exhausted in the evening. Other students have jobs and do not have time during the day to attend classes to pursue their studies. WBDL allows students with different needs to meet in a cyber classroom to take their lectures and interact with students and teachers.

1.7.12 The new curriculum at KAU

The Board of Higher Education in KSA approved the new WBDL programme at KAU in 2004. The main objectives and rationales, described at the KAU website (<http://www.kau.edu.sa>) which I translated from Arabic are as follows:

1. To provide education for students who need to overcome the obstacle of time and place, and meet individual differences among students.

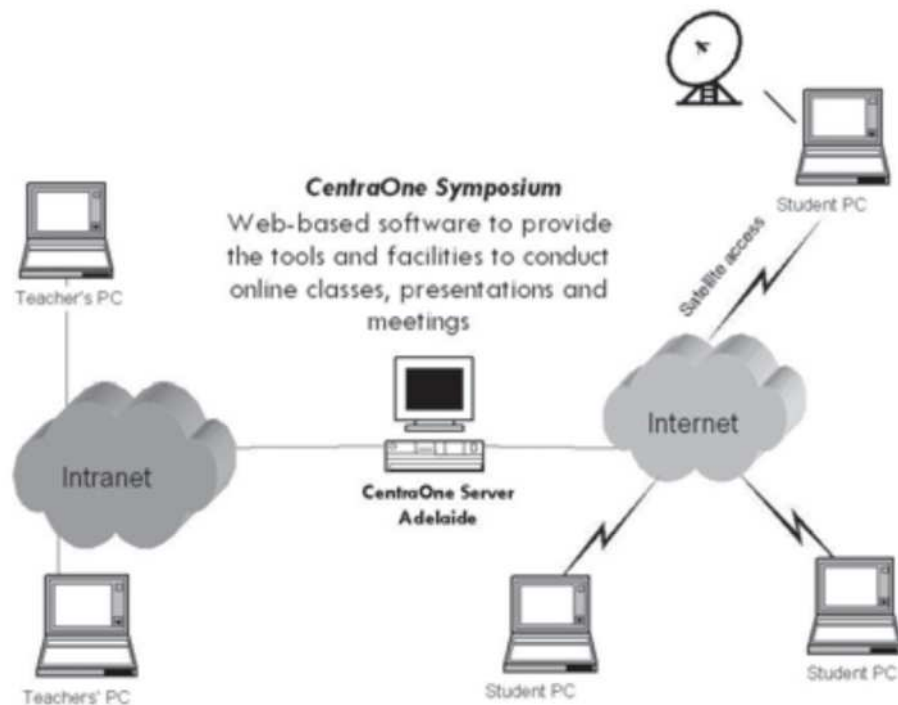
2. To meet the increasing demand for higher education when many students are graduating from high schools and there are not enough classes to take all graduates; for example, in the following years the university will be accepting 30,000 students, which means there will not be enough available seats for all of them.
3. To introduce the latest techniques of distance learning.
4. To provide support and ongoing training for students.
5. To provide educational materials developed for all disciplines that are electronically stored digitally. Materials have been developed to serve as a basis for future educational materials.
6. To eventually expand the majors available in WBDL, including new scientific majors in addition to post-graduate studies.
7. To offer an approved globally recognized university certificate, equivalent to counterpart universities.
8. To spread the cultural education of e-learning and self-directed distance learning.
9. To direct payments for traditional education (installations, equipment, etc.) towards further improvements in the educational process.
10. To provide infrastructure that is strong, flexible and compatible with technical developments.

1.7.13 Online systems at KAU

The main systems being used at KAU are Centra and the Education Management Electronic System (EMES) collectively called CentrEM. Centra is a commercial product owned by Saba, which provides a synchronous virtual classroom environment that enables students to attend live classes from the comfort of their homes or workplaces. Centra is accessed using a web browser and allows the students to see and hear the instructor as well as respond to the instructor's questions with audio chat. Centra offers several practical features. Students can communicate with each other and with their tutors in a virtual classroom, either verbally using a microphone or non-verbally using buttons. For example, there is a hand button to signify raising their hands to answer or ask a question, a yes or no button to answer and ask questions, instant chatting with others by clicking on their names and writing in the chat box, and the ability to give feedback to the teacher. Figure 1.3 illustrates how Centra operates over the Internet

EMES was developed and Arabized at KAU; however, its core engine is based on e-Bridge system via e-Knowledge (an Egyptian company). Its features are very similar to the widely used Blackboard and WebCT systems, offering users asynchronous interaction via electronic mail, discussion forums, assignments, quizzes, and reports on student performance (e.g., how many times they entered the site and sat an examination). There is also a frequently answered questions (FAQ) section that contains information on technical problems or any other problem students may face whilst using the site.

Figure 1.3 Operation of Centra over the Internet



Source: Edmunds (2006)

EMES shares many common features with Web CT, Blackboard, Moodle and Centra, allowing a teacher to manage a classroom online and interact with students. According to the KAU website the main six features of EMES are:

1. Course representation to students online.
2. Online discussion between student and teacher.
3. Student discussion.
4. Self-assessment of student homework, instant feedback given.
5. Exams can be taken online, from a distance.
6. Electronic project and research presentation.

To study via EMES, all external students have to register for a user name and password before they can log in. After they have succeeded in registration,

they have the option of adding or deleting modules. For example, a student registered for the English module from the Arts and Humanities faculty will receive a screen filled with a range of choices such as calendar, chat, exams, email, assignments and at the right-hand side he/she will see the navigation banners leading to the objectives and goals of the course with lectures posted underneath.

1.7.14 Creating a WBDL at KAU

A coordinator usually organizes the curriculum to determine what is taught during the academic year, as well as the timetable and teaching hours for the group of teachers he/she is responsible for overseeing. The teachers are required to follow the timetable given to them so that they do not run out of time and are able to cover the curriculum by the end of the year. For example, the language centre is currently teaching an integrated language course online for Arts and Humanities students. It teaches all the main skills in addition to vocabulary and grammar. There are five units, and each unit consists of three parts (reading and writing, listening and speaking, grammar). When creating an online course, the instructor includes the following information: his/her name and office hours, objectives of the course, references, how the course is assessed, and the web address students will be using.

Once the curriculum is prescribed, the teacher or developer of the online course sends his/her material to the educational design team. They study the contents and discuss it with the developer of the course to find the best scientific and technical ways of expressing the content through multimedia.

During this phase, they agree on a scenario that achieves the objectives of the course. The professor seeks to prepare all the sound effects and videos, which could be included in the content of scientific enrichments. Next, the design team receives the design from the educational team which has been agreed upon with the tutor of the course. They then begin working on implementing the requirements using the latest techniques in graphical animations and interactive tools. At the end, all parts are grouped and drafted in the framework with templates that represent the final draft of the course according to the instructions of the instructor and the educational design team.

1.8 Summary of key points

E-learning is developing in many institutions of higher education. This development is due to many factors including the demand to increase student numbers and to provide greater and more flexible access to education. In KSA, the growing need to accommodate large numbers of high school graduates in the country's universities has made it necessary to implement WBDL formats for incoming students. There are, however, many barriers which are inhibiting the growth of e-learning in KSA. These include cultural, socio-economic, language, infrastructure, copyright and intellectual property issues, and the adequate training of online teachers.

The present study, rooted in my educational background in the KSA, USA, Canada, and UK, and my lifelong interest in ICT, aims to critically examine the current systems used at King Abdulaziz University, to teach students English online. The purpose of the case study is to investigate how students and

teachers use the WBDL programme in practice, to interpret their perceptions, to consider the opportunities and constraints that it affords, and to make recommendations in order to develop its use in the future.

1.9 Glossary of terms

Asynchronous: Learning style in which learners and teachers do not interact at the same time, e.g., Blackboard.

Distance learning (DL): Students study offsite and correspond with the universities either directly or through an embassy.

EMES: E-Learning Management Electronic System

E-learning: Learning through technology. Networked computers (the Internet) is the medium of communication between the teacher and the student

CALL: Computer Assisted Language Learning; term used for computer-based learning through materials that include language software, which students use in language labs.

Centra: Commercial product by Saba Company used by many universities around the world for live interaction between students and teachers; offers numerous operational features such as video conferencing.

CentrEM: Acronym which stems from a combination Centra and EMES.

Constraints: Obstacles that hinder students' learning process, such as technical problems and lack of communication between the teacher and the student.

Saba: A company that helps organizations to assess their employees. They provide unified solutions for people management and productivity across learning, Web conferencing, enterprise social networking, performance management, compensation planning, and administration.

ICT: Information and Communication Technology. Using methods and formats of technology to communicate, store and manage information. Includes radio, television, video, computer hardware and software.

LMS: Learning Management System

Opportunities: Possibilities for action, including thought in its widest sense.

Synchronous: Learning style in which learners and teachers interact simultaneously in real time, e.g., Centra.

Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs): An informational and interactive space where students and teachers are able to gain knowledge and unlimited access to information via the Internet and interact in cyberspace through chat, discussion groups, email, forums, etc., and is mainly used to manage online classes.

Web based distance learning (WBDL): Learning through the Internet where students interact online with the universities and the instructors. The Internet is an important element in distance learning because this network is not confined within geographical barriers (Tan 1999).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 General introduction

Effective e-learning requires ICT resources to be integrated into a curriculum based on a sound theoretical framework (Ally, 2004). The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to describe language acquisition theories; perspectives on teaching foreign languages; and the reporting of the contribution of technology to language learning. The outline of the literature review is provided below:

Part 1: Theoretical issues

- a) Language acquisition theory
- b) Pedagogic models
- c) E-learning models

Part: 2 Teaching and learning a Foreign Language

- a) English as a foreign language
- b) Language learning methods
- c) Language learning and technology

Part 3: Case studies

Part 4: Reflection

- a) Cultural context
 - 1- Opportunities
 - 2- Constraints
- b) Implications for this study

The review starts with language acquisition theory, which is the starting point for understanding pedagogic and e-learning models. It is followed by a review of teaching and learning strategies which includes an extensive consideration of the contribution of technology. Part three reports on 25 case studies in

contexts relevant for this study. Finally, the perceived opportunities and constraints of e-learning, mainly with respect to developing countries, are reviewed. The importance of understanding local contexts and the practical implications for this study are considered.

Information was initially drawn from educational research data bases including the Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Journal Storage (JSTOR) and Emerald in addition to online journals including Becta, IJES, ITESLJ, Asian EFL journal, and TESL-EJ journal. Searches were made in international journals such as the Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education (TOJDE) which included studies relevant to distance learning in developing countries, including Pakistan, Turkey, and Malaysia. In addition the Journal of Online Learning and Teaching (JOLT) the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) the Asian EFL journal and the Internet TESL Journal (ITESLJ) included relevant information. Some case studies are included from papers presented at the First International Conference on E-learning and Distance Learning I attended in March 2009 in Riyadh, KSA. Most of the reviewed literature concerned research conducted outside Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region since relatively few studies on e-learning in this region have been published.

PART ONE

THEORETICAL ISSUES

The concepts that underpin the implementation of second language (L2) learning with particular implications for e-learning of English include (2.2) language acquisition theory and (2.3) classical pedagogic models extended to encompass (2.4) e-learning models.

2.2 Language acquisition theory

Various theories have been proposed to explain the psycholinguistic processes by which human beings acquire language. The classical theories developed over 50 years ago (Table 2.1) associated with Skinner (Behaviorist) Chomsky (Innateness) and Piaget (Cognitive) concerned the acquisition of the native language (L1). These theories are outlined in Table 2.1 (based on Nunan, 2009).

Table 2.1 Classical theories of L1 acquisition

Behaviorist	Children imitate adults. Their correct utterances are reinforced when they get what they want or are praised. Language is acquired by a set of habits through processes of stimulus and response.
Innateness	A child's brain contains special language-learning mechanisms at birth. The ability to acquire language is unique to the human species.
Cognitive	Language is just one aspect of a child's overall intellectual development. The learning of language occurs through deep thought processes including analysis and problem solving.

2.2.1 Acquisition of L2

Children are believed to possess an enhanced intuitive capacity for speech and morpho-syntactic development, which declines after puberty (Birdsong, 2005). This has led to the claim that “the younger the better” in support of the expansion of L2 learning in primary schools (Hunt et al., 2005:2) and stimulated interest in developing methods for L2 learning in the primary curriculum (e.g., Jones et al., 2005). The mechanisms of L2 acquisition are different from the mechanisms of L1 acquisition. People learning an L2 are generally older than L1 learners and are therefore more advanced in their cognitive development, so they may reconstruct an L2 based on their experience of L1 (Nunan, 2009). Numerous theories have been proposed to explain the processes through which L1 speakers may subsequently learn to speak L2. These include the Inter-language Theory (Selinker, 1972), the Acculturation /Pidginization theory (Schumann, 1978) the Multidimensional Model (Clahsen, 1987) the Universal Grammar Theory (Chomsky, 1986), Krashen's (1981) theory of second-language acquisition, and the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996).

2.2.2 Inter-language Theory

Selinker's (1972) inter-language theory emphasizes cognitivism and focuses on the processes that learners go through when mastering a second language. The inter-language system is a temporary grammar system used by an L2 learner that is composed of rules. These rules are the product of five main cognitive processes: (a) Over-generalization; (b) Transfer of training;

(c) Learning strategies; (d) Communication strategies; and (e) Language transfer.

Over-generalization refers to the oversimplification or diminution of grammatical rules. Transfer of training reflects the components of the inter-language system through which the second language is learned. Learning strategies refer to the general tendency of the learner to reduce the foreign language to a simpler, more understandable system. Communication strategies refer to the inter-language system rules that learners apply in their attempt to communicate with native speakers of a foreign language. Language transfer implies that some of the rules in the inter-language system may be the result of a reassignment of the rules from the learner's L1.

2.2.3 Acculturation/Pidginization Theory

Schumann (1978) argued that the learning of a foreign language is part of acculturation, and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the foreign language group will control the degree to which he/she acquires fluency. Second-language acquisition is consequently influenced by the degree of social and psychological distance between the learner and the foreign-language culture. If the social or psychological distance is wide, acculturation is impeded and the learner does not progress beyond the early stages of foreign language acquisition. As a result, his or her speaking of the foreign language will become pidginized. Pidginization is characterized by oversimplification so that the learner's inter-language system becomes fossilized and does not progress adequately in the direction of fluency.

2.2.4 Multidimensional Model

In the Multidimensional Model described by Clahsen (1987) the learner's stage of acquisition of the target language is determined by (a) the learner's developmental stage and (b) the learner's social-psychological orientation. The developmental stages consist of a sequence of strategies. Within each developmental stage, learners may differ because of their social-psychological orientation. A learner with a segregative orientation uses very restricted simplification strategies, whereas a learner with an integrative orientation uses more elaborate simplification strategies. The segregative learner is more likely to fossilize language at an early stage while the integrative learner has a more positive attitude toward learning a foreign language and a better chance of achieving fluency.

2.2.5 Universal Grammar Theory

Universal Grammar Theory supports the existence of developmental sequences in which language learners progressively reconstruct the rules of inter-language. It assumes that inter-language is a natural language subject to the constraints of the so-called universal grammar (Chomsky, 1986). The universal grammar consists of an unexplained innate mechanism or built-in syllabus in the brain into which both children and adults can tap in order to acquire a new language. The universal grammar gradually becomes more complex in response to the learner's exposure to the second language and the communicative needs with which he /she is challenged.

2.2.6 Krashen's Theory

Krashen's (1981) theory of L2 acquisition is based on five main hypotheses: (1) The acquisition-learning hypothesis; (2) the monitor hypothesis; (3) the natural order hypothesis; (4) the input hypothesis, and (5) the affective filter hypothesis. The acquisition-learning hypothesis implies that second-language learning is a subconscious process similar to that which children undergo when they acquire L1. Acquisition learning promotes meaningful interactions in the L2 when speakers concentrate on the act of natural communication rather than on irregularities and grammatical rules.

The monitor hypothesis assumes that the second-language learner scrutinizes language by focusing her conscious attention on form and correctness, using grammatical rules that he/she has learned. Every language learner uses his/her own personal monitor to correct deviations and irregularities from normal speech. Krashen argues, however, that the monitor should play a minor role in language acquisition. He distinguishes between over-users (who act as a monitor all the time), under-users (who have not learned or who prefer not to use their conscious knowledge), and optimal users (who monitor appropriately). The learner's psychological profile may determine which monitor group he belongs to. Extroverts tend to be under-users, while introverts tend to be over-users. Lack of self-confidence is generally related to overuse of the monitor.

The natural order hypothesis implies that the understanding of language structure follows a predictable sequence that cannot be forced or hurried. Certain language-specific grammatical structures tend to be acquired earlier,

while others are acquired later. Every student works at his own pace in this respect. The practical implications to teachers are that explaining all of the facts about the grammatical structure of a language and forcing students to learn them all by rote or through tedious drills is not necessarily the most effective way to promote language acquisition.

The input hypothesis explains how second-language acquisition takes place. According to this hypothesis, the learner improves and progresses along the natural order when he receives comprehensible second language input that is one step beyond his current stage of linguistic competence. Because not all of the learners in a class can be at the same level of linguistic competence simultaneously, the practical implications to teachers are that natural communicative input is the key to designing a language syllabus, ensuring that each individual learner will receive input that is appropriate to her current stage of linguistic competence.

The affective filter hypothesis assumes that several emotional factors play a facilitative, but non-causal, role in second-language acquisition. These factors include motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. When the affective filter is raised, language acquisition is impeded. When the affective filter is lowered, language acquisition is facilitated. Learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are therefore better equipped to succeed in acquiring a second language. Low motivation, low self-esteem, and anxiety, however, raise the affective filter and create a mental block that prevents natural communicative input from being used for acquisition learning. The practical implication of the theory is that the most

effective method of teaching a foreign language is student-centered. Teachers should supply students with communicative and comprehensible input in low-anxiety situations. The input from the teacher should ideally consist of meaningful messages that every student in the class completely understands. The least effective method of language teaching is through a teacher-centered approach, in which the teacher forces the students to memorize the grammatical rules of a language.

2.2.7 Interaction Hypothesis

Long's (1996) interaction hypothesis asserts that interaction between a non-native speaker and a native speaker (or an advanced non-native speaker such as a language teacher) creates a learning environment in which the non-native speaker can learn through becoming aware of gaps in his/her knowledge and understanding. The hypothesis is underscored by the concept that conversation is not only the medium of practice but is also the means by which learning takes place. Conversation facilitates language acquisition by simultaneously connecting input, learner capacity, and output in productive ways. When a foreign language learner is attempting to negotiate conversation, the gaps in his/her linguistic abilities, including pronunciation, syntax, grammar, and vocabulary, are personally revealed. The interaction hypothesis concludes that such self-realization, brought about by authentic conversational interaction, encourages the language learner to seek out the knowledge that he/she lacks in order to produce it later when needed.

2.3 Pedagogic models

F2F teaching practices have historically been underpinned by the behaviourist, cognitivist, and constructivist models outlined in Table 2.2 (based on Joyce et al., 2009) and subsequently developed for e-learning (Ally, 2004; Mayes & de Frietas, 2007).

Table 2.2 Pedagogic models

Model	Description	Practical implications
Behaviourist	The focus is on direct instruction to stimulate a learning response. Behaviorist models are highly structured, teacher directed, and maximize student learning time. It is assumed that given enough time and quality of instruction, nearly all students can master any set of objectives. Behaviourist models generally prove to have a more positive impact on standardized tests of basic skills than other models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The learner is told the explicit objectives.• The learning material is highly structured and sequenced.• The learner is tested against the objectives.• Feedback is provided against the objectives.
Cognitivist	The focus is on mental processes, memory, and motivation. Cognitive models support inquiry training, inductive thinking and concept formation. Emphasis is given to the interpretation and categorization of information, and the formation of principles and theories. Standardized tests must be modified so that they measure the mental processing skills addressed by cognitive learning models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The pre-requisite knowledge of the learner is clearly identified.• Information is organized so as not to overload the learner, and to apply his/her individual learning style.• The learner is required to analyze, to synthesize, and to evaluate information.• Intrinsic activities (e.g. simulations relating to real life) are used to motivate the learner from within.
Constructivist	The focus is on activities that develop each learner's individual potential. Constructivist models are learner-centred. The outcomes include high self-concept, high self-esteem, positive self-direction, independence; creativity, curiosity, and emotional intelligence. Constructivist models do not aim to have a positive impact on standardized tests of basic skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The activities involve social interactions which are contextualized for the learners.• The activities are situational and meaningful for the learners.• Active learning is accentuated by guided discovery.• Learners are given the tools and information to construct their own knowledge, and anchor it to existing knowledge.

An effective teacher should, however, not be constrained by any particular pedagogic model, but should benefit from all of them. No single model applies to all aspects of teaching and learning, and a synergy of all accepted models is applicable in practice (Bransford et al., 2005). The ideal outcomes of teaching whether through F2F or online are that it should motivate learners, facilitate deep processing, build on the whole person, cater for individual differences, promote meaningful learning, encourage interaction, provide feedback, facilitate contextual understanding, and provide support during the learning process (Ally, 2004). Such outcomes do not depend on the application of a definitive model. For example, an effective language teacher can make explicit the course objectives and learning outcomes (behaviourist) whilst at the same time, organizing information in such a way that permits each student to apply an individual learning style to promote deeper learning (cognitivist) in addition to providing opportunities for contextualized social interactions and situational activities (constructivist). In practice, L2 teachers tend to apply an eclectic mix of models in action based on an implicit understanding of how students learn (Nunan, 2009).

2.4 E-learning models

The rapid growth of e-learning has spawned a plethora of models, many of which are aligned implicitly with theories of teaching and learning, as for example those reviewed by Mayes & de Frietas (2007). More recent models have focused on interaction issues, (e.g., Collis & Moonen 2001; Laurillard, 2002; Mayes & Fowler, 1999; Salmon 2002). Three models with relevance for this case study are considered here.

2.4.1 The Conceptualization Cycle

Mayes & Fowler (1999) proposed a simple online instruction model that prescribed e-learning in the form of a three-stage cycle, termed conceptualization, construction, and dialogue (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Maye's & Fowler's Conceptualization Cycle

Stage	Prescription	Use of technology
Conceptualization	Learners are exposed to knowledge and ideas.	Primary courseware, e.g., lecture notes, reading lists, videos.
Construction	Learners test their knowledge and understanding of ideas by performing meaningful tasks	Secondary courseware e.g., online tests and computer assisted assessments.
Dialogue	Knowledge and understanding of ideas are tested via two-way interaction between teachers and peers. This feedback is essential to enable students' erroneous conceptions to be resolved.	Tertiary courseware, e.g. online chat, discussion boards, video-conferencing, online simulations, and shared workspaces

The authors emphasized that focusing only on primary and secondary courseware would not provide sufficient support for learning. High level learning could not take place until the dialogue stage, either using tertiary courseware, or through F2F interaction blended with e-learning.

2.4.2 Salmon's Five Stage Model

Salmon (2002) prescribed a five stage online instruction framework, based on a constructivist system in which the role of the teacher is a facilitator or moderator rather than an authority (Table 2.4). The first two stages focus on acclimatizing the learners to the VLE. The third stage is characterized by

exposing the learners to course materials and activities. Knowledge is constructed in the fourth stage through extensive online teacher-student and student-student interaction. The final stage leads to learning outcomes through the learners taking more responsibility for their own learning.

Table 2.4 Salmon's five stage model

Stage	Prescription	Use of technology
Access and motivation	The teacher ensures that the learners can easily and quickly access the VLE e.g., there are no technical problems such as passwords	VLE
Online socialization	The learners become comfortable in the VLE by communicating with each other. This stage is over when the learners start to share a little about each other.	Online communication via videoconferencing, microphones, and/or chat-box
Information exchange	A structured exchange of online information occurs, summarized and focused by the teacher	Learners interact with the VLE via web-links, videos, articles, databases, etc.
Knowledge construction	The focus is on building an online community through the teacher relating information back to concepts and ideas, posing problems, and encouraging the learners to respond.	Online communication via email, video-conferencing, microphones, and/or chat-box
Development	The focus is on the learners taking responsibility for their own learning and becoming more confident and critical thinkers. The teacher encourages the learners to reflect on the knowledge and understanding and discuss concepts and ideas at a deeper level.	Online communication via email, video-conferencing, microphones, and/or chat-box

2.4.3 Laurillard's Conversational Framework

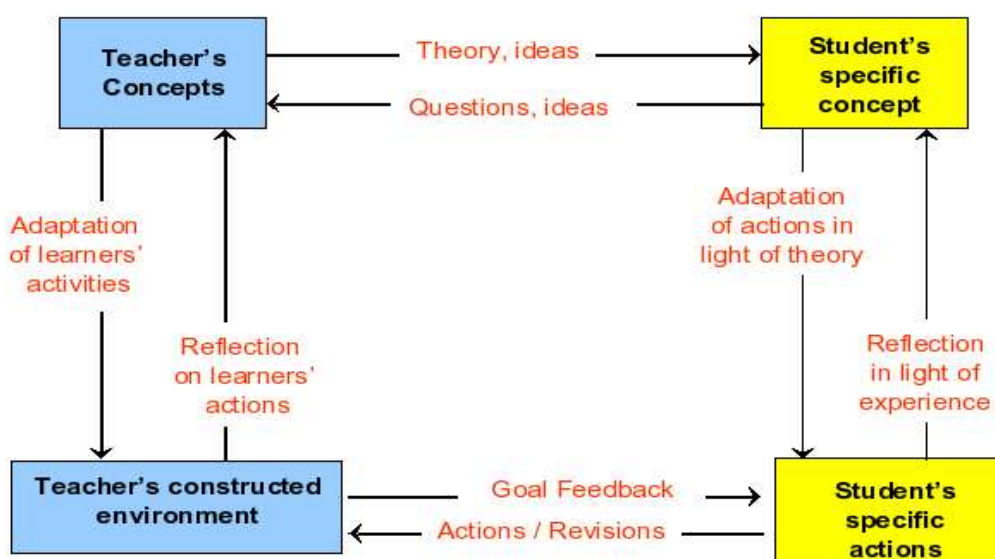
One of the most influential prescriptive models, which has achieved prominence in the UK is Laurillard's Conversational Framework (Laurillard, 2002). It prescribes modes of teacher-learner interaction in higher education,

and stresses the need for meaningful feedback from the teacher and adaptation to the learners as a central feature of e-learning. In F2F settings (also in Mayes & Fowler's Conceptualization Cycle and Salmon's model) the interactions are not prescribed, but are assumed to be intuitive and spontaneous. Laurillard, however, prescribed these interactions in explicit terms, so that they can be applied directly to e-learning. Laurillard's framework appears to be one of the most useful and enduring frames of reference because of the explicit connection made between student-teacher interactions and technology. The framework is based on an interactive dialogue or conversation between teachers and learners and on the feedback the learners receive. Laurillard stresses the importance of dialogue rather than the passive transmission of information from teacher to student. Although learners are conceived as negotiators, Laurillard's model is essentially an instructional view of teaching. She conceives e-learning as an attempt by the learner to comprehend the conception of the teacher. In order to achieve this outcome there has to be interaction between teacher and learner and meaningful feedback from the teacher. The framework begins by describing the nature of learning and then moves to the contribution of technology. There are a range of interactions: interactive, communicative/discursive, reflective, interactive and adaptive (Table 2.5). A case study (Laurillard et al., 2000) illustrated the types of interactions experienced in practice (Figure 2.1).

Table 2.5 Student-teacher interactions

Interaction	Prescription
Narrative	The teacher tells or imparts knowledge to the learners.
Interactive	The learners interact with teacher-structured tasks, attempting to put new knowledge into practice, and getting feedback on their performance. The teacher provides feedback to the learners, based on the tasks that they have performed.
Communicative/discursive	The learners enter into a dialogue with the teacher, to discuss what they have learnt.
Reflective	The learners reflect upon what they have learnt. Reflective interaction takes place only in the mind of the learner. He/she relates theory back to practice, adjusts knowledge and understand in the light of reflection, and frames future actions to be more successful.
Adaptive	The teacher uses the feedback to determine what learning has occurred and if necessary to change the focus of the interactions. This is the touchstone of good teaching practice.

Figure 2.1 Laurillard’s Conversational Framework in practice



PART TWO

TEACHING AND LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

This section considers (2.6) the current status of teaching English as a foreign language; (2.7) the various methods of language learning currently in use around the world including (2.8) the need to understand learner styles and preferences. There is a discussion of (2.9) the applications of e-learning to foreign language teaching and (2.10) a description of 25 previous case studies, with emphasis given to the opportunities and constraints of e-learning in developing countries.

2.6 Teaching of English as a foreign language

According to the British Council (<http://www.britishcouncil.org>) the English language has official or special status in at least seventy-five countries. English is spoken as a native language by around 375 million people, whilst about 750 million are believed to speak English as a second or foreign language. One out of four of the world's population speaks English to some level of competence, and demand from the other three-quarters is increasing. People are used to reading and hearing English everywhere in the mass media and in health-care, business, and educational environments, promoting a universal desire to learn English, and supporting the development of TEFL programmes. English is widely spoken in the Arab world according to status especially in the private business sector. In some multinational companies, e.g., Proctor & Gamble and Unilever, it is obligatory for people to speak and write English fluently in addition to having higher educational degrees (Al-Jarf, 2008).

The goal of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) is not to produce a native speaker but a fluent bilingual speaker, who retains a national identity in terms of accent, and who also has the special skills to negotiate understanding with another non-native speaker (Graddol, 2006). Accordingly, TEFL represents several dialects for example British, American, Australian, and South African, depending on social, political and historical factors (Broughton et al, 1978).

Byrne (1980) remarked that TEFL encourages students who are not native English speakers to participate in and understand better a culture in which they might become enrolled. Lianzhang (2003) stated the important objectives of TEFL are promoting English for commerce and industry, foreign travel, pleasure, and greater insight into one's native language. In this respect, the international labour market does not support Arabic, and prefers those who speak English (Al-Jarf, 2008). The same applies to universities and hospitals in KSA that collaborate with organizations in USA such as Harvard or Cleveland. For this reason parents in KSA strongly encourage TEFL to improve their children's employment prospects. Parents will spend money to enrol their children in international private schools or send them abroad in order to learn English.

Cornfield (1966, cited by Lianzhang, 2003) and Broughton et al. (1978) affirmed that although TEFL is widespread across the world, the speaking of English does not necessarily play an essential role in the national or social life of every English learner. For example, although English may be spoken in business and educational contexts, it is rare to find families in the KSA

speaking English unless they are students at international schools, interacting purely in English with their friends, classmates, teachers, and family members who study at the same school (Al-Jarf, 2008). Accordingly, some young Arabs speak English as a prestigious language to demonstrate they have studied abroad or in an international school. For this reason, it is common to see young Arabs talking English amongst themselves instead of Arabic. Al-Jarf (2008) criticizes such use of English and is concerned about English threatening the status of Arabic.

2.7 Language learning methods

Language learning involves a variety of methods which Saengboon (2006) divided artificially into “traditional” and “communicative” (Table 2.6)

Table 2.6 Traditional and communicative methods of language learning

Traditional Methods	Communicative Methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher-centred • Grammar focused • Rote-memorization • Non-authentic material • Explicit and immediate error correction • Teacher as authority figure • Students as <i>tabula rasa</i> • Language in isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner-centred • Meaning-focused • Meaningful tasks • Authentic materials • Tolerance of error • Teacher as facilitator • Students as negotiators • Language in context

This classification is an over-simplification, because it implies a historical dichotomy. Hood & Tobutt (2009) argue that in England the communicative approach to language teaching is in many ways regarded as traditional because it has been practised for such a long time. On a global basis, the traditional and communicative methods represent the extreme ends of a continuum which has been expanding around the world for many years

(Nunan, 2009). This continuum encompasses the Grammar-Translation, the Audio-Lingual Method, the Direct Method, Language Immersion, and the Communicative Method, all of which are still in use in some form or other today in various parts of the world.

2.7.1 Grammar-Translation

The oldest method of L2 teaching, developed in the 19th century, is Grammar-Translation. This is a behaviourist approach which focuses directly on memorization of the rules of language and vocabulary in order to achieve proficiency in reading and writing. The Grammar-Translation method creates students who can, for example, conjugate irregular verbs, but cannot necessarily make themselves understood clearly using L2 in conversational situations. Most language instructors now acknowledge that although an understanding of grammar is instrumental to L2 learning, the Grammar-Translation method is ineffective by itself to promote language acquisition (Nunan, 2009). Nevertheless, in parts of Asia, e.g., in Japan and China, TEFL still remains mired in a Grammar-Translation mode to the present day (Liao, 2004; McCarty, 2010).

2.7.2 Audio-Lingual

The Audio-Lingual or Oral Method developed in the 1940's is another essentially behaviourist approach that assumes the student can acquire language by mimicking or memorizing items of dialogue. The mainstay is pattern practice expecting verbal or written responses from the students. Technology and language teaching became linked in the 1960's when audio-

lingual language laboratories were developed using cassette decks and microphones. Nevertheless, the pedagogical approach was still the drill and practice method monitored by the teacher at a control panel (Mambo, 2004). Due to weaknesses in performance and attacks on the method as producing students who can only produce parrot-like responses to predictable situations, the audio-lingual method is not considered to be the most effective approach to TEFL; nevertheless derivatives of audio-lingual methods are still widely practised around the world, especially in developing countries (Nunan, 2009).

2.7.3 Direct Method

The Direct Method aims to achieve L2 proficiency mainly through oral communication (listening and speaking) with less emphasis on reading and writing. It is based on the idea that L2 learning is an imitation of L1 acquisition, achieved naturally in childhood. Lessons are restricted to the use of L2. The student is prevented from using his/her L1 language, and emphasis is placed on correct pronunciation of the L2 language from the beginning. Unlike the Grammar Translation and Audio-lingual methods, the Direct Method does not rely on drills. Grammar and translation are avoided because they involve the application of the learner's L1. The method relies on a step-by-step progression based on question-and-answer sessions which begin with naming common objects and progressing towards verbs and other grammatical structures with the goal of learning about thirty new words per lesson. The Direct Method aims to provide a motivating start as the learners begin to speak the L2 almost immediately. There are numerous criticisms of the Direct Method including (a) An adult L2 learner has less time, opportunity, and

motivation than a small child learning L1 continuously in his/her natural environment; (b) L2 cannot be acquired in the same way as L1, because an L2 learner already has L1 at his/her disposal; (c) The rejection of printed material is illogical if the L2 learner has already mastered reading skills in L1 (Richards & Renandya, 2005).

2.7.4 Language Immersion

Language immersion is a natural development of the Direct Method which provides support for both L2 learning and L1 maintenance. Language immersion programs are popular in Europe where they are termed Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). They involve students learning subjects such as science and geography through the medium of an L2, usually English, in addition to their native language (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009). Immersion programs offer the greatest amount of time for language study, and aim to produce students with the highest levels of language proficiency (Nunan, 2009).

2.7.5 Communicative Language Teaching.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was developed in the 1970's by educators and linguists in England who were dissatisfied with alternative methods of L2 instruction, and has since been adapted for all educational levels around the world (Richards & Rogers, 2001). CLT became a mainstream method in the 1980's and it is generally perceived to be the most effective basis for L2 instruction (Nunan, 2009). CLT adopts the constructivist model in which the teacher is a facilitator and not an authority. The student is actively involved in the learning process, and given responsibility for his/her

own learning. For this reason CLT is described as learner-centred. CLT accomplishes this by focusing on real life situations, helping students to teach themselves how to communicate in L2 based on everyday social interactions. High language proficiency may be attained through CLT but 100% fluency is not necessarily the goal. Emphasis is given to interaction in the L2 language through (a) The use of authentic materials such as books, newspapers, magazines, and recordings in the target language; (b) The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on L2, but also on the learning management process; (c) The learner's own personal experiences are important contributing elements; (d) Classroom language learning is linked to L2 activities outside the classroom. One of the most widely used CLT methods is for the teacher to organize games, role plays and pair/group work where students interact with one another in an authentic scenario in order to develop L2 proficiency. A communicatively oriented environment is not the only necessary condition for L2 acquisition. Learners' performance can also be improved by the teacher providing formal instruction in a communicative setting. For example, if grammar is perceived to be relevant, then the teacher can provide appropriate feedback to help learners reprocess their output (Lyster, 1998; Chung, 2005). Although CLT is widely recognized to be beneficial it has weaknesses. When students work in groups, some are confident about speaking the L2 whereas others may be reluctant and frequently do not participate. Nunan (2009) suggested that the intrinsic reluctance of some students to speak the L2 was the biggest challenge facing CLT. Reluctance to speak was associated with (a) linguistic factors (e.g., difficulties in transferring sounds, rhythms, stress patterns, and grammar from

the L1 to the L2; and (b) psychological factors (e.g., lack of motivation, anxiety, and shyness). CLT may also fail if pair/group activities lead students into side discussions in L1 rather than the L2 they are supposed to be learning (Richards & Renandya, 2005).

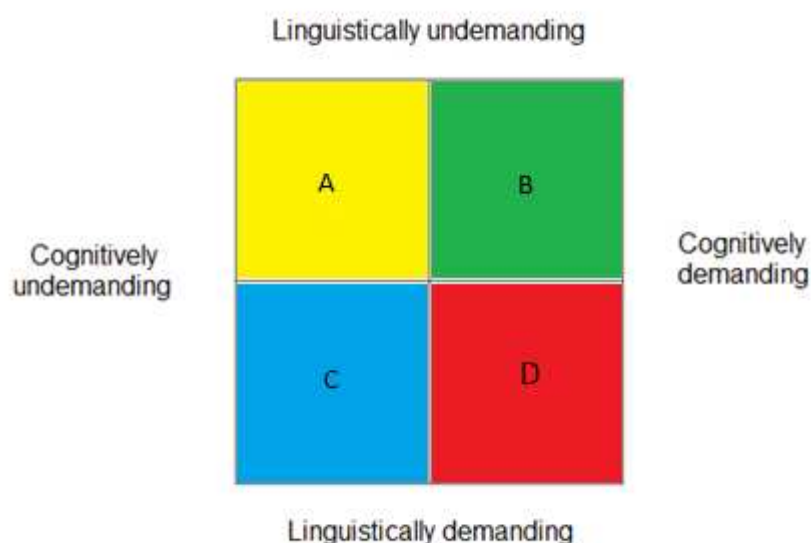
CLT was conceived as a set of general principles that can be applied and interpreted in a variety of ways (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Consequently CLT may fail to create sufficient opportunities for authentic L2 communication if teachers misunderstand or misuse its principles. Every language teacher should be able to accept the fundamental premises of educational reform by being reflective and open to change, but this is not always easy, particularly when CLT is introduced into countries where Western methods of education may be considered revolutionary. One case study in Vietnam demonstrated how the introduction of the communicative approach worked to enhance students' involvement and participation in TEFL (Hung, 2006); on the other hand in China, where rote learning and teacher-centred methods are the norm, CLT has been condemned (Hu, 2005). With reference to teaching English as a second language (TESOL) in the Philippines, Borlongan (2010) reported that the traditional practices that older teachers adopted whilst maturing in the profession were difficult to unlearn when CLT principles were introduced. Similar problems were experienced when CLT was imposed in Thailand. A recent case study demonstrated that TEFL instruction in Thailand was still mostly teacher-dominated, and the only interaction occurred when learners were called upon to provide factual responses to the teacher's questions (Khamkhien, 2010). The teachers found it difficult to select authentic materials and activities that matched the learners' speaking ability,

and did not understand that implementing CLT required considerable effort to devise strategies to help learners. TEFL teachers using CLT methods must accept the responsibility for developing interactive activities which connect to what the learners already know in terms of their language skills, personal lives, and real world situations. Learner-centred methods imply ironically that the teacher has more control and needs to work harder than when teacher-centred methods are applied. To use CLT properly, teachers must have a scholastic knowledge of linguistics to attend to discourse, lexis, syntax, prosody, and pronunciation and understand how cognitive, linguistic, and emotional development impacts on L2 learning. The implementation of CLT requires teachers not only to be highly competent in the L2, but also to have the time, ability and enthusiasm to develop appropriate communicative teaching strategies. As pointed out by Kanoksilapatham (2007) it may be difficult in practice to find such a combination of knowledge, skills, and motivation in every language teacher, particularly in developing countries.

2.7.6 Quadrant Model

Cummins (1991) devised a student-centred cognitive learning model which has practical implications for CLT. The different tasks a student is expected to perform are categorized by the teacher in the form of a quadrant or instructional hierarchy (Figure 2.2). The tasks range in difficulty along the vertical dimension from linguistically undemanding to linguistically demanding and along the horizontal dimension from cognitively undemanding to cognitively demanding.

Figure 2.2 Quadrant Model



A cognitively undemanding task is one in which the student has access to a range of visual and oral cues; for example looking at pictures of what is being talked about in a foreign language by the teacher, describing a simple object, or asking questions to confirm his/her understanding. A cognitively demanding task is one such as listening to speech or reading text, and understanding grammatical structure, where there are no external sources of help, other than the language itself. A task in quadrant A is both cognitively and linguistically undemanding, and is therefore easy to perform. A task in quadrant D is both cognitively and linguistically demanding, and is therefore the most difficult for students, particularly for those just beginning to learn a foreign language.

The practical implication of the Quadrant Model is that when language teachers are aware of the difficulty of a task, they can judge its appropriateness for students and avoid frustration. This does not imply that foreign language students should be fed only on a diet of cognitively-undemanding tasks. It may be beneficial to use such activities in the early part

of a language course, in order to build confidence, or as a lead in to a more challenging activity. Teachers should gradually switch from cognitively and linguistically undemanding tasks to cognitively and linguistically demanding tasks. Once students are comfortable with less difficult activities, they can be gradually exposed to more difficult tasks. It is essential that language learners eventually develop the ability to accomplish D quadrant tasks, since fluency is impossible without it (Cummins, 1991).

2.8. Learners' motivation & learning style preferences

Whatever teaching strategies are employed they will not be successful without the engagement of the learner. Hence motivation towards second language learning is an important issue. Gardner (1985) argued that if students' attitudes towards the learning process were favourable and they were enjoying what they were doing, they achieve better learning outcomes. According to Gardner (1985:50) motivation involves four elements: setting of a professional or personal goal; effortful behaviour to reach those goals; a strong desire to reach that goal, and finally favourable/positive attitudes towards particular learning activity. According to McKeachie (2002, p19) 'students who are motivated to learn will choose tasks that enhance their learning, will work hard at those tasks, and will persist in the face of difficulty in order to attain their goals.'. A similar point is made by Chularut and DeBacker (2003). Gardner and Lambert (1959), Oxford (1994), and Noels et al. (2000) have suggested that while motivation is multi faceted research has mainly focused on two categories integrative and instrumental motivation. The former is based on a desire to learn a L2 in order to appreciate another culture and perhaps to have contact with members of the target language

community. The latter is more focused on gaining knowledge of the language for practical purposes for example to take advantage of business or study opportunities as in the case of the Saudi learner wanting to access textbooks written in English. Oxford (1994) suggested that there were a range of motivations, perhaps overlapping ones, to learn a language but these different motivations were important factors in determining success.

A further consideration in motivating learners is the recognition that one size does not fit all as regards language teaching. Knowles (1982) for example classified four categories of language learner styles which have been influential in later research (e.g. Willing 1988 and Nunan 1999): concrete; analytical; communicative; authority oriented. For example the concrete learner seeks very direct means of taking in and processing information and may have a preference, say, for games and talking in pairs; the analytical learner is led to analyze structures and puts a great deal of value on independent working; the authority oriented learner may value teacher explanation and the communicative learner may look for more authentic language contexts. Nunan (1999) and others suggest that many learners will have preferences for authentic activities, for example access to native language speakers, over drills and other controlled practice. This sets up the possibility of a mismatch between authority oriented teaching strategies and preferred communicative learning strategies. However the implications of individuals' learning styles and learning preferences are not always clear cut. Akkoyunlu & Soylu (2008) understandably argue that it is important to address learning styles by providing flexible components into e-learning programmes. However, while these are important considerations learning styles should not

be treated mechanically. For example learners will shift between styles in their learning and many expect, and can take advantage of, a range of activity during a programme and even a one off teaching session.

2.9 Technology and language learning

Technology and language learning have been inextricably linked since the 1960's when audio-language laboratories consisted of cassette decks and microphones. This technology was useful in that it permitted easy access to spoken patterns of speech and the opportunity to practise (Singhal, 1997). However, it clearly did not support a communicative approach in that there was no verbal interaction between learners (Mambo, 2004). The introduction of video-language teaching and computer assisted language learning (CALL) via CD ROMs subsequently helped to develop skills in listening, reading, grammar, and vocabulary. According to a report compiled by Becta (2003) the significant applications of CALL which facilitate teaching the main language skills include (a) Digital resources such as those on the Internet e-books, electronic journals, computer games, DVDs, data bases, web sites and CD-ROMs; (b) Access to authentic materials and communication with schools abroad via video conferencing, emails, and discussion forums in the target language facilitate cultural awareness; (c) Multimedia presentation software enabling a range of foreign language skills to be practised and supporting a range of learning styles; (d) Word processing applications allowing pupils to plan, draft, and edit their work; (e) Digital video offering feedback on pupils' language performance for self-critique, teacher or peer evaluation; and (f) Students watching DVD movies with subtitles to improve their language skills.

The applications of the Internet to L2 learning are enormous and include multi-media, streaming audio and video, push technologies, audio chat and Voice Over Internet Protocol, Web white-boarding, Instant messaging, hand-held and wireless technologies and peer-to-peer file sharing (McGreal & Elliott, 2004). The use of ICT has lifted the pressure off teachers so that they are not the only source of language information. The use of ICT in L2 learning also confers other benefits, including language practice with feedback, individualization of students in a large class, pair and small group work on projects, either collaboratively or competitively, the fun factor, variety in the resources available and learning styles used, exploratory learning with large amounts of language data, and the acquisition and development of computer skills (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). The acronym ALIVE (Authenticity Literacy Interaction Vitality Empowerment) was coined to outline the reasons why a teacher of English should apply ICT in the classroom (Warschauer et al., 2000) as follows:

Authenticity: TEFL is most successful in authentic meaningful contexts. The Internet gives teachers and students the opportunity to access an enormous amount of authentic material on any topic they are interested in.

Literacy: The ability to read, write, communicate, research, and publish on the Internet represents a new form of literacy essential to students in the twenty first century. By combining English and technology in the classroom, teachers can help students master this new form of literacy.

Interaction: Interaction is recognized both in theory and practice as the major means of acquiring and gaining L2 fluency. The Internet provides

opportunities for students to interact individually not only with teachers, but also with native and non-native speakers from around the world e.g., using email, chat rooms and instant messengers.

Vitality: The Internet injects an element of vigour into teaching and helps to motivate both teachers and students as they interact with a medium that is flexible, constantly changing and connected to their real-life needs.

Empowerment: The use of the internet empowers teachers and students to become autonomous lifelong learners who can find what they need when they need it and collaborate with others to help construct new knowledge.

Although Warschauer et al. (2000) strongly defended the use of ICT as an indispensable medium for language teaching they also emphasized that successful learning outcomes depend on exactly how ICT is used in practice. Just as students do not automatically learn by sitting in a classroom, so they do not automatically learn by staring at a computer screen. Ultimately it is not the quality of the technology but the quality of the teaching that makes the difference. Ally (2004) similarly emphasized that e-learning does not occur by the provision of information by technology alone. It occurs when students experience a sequence of formal instruction, complete their prescribed learning activities, and achieve learning outcomes and objectives. As asserted by Laurillard (2009:1) "Learning concerns what the learner is doing, rather than what the teacher is doing".

2.10 Distance learning: VLEs, WBDL, and Open learning

Distance learning has been defined as ‘the acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated information and instruction, encompassing all technologies and other forms of learning at a distance’ (USDLA, 2008). Traditionally distance learning was ‘delivered’ by the posting of materials such as text books, tapes and assessment tasks which students worked at independently. In award bearing courses students generally sat examinations at test centres.

However, the notion of distance learning changed with the introduction of web tools, such as, a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). A VLE brings together resources for curriculum mapping, delivery, assessment, tutor support, communication and tracking (Becta 2003; 2004). It offers an informational and social space where students and teachers are able to access information online, and to interact with one another by chat, discussion groups, emails, forums, etc. (Dillenbourg, 2000; O’Leary, 2002). There are many types of VLEs, the most common are Blackboard and WebCT (which is part of Blackboard and similar to EMES used at KAU). Distance learning is also called web-based distance learning (WBDL) when students interact with the instructors and peers on the Internet. The Internet is the central element in WBDL because the network crosses geographical barriers (Tan,1999).

There are two types of WBDL: asynchronous and synchronous. Asynchronous means the learners and the teacher do not communicate at the same time. It may include students’ independent learning, for example, watching videos or listening to audio files, looking at their scores, posting threads in discussion groups and so on. In synchronous WBDL the teacher

and the students communicate simultaneously. A good example is video conferencing and voice chats where the teacher is able to see and speak to students and *vice versa*. Students have the opportunity to ask questions and get replies immediately, which may help build a social relationship online.

Open learning

Much of the discussion about web based learning and VLEs present opportunities and difficulties for teachers and learners without deep reference to pedagogy. However, there is an important distinction to be made between open and distance learning. Open learning is defined as an approach to learning that allows learners *flexibility* and *choice* over what, when, at what pace, where, and how they learn. In other words in open learning constraints on study are minimised. Open learning tends to be delivered via distance education but this is not necessarily the case. The key issue is that it suggests a pedagogy in which learners make choices including in some cases, such as McConnell (2000), choices as to how assessment is carried out and with peer assessment integrated into the course organization. Viewed logically distance learning and face to face teaching can be both open and closed (see table 2.7) but face to face teaching does necessarily impose restrictions on who can access a programme:

Table 2.7 Distance learning and face to face teaching: a matrix

Distance	Anywhere any time access high user choice as to what is studied how it is studied and how assessed	Anywhere any time access low user choice as to what is studied how it is studied and how assessed
Face to face	Fixed location high user choice as to what is studied how it is studied and how assessed	Fixed location low user choice as to what is studied how it is studied and how assessed
	Open	Closed

Open learning is closely aligned with the idea of learner autonomy. Holec (1981:3) sees autonomous learning as offering the learner control over 'their own learning' by choosing: aims and purposes; materials, methods and tasks; criteria for evaluation and using them in evaluation. Benson (2001) agrees with Holec and defines autonomy as the capacity to have charge of one's own learning and 'the ability of learners to control their own learning'. For Song (2011) autonomous learning requires a change of role for the teacher or rather the adoption of a range of roles such as information provider, counsellor, administrator, organizer, and so on.

Can distance learning match up to F2F teaching and learning if supported by new technology?

Brown (2006) mentions that some people consider any kind of instruction other than on campus f2f teaching as inferior but others point to important advantages of distance learning using new technology. For example, some of the benefits of using VLEs include: easy online delivery of materials; widening student access on and off campus to learning materials and resources; offering flexible support for educators who do not need to be in a fixed time or place to support and communicate with students. In addition to those efficiency gains the VLE offers the potential for new ways of learning and teaching such as active and independent learning making; use of online communication; online assessment and collaborative learning.

Lee (2000) suggests a further advantage is that 'shy' students may learn more when they work individually since there is no F2F interaction to distress them and students can make mistakes without worrying about what their classmates think. Johnstone et al. (1994) argue that students' attention wanes when following a lecture and only about one-third of the students can successfully recall content. With online learning everything is recorded online and student can go back to whatever they have missed or not understood at a particular time. Information can be presented using different media. Animations can help demonstrate concepts and events difficult to portray in traditional classes. E-learning can offer a range of examples, explanations, assessments, and exercises. Online learning can enhance learning compared to what can be accomplished using a class room only approach (McEwen, 1997). Barajas & Owen (2000) suggested that VLEs are advantageous because they provide online domains that permit synchronous, collaborative interaction among teachers and students while also providing asynchronous

learning resources for individual use by students at any time. And this 'any time, any place' access is emphasized by Siddiqui & Zubairi (2000:2). A VLE or WBDL approach can promote a variety of interactions including teacher with students, students with other students, students with other experts in the field, students with resources such as posted lecture notes, reference books, other web sites, etc. In addition, new technology supports innovations for example, text based communication, online assessment and collaborative learning, some of which may particularly appeal to younger learners.

In contrast, those sceptical of distance learning claim that students need F2F tutors and academic planners to help them complete courses on time and to act as a support system when stress becomes a problem. The 'distance' of distance learning takes away much of the social interactions that would be present in traditional learning environments. This problem can be mitigated by institutions promoting a sense of personal involvement between the student and the institution, for example having tutors communicate with students either electronically or by phone (Galusha, 1997).

Keegan (1986:120) suggested that the separation of student and teacher imposed by distance removes a 'vital link of communication' between the two parties, making immediate interaction between learners and teachers impossible or, using synchronous tools, problematic. Feenberg (1989) argued that e-learning generates anxiety because online communication does not produce the normal signals that reassure us that others are listening, agreeing, approving, or disapproving. He explains that when we communicate online we feel like we are taking a risk and it is essential we receive a response. Another disadvantage reported by Kelsey (2000) showed that

camera shyness is a factor that interferes with classroom interaction. Her study on two-way compressed video showed that more than a half of students reported that they feel uncomfortable with asking questions when they are seeing themselves on the TV monitor.

Closing the distance between learner and tutor needs to be sustained by overt institutional efforts so that the teaching-learning transaction is integrated. On this, Bartlett and Jones (2004) argue that an effective web based distance learning programme needs planning and foresight. Students need information as to what they should expect, and how the system works and what methods will be used in delivering the learning process. They also add that the programme team should discuss together whether or not a test should be given to group students according to past learning and experience. Students need access to systems and to IT support. Learning materials need to be designed with care and adapted to the particular students being taught. On this, much distance learning material is simply poorly designed, and teachers need strategies in order for them to compensate the lack of face to face interaction for example by promoting self-motivation.

To sum up, it can be said that distance learning is not good or bad in itself much will depend on the individual teacher and students involved. As seen earlier (pages 70-72) motivation of the student is the key. This is a particularly important factor for the online learner who is offered the opportunity for any time interaction, meaning that there is always the opportunity to delay participation for later. Without the direct stimulus of f2f interaction students may lose interest. The most successful distance learners are self-directed and clear in their educational objectives. They tend to enjoy learning for learning

sake. They become empowered by the ability to be set free and explore an interesting topic. They demonstrate good thinking and organizational skills, an ability to work and do research independently, and to learn in an unstructured environment (Hartman, 1995; Birch, 2002.)

Clearly the role of teacher preparation is an important issue in the use of technology and Richards (2005), in the context of language teaching in Singapore, shows how technology can be modelled through innovative use of ICT including:

- Web quests which allow students to answer questions given to them by the teacher by searching the internet for resources.
- Micro lessons which allow the teacher to point out and concentrate on important issues
- Project based learning to encourage students to link the design of learning context for ICT integration with a range of associated issues and challenges.

PART THREE

CASE STUDIES

Case studies concerning e-learning applications in KSA and the Gulf region are scarce and limited in distribution. Most are written in Arabic and hosted in local libraries, reducing their accessibility (Al-Wehabi et al., 2008). Consequently it was necessary to search elsewhere for relevant information. Relatively few case studies have been conducted to evaluate foreign language WBDL programmes outside Europe and the USA. Research rooted in developing countries where English is taught as a foreign language was considered most relevant. It is debateable whether the findings of case studies based on other socio-linguistic contexts in the West contribute towards an in-depth understanding of the issues associated with the implementation of e-learning in KSA and other developing countries. Consequently 25 case studies conducted outside Europe and the USA are reviewed. They are divided into (a) 14 case studies specific to online teaching of foreign languages and (b) 11 case studies using VLEs and WBDL to support the teaching of other subjects. The two groups are further subdivided into studies that highlighted the constraints and those that highlighted the opportunities. 14 case studies conducted in Singapore, Thailand, Australia, KSA, Malaysia, South Africa, Taiwan, Hawaii, and three regions of the British Commonwealth are reviewed in chronological order (Table 2.8).

Table 2.8 Case studies on online language learning

Reference	Country	Context	Method
Kannan & Macknish (2000)	Singapore	Study of issues affecting an online English Enhancement Programme for Chinese students	Observation
Okita (2003)	Singapore	Evaluation of online text based activities for learning Japanese	Observation
Muangsuma (2003)	Thailand	Students' perceptions towards online learning of English as a foreign language	Interviews & observation
Wang (2004)	Australia	Evaluation of a VLE (Net Meeting) for teaching Chinese to Australian students	Interviews & observation
Okuyama (2005)	Hawaii	Evaluation of a VLE (WebCT) for teaching Japanese conversation	Observation
Al-Jarf (2005)	KSA	Students' attitudes towards online learning of English	Observation
Al-Asmari (2005)	KSA	EFL Teachers' attitudes towards the use of internet in Saudi Arabian colleges of technology	Questionnaire & interviews
Ghandi & Duaud (2006)	Malaysia	Evaluation of an online chat programme for the development of English language skills	Observation
Nchindila (2007)	South Africa	Evaluation of the online teaching of English writing skills, as part of the Business Communication Programme	Observation & questionnaire
Hsu & Sheu (2008)	Taiwan	Evaluation of an online programme for students with low English proficiency level	Questionnaire
Chen & Wang (2008)	Australia	Evaluation of a VLE (C3) for teaching Chinese to Australian Students	Observations
Al-Jarf (2006)	KSA	Evaluation of the impact of online instruction on the development of English skills	Pre-test and post-test scores & questionnaire
Krish & Wong (2009)	Malaysia	Evaluation of students' perceptions of online English language courses	Questionnaire & interviews
McGreal (2009)	Africa, Asia & Caribbean	Evaluation of DL programmes used by the Commonwealth of Learning	Interviews & content analysis of documents

Seven of these case studies (Kannan & Macknish, 2000; Muangsami, 2003; Wang, 2004; Okuyama, 2005; Al-Jarf, 2005, Ghani & Daud, 2006; Nchidila, 2007) highlighted the constraints experienced by teachers and students using online systems for teaching and learning a foreign language.

An observational case study in Singapore conducted by Kannan & Macknish (2000) focused on the challenges faced by a WBDL programme developed to teach English online. This study concerned the English Language Enhancement Programme (ELEP) at Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore which included an on-line component called the Test Taking Skills as supplementary work. ELEP culminated in a Language Assessment Test for International Students seeking admission to Temasek Polytechnic. The curriculum focused on language and learning skills and ran for twelve weeks. Most of the students were Chinese whose previous background was in teacher-directed learning. The differences in perception of the tutors and the students towards feedback, the problem of encouraging students to be more self-directed and the need to cope with the unreliability of technology were highlighted.

Muangsamai (2003) investigated students' perceptions towards learning English as a foreign language online in the pre-medical level at Kasetsart University (KU), Bangkok, Thailand. The research was mainly based on a qualitative approach in which he interviewed students and conducted observations. The participants were five male pre-medical students who were taking English for Medical Students as a compulsory course for one whole semester. English language was the only means of communication. The student perceptions of the Internet were positive. They enjoyed online games, entertainment and discussions. The students independently discovered many

web based resources including authentic materials which proved to enhance their writing skills, reinforce their vocabulary, and help them write with more sophisticated English structures. Furthermore, by interacting with other learners through discussion groups they further improved their language skills. Nevertheless there were several constraints including the problem of the students being attacked by hackers and viruses which wasted time and caused frustration.

Wang (2004) interviewed and observed eight Chinese language learners at Griffith University in Australia (3 on-campus and 5 DL students). His aim was to investigate the students' interactions by using free online software called "Net Meeting 3.01" in the context of synchronous oral and visual interaction. The students' perceptions towards NetMeeting for language learning were positive and they enjoyed using it, especially the White board feature; however, there were several constraints, mostly technical problems, including image or sound break-up, delay in sound, blurry pictures in videos, and frequent disconnections. The problems varied depending on the time of day. In the morning the performance of NetMeeting was better than the evening. It was concluded that in order to have a better virtual classroom the Internet bandwidth needed to be expanded. With high speed and wider bandwidth the connection and quality of the video and sound would be better.

Qualitative research reported by Okuyama (2005) investigated 3 native speakers (one the teacher) and 11 non-native intermediate level students at the University of Hawaii taking an obligatory 4 week foreign language distance learning course (Japanese conversation through chatting). The students interacted in a synchronous environment using WebCT. 20 hours of chats

were observed and analysed. Students completed a survey, and also logs and duration of their online access were recorded, in addition to interviewing some of the students. The students were able to access a record of the chat and could review and later correct by themselves the language they or their classmates used. The students enjoyed the course and expressed their enjoyment through Japanese expressions which they had learned. The constraints were that students with computer skills performed better than those who had less computer experience, and that advanced Japanese learners had a better learning output than less proficient learners.

Al-Jarf (2005) considered the effectiveness of collaborative online instruction on students' achievement in grammar and their attitudes towards online collaborative learning and teaching. The two groups of students from different universities were sharing a supplementary English grammar course online using a website similar to Moodle. The sample from Um Al-Qura University consisted of 70 freshman English literature students, including both males and females, whereas the sample from King Saud University (KSU) were 40 freshman female students majoring in languages and translation. Both groups were taught by the researcher and the developer of the online site. Al-Jarf concluded that the study was a complete disappointment for two reasons. Firstly, most students did not register on the online site, apparently due to cultural difficulties. The females did not feel comfortable about sharing a course with male students. This led to a lack of interaction, an important element of online learning. Secondly, since this course was optional and was not assessed the students did not feel enthusiastic about the learning experience and did not want to waste time on it.

Ghani & Daud (2006) carried out a descriptive case study at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) including 70 intermediate ESL/EFL students taking English courses. The courses were a requirement for all students willing to study at the university. The main aim was to investigate the potential of computer-mediated classroom discussion for the development of English language skills by observing the students' communication and participation through a synchronous programme called LAN Chat Enterprise. The researchers observed the students' live discussions for 9 weeks, whilst they were required to discuss topics from a textbook. The chats were classified into four sections: greetings or introductions, task related discussions, off task discussion and the conclusion. It was concluded that students' writing in chat cannot be compared to academic writing. In chat rooms brief simple words and phrases were used which could constrain the enhancement of academic writing skills. With respect to the development of communication skills, all students participated equally in the chat room; however, there were differences in the quality of their discussions.

Nchindila (2007) conducted a case study in South Africa which concluded that the online teaching of English writing skills, as part of the Business Communication Programme (BCP) was a complete failure. The objective of the BCP was to develop work-based communication skills for learners of English as a second language. The students were mainly women or disabled people. To achieve the required skills, the students had to submit a portfolio of written work for each phase of the programme and used an online mentor to assess their work and pinpoint particular difficulties in their writing. The submission of the portfolio was an important part of the assessment that led to formal

accreditation. A mixed method approach was applied. The researcher qualitatively analysed observations of the students and mentors for two years and quantitatively analysed their responses to a questionnaire. The conclusion was that the online mentoring programme did not improve the learners' English language skills, spelling, grammar, ability to write clearly, or ability to organize ideas. The learners did not return their portfolio work within the stipulated time and most of the learners lacked commitment.

Six of the 13 case studies (Okita, 2003; Al-Asmari, 2005; Hsu & Sheu, 2008; Chen & Wang, 2008; Krish & Wong, 2009, and McGreal, 2009) highlighted the opportunities experienced by teachers and students using online systems for teaching and learning a foreign language.

An observational study of online text based activities in a foreign language classroom was reported by Okita (2003). The participants were 54 students taking a Japanese language class at Singapore National University using both synchronous and asynchronous software. The students discussed topics related to the Japanese culture to enhance their speaking skills in addition to writing reports to enhance their writing skills. The students perceived that they needed to combine synchronous and asynchronous activities such as re-writing compositions and reading other learners' compositions in order to learn effectively. Okita concluded that online learning is an effective pedagogical tool which helps improve foreign language learners' motivation and interaction with native speakers and other learners in different environments. The advantage of asynchronous activities was that students could review their own and their classmates' mistakes in order to evaluate and correct the language being used and compare it with other students.

Al-Asmari (2005) explored the level of Internet use by EFL teachers in colleges of Technology in KSA. He also evaluated the teachers' perceptions towards the Internet as a tool for instructional use in language teaching. The instruments were questionnaires and phone interviews. Fifteen EFL teachers at the colleges of technology were selected randomly for interviews and 185 completed questionnaires. The teachers' attitudes towards using the Internet for EFL teaching were positive. They found the Internet useful for obtaining information and shifting the role of the teacher towards a facilitator rather than an authority. The Internet was a useful tool for language learning in that students could practise the target language. For example, Arab students could send emails to English students speaking the target language in the UK. Additionally, the teachers were able to exchange ideas, experiences, and knowledge with other teachers from around the world. The main constraint the teachers faced in this study was the limited access to ICT.

Hsu & Sheu (2008) conducted a study to explore students' attitudes towards a programme called 'The KUAS English Web Learning Level I' developed at the National Kaohsiung University of Applied Sciences in Taiwan. This online programme was for students with low English proficiency level to support paper based courses and help improve pronunciation and grammar. 373 low proficiency students from six classes were selected for the study. The students completed a questionnaire including 8 open ended and closed questions to evaluate their perceptions. 70% of the students found the online programme helpful in enhancing their English level and learning more effectively. 60% of the students found that online learning helped in spelling, sentence structure and grammar. 70% found that it helped them with

vocabulary. It was concluded that most students enjoyed learning online and gave positive feedback.

Chen & Wang (2008) carried out qualitative observations of interactions in a virtual learning environment developed in Taiwan. The VLE, called Collaborative Cyber Community (3C) consisted of both synchronous and asynchronous forms. Seven (3 female and 4 male) adult students who were enrolled in the intermediate level of the Open Learning Chinese Programme at Griffith University volunteered to take part in the study. The students participated in a 10 week tutorial to develop speaking skills in Chinese which was 2 hours a week. The course provided opportunities for the learners' input as well as output through video and other online conferencing tools. Students could give a presentation through video conferencing and then play the role of the teacher in asking questions. The programme included a joint browsing facility where students could view websites, hear audio files, and watch and discuss them. The programme allowed access to voluminous web resources in the target language. Joint web browsing was used to teach English. For example, the teacher shared a website illustrating a map of the world, and asked the students to talk about the countries they had visited in the past tense or the countries they wished to go to in the future tense. The main conclusion was that successful instructed online language learning requires extensive student input and also requires opportunities for output. This study identified a case in which a VLE created an effective communicative environment for foreign language learning.

Al-Jarf (2006) described a study on 80 EFL sophomore Saudi female students between the ages of 19 and 21 at King Saud University in Riyadh to explore

the impact of online instruction on the development of English skills. She designed an experimental study in which the students were divided into two groups: an experimental group (40 students) and a control group (40 students). The experimental group was taught by an integrated method of online learning (using Nicenet, a free virtual website) and F2F learning. The control group was only taught F2F. She taught both groups in 12 sessions over 6 weeks, and she gave both groups a pre-test (at the beginning of the semester, before instruction began) and a post- test (at the end of the semester). There was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the pre-test. The students who were taught through blended learning performed significantly better in the post-test than the students who only took F2F. A questionnaire survey indicated that most students perceived that online learning was useful and enjoyable. Of particular value was the opportunity to search online for topics which enhanced their English language skills.

Krish & Wong (2009) investigated online English language courses at one of the Virtual Universities in Malaysia. The learners' perceptions were evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative methods. They used questionnaires and in-depth interviews with selected students. The findings indicated satisfaction towards the delivery of English courses online. 90% of the discussions between students were about assignments. 65.5% of their discussions with instructors concerned examinations. Students used the VLE to seek guidance on how to prepare for the exams. They were also looking for tips from the teachers to help their studies. Students who interacted with the teachers on a regular basis came to know them well. Students perceived that

the teacher's voice and enthusiasm when delivering online lectures motivated them and promoted learning. 81% of the students responded positively to the statement 'I learned a lot about the language from the feedback provided by my instructors'. 78.5 % felt that the prescribed activities had improved their grammar because it gave them the opportunity to practise. 53% felt their reading skills and 46.7% felt their writing skills improved. Learners did not encounter severe technical problems. Most difficulties were solved quickly or dealt with by a technical support team. The students valued the efforts made by the instructors to motivate learning in a faceless VLE by (a) Getting to know students well; (b) Promoting wider online participation by affirming students' abilities and ideas e.g., giving positive comments on students' work; (c) Integrating stories and personal experiences during interactions with students; and (d) Permitting students flexibility and adequate time to answer questions and complete assignments.

McGreal (2009) evaluated the work of the Commonwealth of Learning's (COL) e-Learning with International Organizations (eLIO) section which included training in the use of English for over 2000 staff in 8 organizations in regions of the British Commonwealth (Africa, Pacific, and Caribbean). The need for WBDL programmes was emphasized particularly for students who spent a lot of time traveling or who had fragmented work assignments. Qualitative methods were used including interviews with learners, supervisors, and COL staff and a content analysis of relevant documents. All the students perceived that their English writing skills had improved and that the course content was sufficient, clear and easy to understand, and appropriate for their organizations. It was concluded that the eLIO achieved its educational

objectives, including gender and culture-sensitive workplace oriented e-learning programmes. The programme trained and recruited highly qualified tutors and used appropriate technologies.

The other 10 case studies included in this review (Table 2.9) concern e-learning contexts other than language learning. They also highlight the constraints and challenges of administering and executing WBDL courses in higher educational institutions in developing or non-Westernized countries (UAE, Kuwait, Taiwan, Jordan, Malaysia, West Indies, Ghana, Pakistan, and Turkey).

Table 2.9 Case studies on e-learning

Reference	Country	Context	Method
Chuang (2003)	Taiwan	The perceptions of students towards a VLE (EduCities)	Interviews
Aldojan (2007)	Jordan	The use of the Internet for academic purposes by faculty members at 7 universities	Questionnaire
Al-Kashab (2007)	Kuwait	The impact of gender and educational level on students' attitudes towards e-learning	Questionnaire
Al-Raway (2006)	UAE	Evaluation of VLEs on student-student and student-instructor interactivity in gender segregated campuses.	Interviews & observation
Al-Oraini (2007)	Malaysia	Students' perceptions of a learning skills course taught online through myLMS	Questionnaire
Dabaj & Basak (2008)	Turkey	Students' perceptions of distance learning according to their age and gender	Questionnaire
Malik & Shabbir (2008)	Pakistan	Students' perceptions, motivation, and engagement with learning technology when studying on their own.	Questionnaire

Jarwan & Hamran (2009)	Jordan	Evaluation of the challenges students faced in online learning.	Questionnaire
Mensah et al. (2009)	Ghana	Obstacles and constraints experienced by part time working DL students at three institutions	Questionnaire
Nkhosi (2009)	West Indies	Students' attitudes towards an orientation course to prepare them for online learning	Questionnaire
Sakar (2009)	Turkey	Students' perceptions of blended learning on Bachelor's of Arts courses	Questionnaire

Chuang (2003) used online interview software to elicit the perception of 6 students in Taiwan towards EduCities, a web-based learning environment for online instruction. It was found that prior online learning experience was not the major reason for the students enrolling on the online course. Those who had prior online learning experience had negative overall perceptions toward EduCities. They were dissatisfied with the interface design of EduCities and thought it did not provide direct and clear information for online learners. All six experienced computer users were challenged to handle the navigation system, implying that the user interface of EduCities should be redesigned.

Aldojan (2007) used a quantitative methodology to investigate the use of the Internet for academic purposes by faculty members at 7 universities in Jordan according to their academic rank (professor, associate professor, assistant professor, or lecturer) and age. A questionnaire was administered to teachers and 223 completed responses were collected. Faculty members were also interviewed to get a more in-depth understanding. The younger academics (lecturers and assistant professors) with less than five years of teaching experience were found to use the Internet significantly more than the older

teachers. The younger lecturers and assistant professors were more satisfied in using Internet technology in teaching than the older associate professors and professors. The constraints were that most of the teachers were dissatisfied with the infrastructure, specifically the limited availability of technology for accessing the Internet.

Al-Khashab (2007) evaluated the impact of gender and educational level on the attitudes of Kuwaiti students towards e-learning. 276 questionnaires were returned out of 300 distributed. The results indicated that Kuwaiti students had positive attitudes towards e-learning. There were no statistically significant differences in attitudes with respect to the genders of the participants; however, significant differences were found in the students' attitudes towards e-learning with respect to their educational level.

Al-Raway (2006) investigated two way video courses at the United Arab Emirates University. The video conferencing system was divided into one male and one female site equipped with cameras, TV screens, microphones, computers, and overhead projectors. The sample consisted of 114 female and 91 male students. The aim was to explore the impact of video conferencing technology and online discussion groups using Blackboard on student-student and student-instructor interactivity in gender segregated campuses. The mixed method design included qualitative and quantitative measures (interviews and open ended questions, surveys and observation). When the students and instructor were at the same site, the levels of student-instructor and student-student interaction were higher than when the students and teacher were at different sites. The main findings concerned gender differences. Student-instructor interaction was highest amongst male

students whereas student-student interaction was highest amongst female students. More male than female students perceived that the instructor was effective in motivating communication. Both male and female students agreed they used Blackboard to answer the instructor's questions, and felt confident and comfortable communicating with Blackboard. More male than female students, however, perceived that they would participate in discussions with students from other sites using Blackboard.

A study carried out at the Open University Malaysia (OUM) was conducted by Saudi researchers Al-Oraini et al. (2007). They evaluated students' perceptions about a learning skills course taught online through a Learning Management System called myLMS. Most students were between the age of 20-50 and many had a long gap since they were last in school. The university delivered a blended learning course which was divided into 70% self managed studies, 15% F2F interaction and 15% online interactions. The students were given the opportunity to take F2F classes in any of the 53 centres associated with the university every fortnight. The mixed method study combined both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. A questionnaire comprising 25 Likert-scale questions and 3 open ended items was randomly distributed online to students in different faculties. There were 330 responses (185 females and 145 males). Inferential statistical analysis indicated no significant differences between the students' perceptions of the course with respect to gender, age, chosen learning centres, or type of programmes. Most of the students were satisfied with their course, and perceived that it helped them to acquire the skills needed for further study. On the other hand, they complained about the limited instructions and information

in some areas (e.g. the university's digital library and the use of Microsoft applications). The students experienced confusion identifying which articles they had to read in order to complete their assignments. One of the main recommendations of the study was to give students lessons in accessing library resources.

Dabaj & Basak (2008) studied students' perceptions of distance learning according to their age and gender at Sakarya University, Turkey. 118 students enrolled in the WBDL programme completed a questionnaire. The findings were that the female students were more positive than males about the online programme, and that older students preferred F2F teaching.

Malik & Shabbir (2008) presented the results of a case study at the International Islamic University in Islam Abad, Pakistan, which sought to explore students' perceptions, motivation, and engagement with learning technology when studying on their own. A questionnaire was distributed to 300 students from which there were 279 responses. The results indicated that 66% of the respondents preferred F2F classes rather than independent study. The students were looking for more guidance and instructions from their teachers because they frequently felt lost and did not know what was required of them. Another finding was that students requested training on navigating the website and accessing the online library.

Jarwan & Hamran (2009) conducted a survey of the perceptions of Bachelor's degree students at Al-Huson University, Jordan, towards e-learning. 200 students were selected randomly from a population of 2827. The questionnaire consisted of 40 items. The main challenges faced by the

students were the unavailability of the Internet at their own homes and the lack of training in the use of online learning programmes. The most serious technical problem was the insufficient number of computers in relation to the number of students who wanted to use them. Inferential statistics indicated that no statistically significant differences between the perceptions of males and females; however, there were differences between students studying different majors. Engineering students had better access to the Internet than students from other faculties, and there were differences between the responses of students in the first and second year.

Mensah et al. (2009) studied the obstacles and constraints experienced by part time working students in learning at a distance at three institutions in Accra, Ghana. They distributed 240 questionnaires and received 161 responses. One of the main problems faced by students was the inadequate time to study, because of the pressures of work, and social activities such as attending parties or family gatherings. Power cuts were the main technical problem. It was concluded that the course delivery needed to be flexible in terms of structure and time, and that the students need to exercise better time management.

The University of the West Indies started a new blended learning programme in 2004 to give more opportunity for people to access education (Nkhosi, 2009). The University introduced synchronous and asynchronous systems for teaching students at 30 centres spread over the region. There was a six week orientation course for students to get acquainted with web-based learning, as well as improve their reading skills. This course covered preparing for online learning, study strategies, understanding the reading process, taking notes

and writing summaries. After finishing the orientation course students were surveyed to gauge their attitudes. The majority perceived that the orientation course was not necessary. A research team monitored the students, e-tutors and coordinators' activities during the programme. Two weeks before the students' final exams a questionnaire of 42 closed questions and 3 open ended questions was distributed. The results of the evaluation were that most students enjoyed greater learner autonomy and they were satisfied with the discussion forums. On the other hand, some were dissatisfied with the feedback from e-tutors, the grading system, the slow responses from the tutors and above all the lack of F2F interaction (Nkhosi, 2009).

Sakar (2009) reported a questionnaire survey of 422 students at a Faculty in Turkey which offered blended learning. The survey focused on students' perceptions of online courses, and answered the following questions: (a) Do online courses help students comprehend the courses better? (b) Do these courses meet learning needs? (c) Are there any problems with these courses? If yes, what kind of solutions can be proposed? 85% of the students participated in the online courses. The students accessed the site mostly before the exam period in order to practise and interact with other students and discuss the exam materials. 15% of students did not access the online courses because they did not have Internet connections and/or computers at home, or in the areas where they lived. Most of the students perceived that online learning was convenient and useful; however, there was a constraint in that the students disliked learning without F2F interaction.

PART FOUR

REFLECTIONS

This section presents a summary of the literature review and contains some personal reflections concerning (2.12) the perceived opportunities and (2.13) constraints of using online systems for teaching and learning a foreign language in developing countries and (2.14) the importance of cultural contexts. Finally, (2.15) the practical implications for this case study are considered.

2.12 Opportunities

It is evident from the literature that e-learning has the potential to enlarge the repertoire of methods that L2 teachers can bring into higher education, including the introduction of student-centred, communicative task-based activities inside Internet-based projects. The Internet permits the exploitation of authentic language materials not originally designed for educational purposes. Information is presented online in attractive forms, suitable for every level of language competence, learning style, and preference. The Internet gives both teachers and students the potential for high levels of interactive exchanges with feedback and collaboration between groups both inside and outside the classroom. The TEFL teacher does not have to rely on Grammar-Translation, Audio-Lingual or other traditional resources. He/she can integrate communicative language teaching with ICT to enlarge the language skills and cultural richness of students and encourage them to participate in a much wider range of social interactions. E-learning has the potential to transform the formal environment of an educational setting into a

more informal place where reading, writing, listening to and speaking a foreign language can be a natural process not just an academic subject based on learning grammar and vocabulary by rote. It is evident, however, that ICT can only support successful L2 learning where the infrastructure is reliable, the teachers are highly skilled and motivated, the technological resources can be integrated into a curriculum based on a clear theoretical framework for teaching and learning a foreign language framework, and the learners are willing to participate fully in the tasks that are prescribed by the teachers. All of this may be difficult to achieve in practice, particularly in the developing countries. Nevertheless, six of the 25 reviewed case studies highlighted the opportunities of using online systems in developing countries for communicative language teaching. These included improved motivation and interaction with native speakers and other learners in different environments. For example, Arab students could send emails to English speaking students in the UK. Additionally, the teachers could exchange ideas, experiences, and knowledge with other teachers around the world. Opportunities were provided to search for topics online and read more about them which enhanced English skills. Students could independently discover many web based resources including authentic materials which proved to enhance their writing skills, reinforce their vocabulary, and help them write with more sophisticated English structures. Online learning was perceived to help in spelling, sentence structure, grammar, and vocabulary and VLEs were perceived to create an effective communicative environment for L2 learning at some but not all institutions.

2.13 Constraints

The implications of language acquisition theories for teaching practice are difficult to determine, because no single theory has offered a comprehensive explanation. Each theory offers a different insight into the complex process of language acquisition, and none provides a holistic framework for e-learning. All of the theories do, however, share one thing in common, which must be taken into account as a constraint by L2 teachers: they all conceive language learning as a slow and gradual process. Irrespective of whether language learners use strategies, cognitive, or innate mechanisms, they still have to move progressively toward speaking L2 by passing through several stages of development over a long time period.

In Europe and USA there has been a shift from Grammar-Translation and Audio-Lingual (behaviourist) methods to Communicative Language Teaching (constructivist). CLT has inevitably been exported, sometimes unsuccessfully, to other parts of the world. The main outcome of this educational imperialism is that teachers in the developing countries must change in order to become facilitators rather than authority figures and students are given more independence and responsibility for their own learning. The extent to which the constructivist models developed in the West are applicable elsewhere in the world is, however, questionable.

The majority (19) of the 25 reviewed case studies highlighted the constraints experienced by teachers and students using online systems for teaching and learning a foreign language and other subjects in developing countries. Both students and teachers must cope with the unreliability of the local technology,

including image or sound break-up, delayed responses, blurry pictures in videos, frequent disconnections, and power cuts. From the students' perspective the perceived constraints include lack of F2F interaction, being attacked by hackers and viruses, and difficulties in navigating certain VLEs. A problem specific to Arab female students was that they did not feel comfortable about sharing a course with male instructors or students. Student-student and teacher-student interactivity varies between males and females in gender segregated institutions in KSA. From the teacher's perspective, the constraints include the differences in perception of the tutors and the students towards interaction and feedback, the problem of encouraging students to be more self-directed, including exercising better time management, and younger teachers being more satisfied using Internet technology in teaching than older teachers. Advanced computer users and language learners may have a better learning output than those less proficient using computers and foreign language, and significant differences are found in students' attitudes towards e-learning with respect to their educational levels. Students' writing in online chat does not necessarily improve their academic writing skills since only brief simple words and phrases may be used. All online language courses do not always achieve their objectives. Online mentoring interventions to support foreign language learning have been shown to fail in some cases.

2.14 Cultural context

Differing contexts are the reason why educational practices around the world must adjust according to the needs of the local setting. The cultural dimension makes each scene of education unique and argues against a one-size-fits-all

approach. I do not therefore consider it to be imperative that developing countries should blindly follow the e-learning practices used in Europe and the USA. Relatively little research has been conducted in the developing countries in this respect, and it evident that more information is needed to understand the cultural contexts into which e-learning opportunities and constraints are locally embedded. This provides a rationale for conducting my case study at KAU.

It is clear that developing countries and KSA in particular face many challenges to exploit the opportunities of e-learning resources, associated with cultural issues. For example, communicative learning tasks involving role plays between matching males and females would be impossible in KSA, where males cannot even enter a classroom with females. In a Saudi classroom there may be little room for students to express themselves as unique individuals or disagree with the authority of the teacher or make mistakes due to a wider emphasis on social harmony by conforming to the beliefs and values of the in-group (one of Hofstede's cultural dimensions). Knowing how the in-group and gender orientation of Saudis shapes their learning behaviour could help match teaching styles to e-learning styles. In KSA many other contextual issues need to be considered, associated with poor technological infrastructure, confusion over copyright issues, the need for more local language content and better training of online teachers and website developers.

2.15 Practical implications for this study

It is evident that there is currently no agreed best practice to conduct case studies on e-learning in terms of whose voices should be heard or the most appropriate research methodologies. All but four of the reviewed 25 case studies focused on the perceptions of students, so the perceptions the teachers were often neglected. A questionnaire was the most frequently used instrument in 12 cases. Nine of the studies used qualitative analysis (interviews and/or observations) whilst only four used mixed methods. The conclusion is that the road appears to be left open for a researcher to pursue whatever methods he/she chooses, without reference to any kind of discipline-based methodological framework. This is not the most appropriate strategy. An effective case study should ideally be multi-perspectival, implying that it should not only interpret the perceptions of individuals, and their behaviour and interactions in natural settings (an essential feature of qualitative research methodology) but it should also summarize the views of defined groups of individuals, and analyze the differences, similarities, and associations that exist between them (an essential feature of quantitative research methodology). None of the 25 reviewed case studies seemed effective according to these criteria, providing the rationale for designing a more effective case study.

The design of this case study attempted to provide a multi-perspectival understanding of the opportunities and constraints of the WBDL programme at KAU, from the point of view of both the teachers and students, using quantitative and qualitative methodologies, taking the cultural context into account. This case study methodology followed the advice of Fraenkel &

Wallen (2007: 430) who stated “We believe that educational research increasingly is, and should be, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches” and that “as far as we are concerned, research in education should ask a variety of questions, move in a variety of directions, encompass a variety of methodologies, and use a variety of tools (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007:14).

2.16 A final reflection on the literature

Looking at the case studies it can be seen that they present pragmatic arguments for using ICT, focusing on the motivation of both teachers and students, access to the online systems and on the technical problems associated with access. To the extent that ICT ‘affordances’ are discussed they seem to concern attributes such as multimedia e.g. Muangsamai (2003), Chen & Wang (2008) and Al-Raway (2006); access anywhere and anytime e.g. McGreal (2009), Al-Oraini et al. (2007), and Mensah et al. (2009); interactivity between both students and teachers/students and students e.g. Muangsamai (2003), Okuyama (2005), Okita (2003), and Chen & Wang (2008); and collaboration e.g. Al-Jarf (2005) and Chen & Wang (2008).

This pragmatic view of the contribution of ICT resonates with a review of research into technology in language teaching provided by Chapelle (2007). She suggests that ICT has been seen as allowing enhanced input; a variety of feedback; types of help; and written interaction. Furthermore, she sees much of the research as arguing that ICT provides opportunities for a greater choice over mode of learning and location. However, Chapelle further noted the limited role that SLA theory plays in discussion of ICT and language learning.

This lack of theoretical underpinning is, as noted by Laurillard (2009), a weakness of research into e-learning in general. Indeed, there is some overlap between Laurillard and Chapelle as both are interested in instructional strategies and conceptions of a learner trying to make sense of a 'target' knowledge base. Chapelle is further interested in the implications of ICT for SLA research, for example the opportunities for designing research that will allow the researcher to explore learners' knowledge of the language and the learning strategies they use.

In discussing SLA Chapelle notes the importance of cognitive interactionist and social-cultural second language acquisition theories as a way of making sense of CALL. She suggests that a number of interventions are based implicitly on cognitive interactionist theory or at least can be interpreted through this theoretical lens. She provides examples of four instructional strategies within examples of CALL: offering help for comprehension of aural input through written L2 support; offering help for comprehension of aural input through written L1 support; offering help for comprehension of written input with multiple supports; offering precise explanatory feedback on errors. To illustrate this in more detail we can take one of Chapelle's examples: a case study by Nagata (1995). This was conducted at the University of San Francisco using a computer assisted language instruction program which offered instant feedback to students studying a Japanese in an interactive environment. Two types of programs were used for offering feedback in a type of experimental study. One was a so called intelligent CALI programme which gave detailed personalised feedback and the other group used the traditional modified version of the program which offered general feedback. Both used

the same grammar notes for feedback. Results showed that students using the intelligent CALI progressed more than the traditional students due to the fact that they were better able to assess support and they developed better learner sentence production skills.

Chapelle (2007) further discusses Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) in relation to SLA, though here the association with the theory of SLA is less clearly explained. Much seems to fit an interactionist model and aspects of interaction include: negotiation of meaning, negotiated interaction, negotiation strategies, and repair moves. Again taking one of Chapelle' s examples, Jepson (2005) argues that in his study voice chat generated more repair moves than text chat; clarification requests were the most frequent kind of repair move. (A repair is a conversational move of fixing a problem which is related to negotiation of meaning and negative feedback.)

What is important in this contribution and in more general literature of e-learning (e.g. Laurillard, 2009) is the concern for linking what we do with technology to a theory of learning and of language acquisition. For example many of the case studies considered earlier can be considered as embodiments of learning theory and of language learning models. For example some studies seem to embody the principles of cognitive interaction (e.g. Nkhosi, 2009) while Wang (2004) appears to better fit the idea of socio cultural language acquisition.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 General introduction

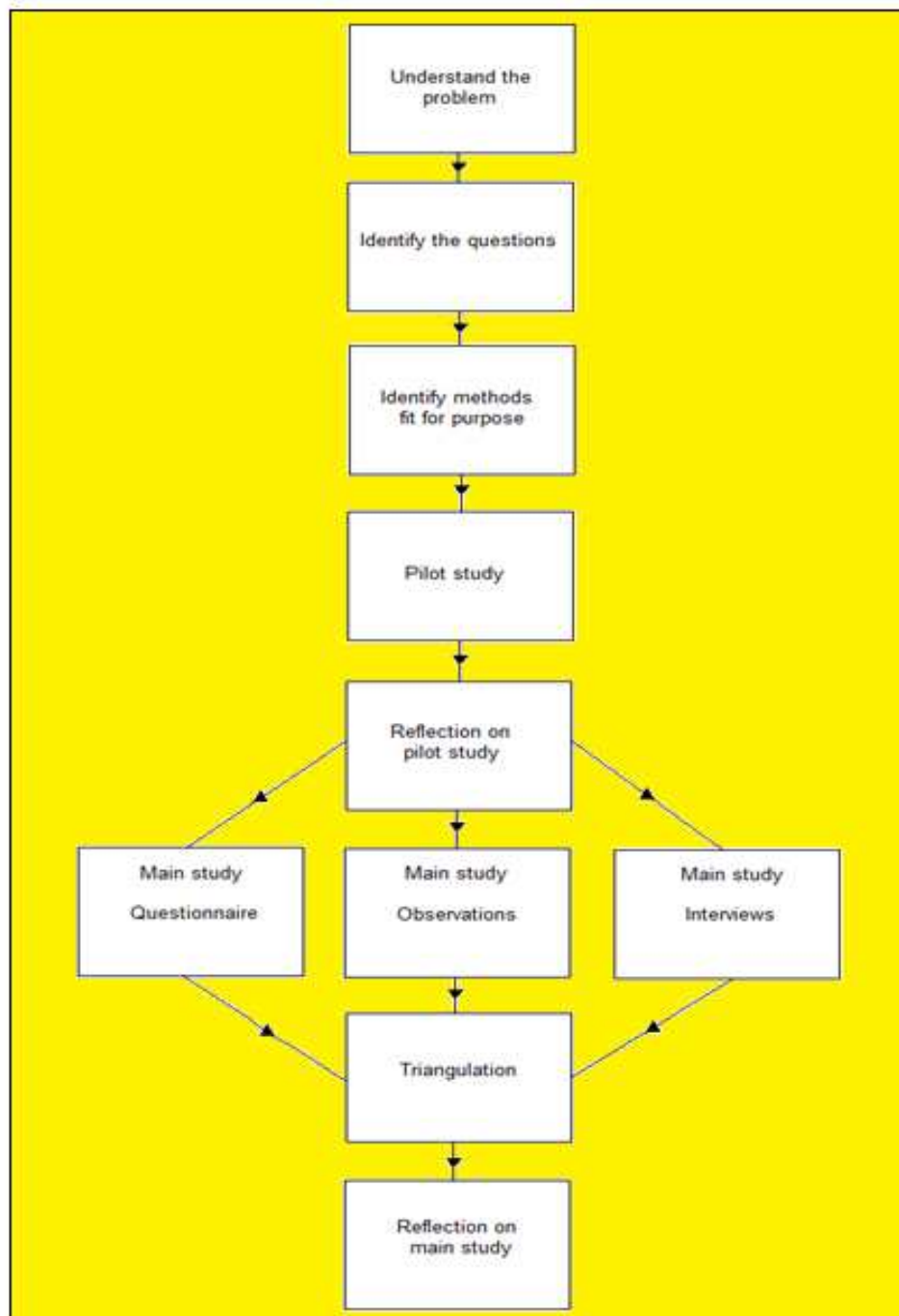
This chapter describes the methods and methodology used to conduct this case study. Methods are defined as “the range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction” (Cohen & Manion, 1994:38). Methodology refers to the stance of the researcher towards explaining or understanding the physical or social world. Methodology requires a discussion of how the methods were developed, and the theoretical issues that underpinned the use of the methods in practice. Research methodologies are conventionally polarized into qualitative and quantitative (Feldman, 1997) although mixed-method approaches empower the researcher to “have the best of both worlds” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007: 428).

This chapter begins (3.2) by outlining a strategic map of the study and (3.3) elaborating on the research questions (see Chapter 1). It then identifies and justifies the methodology and the mixed methods approach used in this study with respect to (3.4) the research design; (3.5) the time schedule of the research activities; (3.6) the instruments used to collect the information, including (3.7) the questionnaire, (3.8) the interviews, (3.9) the observations of online classes. Finally, (3.10) reliability and validity, (3.11) triangulation, and (3.12) the ethical issues are considered.

3.2 Strategic map

A simple map (Figure 3.1) illustrates the strategy proposed to conduct this study. The strategy began in Chapters 1 and 2 by gaining an understanding of the problem.

Figure 3.1 Strategic map of research activities



The second stage of the strategy was to identify the research questions and methods, including a pilot study performed to develop and refine the methods used in the main study. Following reflections on the pilot study, the main study was performed, involving three methods of collecting information (questionnaires, interviews, and observations in a natural setting). Triangulation (i.e., the comparing and contrasting of information from different sources) was then attempted (see Chapter 4) before the reflections were consolidated (see Chapters 5 and 6).

3.3 Research questions

The primary aim of this study was to explore the use of the new WBDL programme for teaching TEFL at the English Language Institute at the King Abdulaziz University. The case study focussed on the behaviour and perceptions of both teachers and learners. The research questions (RQ) introduced in Chapter 1 are repeated as follows:

RQ#1: How do both the teachers and learners at KAU use the new WBDL programme in practice?

RQ#2: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the opportunities afforded by the new WBDL programme (i.e., the attributes of the programme that are most helpful in achieving its educational objectives)?

RQ#3: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the constraints of the new WBDL programme (i.e., the attributes of the programme that generally prevent or limit the achievement of its educational objectives)?

The characteristics of “good research questions” as defined by Fraenkel & Wallen (2007:35) were incorporated. The questions were (a) feasible, i.e., capable of being investigated using available resources and accepted research methodologies; (b) clear and unambiguous; (c) significant or worthy of investigation; (d) ethical, in that they did not involve harm to the participants or their environment.

3.4 Research design

The research was designed around a case study, using both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, the results of which were triangulated and consolidated. The research design is described as a triangulated mixed methods case study. It was based on the philosophy that quantitative and qualitative methodologies are complementary and not in direct opposition to each other (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003; Brannen, 2005).

3.4.1 Mixed methods

The research questions of this study were addressed by means of a case study which included the quantitative analysis of numerical data collected using questionnaires and the qualitative analysis of interview responses and observations made in natural settings. Quantitative analysis is most usually applied within the positivist paradigm that reality can be explained in terms of statistics (numbers that summarize samples) parameters (numbers that summarize populations) and hypotheses (predictions based on the laws of probability) that exist outside human feelings (Giddens, 1974). Most social scientists, however, appreciate that positivism cannot explain all cases of human perception and behaviour. Positivism only seeks to collect and

analyze information from part of a phenomenon but in so doing misses many important aspects. Although information relating to a defined group of people may be summarized, predicted and generalized in terms of statistics, parameters, and the laws of probability, it is much more difficult to explain the perceptions and behaviour of each individual person (Cohen, 2007). The qualitative analysis used in this study addressed this difficulty by applying the interpretivist paradigm that to understand a phenomenon better, the wider picture must be examined. Interpretivism aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the whole, through exploring the richness, depth, and complexity of information, assuming that knowledge is socially constructed through the perceptions and experiences of each individual (Palinscar, 1998). The use of interpretivism also implied that I must reflect personally upon what role I played in constructing knowledge and how and why I came to certain conclusions (Holland, 1999).

Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie (2003:379) recommended that “researchers undertaking mixed methods techniques should seek to defend explicitly the approaches they are employing”. I argue that the mixed method approach used in this study was essential, since the research questions were demanding, and required a broad methodology, in which the best available tools had to be employed.

3.4.2 Case study approach

Flyvbjerg (2006) in a review of misunderstandings about case study research pointed out that although our knowledge of situations will be strengthened by the execution of more case studies, there appears to be no common

consensus as to what actually constitutes a case study. Accordingly, I could find no single holistic definition of a case study in the literature. The term has different meanings to different researchers, in different disciplines, depending upon their variable perspectives. A selected range of examples, to illustrate the diversity of definitions and terminology, is presented here. Some researchers, particularly psychologists, define a case study in terms of the history of an individual person (Ray, 1997). Fraenkel & Wallen (2007) referring to research in education, defined a case study in terms of qualitative research on one or more individuals. Feagin et al. (1999) considered that the main characteristic of a case study is that it achieves a holistic understanding of the inter-related activities of individuals participating in a social situation. Creswell (2003:15) described a case study as a method “in which the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals”. Merriam (1988) refers to a case study as gaining an in-depth understanding of a situation, adding that it can include gathering data by a survey. Yin (1994:13) defined a case study as “an in depth inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context”.

There is clearly a disagreement about how to define a case study, but the definition of Yin seems to be a common feature of this and most other case studies. Since the road appears to be open to proceed with a personal definition, it is my opinion that a case study is not so much a method or an investigation as a strategy. This case study is defined as a strategy involving the development of theory and the collection, analysis, interpretation, and consolidation of multiple sources of information from different perspectives

leading to an in-depth knowledge and understanding of a social situation at a specified location.

Case studies have been classified as illustrative, exploratory, cumulative or critical instance (Yin, 1994). This case study was essentially exploratory, implying that it provided new information about a subject of interest, at a location that has not been studied before, and it included a pilot study, performed to develop and determine the final protocols (i.e., the instruments, participants and research questions) employed in the main case study. The local significance of this case study was that it contributed specifically to exploring the opportunities and constraints of a WBDL programme for Saudi learners of the English language.

A major criticism of case study methodology is that its dependence on a single object of interest may render the results incapable of generalization to other cases. The conclusions may have local significance but do not have external validity, i.e., they cannot be extrapolated to situations and/or populations outside the boundaries of the study (Yin, 1994); nevertheless, it is suggested that the results of this case study may also be of value to teachers and learners of English as a foreign language using WBDL programmes outside KSA. The rationale underpinning this suggestion is that the research questions of this case study may be identifiable to other teachers and learners operating in similar e-learning settings elsewhere.

3.5 Time schedule

The time schedule of the research activities is outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Time schedule of research activities

Date	Activity	Description of activity
March-May 2009	Pilot study questionnaire	Questionnaires for the pilot study were administered electronically to students at KAU
July 2009	Main study questionnaire	Revised questionnaires for the main study were administered directly to students at KAU with the help of a personal contact.
October 2009	Permission for field work	A letter was requested by the KAU to state the reasons for undertaking field work. A letter was sent, stating the need to visit KAU to distribute questionnaires, conduct interviews, perform observations, and collect data. I was given permission to carry out three months field work from 2 nd October 2009 to 1 st January 2010
October 2009–January 2010	Interviews with teachers	Telephone interviews, each lasting for one hour, were conducted personally with 4 teachers at the English Language Institute at KAU. The teachers' perceptions regarding the use of the new DL programme were elicited. The interviews were recorded electronically.
October 2009-January 2010	Interviews with students	Phone and online interviews in an informal context were conducted personally with 6 students from the English Language Institute at KAU. The students' perceptions regarding the use of the new DL programme were elicited
October 2009-January 2010	Classroom observations	30 online classes at KAU were observed personally. Observations were recorded using field notes. Descriptive observations were made every two minutes, documented both in writing and by use of a check -list.
February-December 2010	Analysis and communication of results	The collected information was analyzed and interpreted, and written up in this dissertation.

3.6 Instruments

A survey approach was chosen, since I was interested in collecting the answers to questions across the full range of learners in order to provide a broad overview of the situation at ELI. Three conventional survey instruments were used to collect data: questionnaires, telephone interviews, and online interviews. A non-participant observer approach was also used to complement the results of the survey. The following sections justify the use of the research instruments, discuss their fitness for purpose, and describe how they were developed and administered in practice.

3.7 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was chosen as the survey method to elicit the perceptions of the student population since it facilitated the rapid collection of responses from a large number of students at low cost. It also facilitated anonymous responses to sensitive topics that the students may not want to discuss at an interview (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). The target population of students to whom the questionnaire was administered was the growing numbers of learners pursuing the WBDL programme in TEFL at the ELI. These learners were in their first year (foundation year) before choosing their major. The numbers of distance learners associated with this programme from 2007 to 2010 are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Student population in the WBDL programme at ELI

Academic year	Semester	Males	Females	Total
2007-2009	1 st	93	79	172
	2 nd	57	64	121
2008 -2009	1 st	70	68	138
	2 nd	54	57	111
2009 -2010	1 st	206	214	420
	2 nd	211	207	418

The academic year at KAU is divided into the 1st semester (October to March) and the 2nd semester (April to July). The 1st semester examinations are in March and the 2nd semester examinations in July. Electronic versions of the questionnaire were distributed during the two examination periods, which are the only times of year when the WBDL students collected together at KAU. All students sat the examinations on the same days and at the same times but on different campuses since education is segregated between males and females. The kind cooperation and assistance of male and female teachers invigilating the examinations at the ELI was procured to help distribute the questionnaires. All questionnaire responses were received via email.

3.7.1 Pilot study questionnaire

A short questionnaire was designed to ensure rapid responses. This was essential, since students at KAU complained to their teachers that they received so many questionnaires from different researchers, which was stressful and time consuming. Two electronic versions of the pilot study questionnaire (in Arabic and English) in Microsoft Office Word® 2007 format were distributed (See Appendix 1A and 1B). Students were advised to answer according to their language preference and return the responses to my e-mail address. All students answered the Arabic questionnaire which was translated into English. The pilot study questionnaire was administered between March and May 2009, during the second semester of the 2008-2009 academic year when I was based in the UK. Initially only three questionnaires were returned. The teacher responsible for WBDL students was contacted, and the students were sent a formal reminder, assuring them of the importance of their replies. Teaching staff at the ELI responsible for male and female students kindly redistributed the pilot questionnaires. Other responses were subsequently received by email over a period of 2 weeks. Ultimately, a total of 25 questionnaires were received for the pilot study.

3.7.2 Reflections on the pilot study questionnaire

The pilot study confirmed the need to send a reminder in order to improve the response rate, as recommended by Brennan (1992). The main technical problem was that the pilot study questionnaire was distributed using Microsoft Office 2007 format, but most students were using Microsoft Office 1997-2003, which was incompatible. The questionnaire had to be redistributed in the older

format before the students could respond. The responses indicated that the students understood the questions. Minor changes were made to the Arabic wording, with the help of Arabic linguists, since all of the students preferred to answer the Arabic and not the English questionnaire. The responses to the pilot study were from a relatively small number of students, and were not considered to adequately represent the views of the target population. The implications were that a larger sample size was necessary to represent all sectors of the population. Consequently, the responses to the pilot study questionnaire were not analysed. They were combined with those of the main study to ensure a larger and more reliable sample.

3.7.3 Main study questionnaire

The revised questionnaires for the main study were first administered in July 2009 when I was in the UK. I was therefore not personally responsible for the distribution of the instrument. With the help of personal contacts at KAU, over 200 questionnaires were distributed for the 2008-2009 academic year. 152 questionnaires were returned. The distribution was repeated later in 2009 for the 2009-10 academic year, resulting in a total of 240 completed questionnaires (25 from the pilot study and 215 from the main study). Samples from different academic years were considered beneficial to elicit the perceptions of students across different cohorts. The discrepancy between the response rates in the three samples was associated with the different methods of administration. The response rate was low when questionnaires were distributed to students online with the help of teachers and the distance learning deanship. The response rate was higher when the questionnaires

were distributed with the help of personal contacts to students during their final exams at the end of the year.

47.9% of the 240 study responses were from males and 52.1% from females. The sex ratio of the respondents in the main study was approximately 1:1 so it was not skewed towards one specific gender. The design of the questionnaire took into account the recommendations of McDonough & McDonough (1997) with respect to its short length, consisting of 45 questions in 2 pages. The following considerations were also applied with respect to each of the items in the questionnaire (from Mertens, 1998). My name and address was provided, and the purpose was outlined. Brief instructions to complete the questionnaire were included, and respondents were assured that their replies were anonymous. The purpose of each item was considered with reference to the research questions. Responses using Likert scales were included to facilitate quantitative analysis. The items were short, clear, and straight forward with simple easy wording. Negative wording, sensitive topics, and threatening questions were avoided. The items were numbered, grouped and organized into a logical sequence. The questionnaire began with simple general items about the demographic characteristics of the respondents before specific items about the WBDL programme. The purposes of the items, grouped into a logical sequence, are outlined in Table 3.3. The correspondence between the questionnaire items and the research questions are outlined in Table 3.4.

Table 3.3 Purposes of the questionnaire items

Items	Purpose of items
1-6	To collect factual information about the demographic characteristics of the respondents (time of joining the WBDL programme, sex, age, major, occupation, and place of residence).
7-12	To collect background information concerning the respondents' previous experience using computers and the Internet, and attendance at e-learning courses
13-15	To elicit the respondents' perceptions concerning the opportunities of the WBDL programme (whether it is the best way to learn English, whether or not there is confidence in the programme, and the aspects that are most liked).
16	To elicit the respondents' perceptions concerning the constraints of the WBDL programme (the aspects that are most disliked).
17-21	To collect factual information about the respondents' use of the WBDL programme (where, when, and how it was used).
22-23	To elicit the respondents' perceptions about the quality of the course website.
24-30	To elicit the respondents' perceptions about the usefulness of various aspects of the WBDL programme with respect to learning English as a foreign language.
31-45	To elicit the perceptions of the respondents (using a Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) about the opportunities and constraints of the WBDL programme, with respect to the use of computers and the organisation, delivery, and effectiveness of the programme.

Table 3.4 Correspondence between research questions and items

Research question	Corresponding questionnaire items
<i>RQ#1: How do both the teachers and learners at KAU use the new WBDL programme in practice?</i>	17-21 To collect factual information about the learners' use of the WBDL programme (where, when, and how it was used).
<i>RQ#2: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the opportunities afforded by the new WBDL programme (i.e., the attributes of the programme that are most helpful in achieving its educational objectives)?</i>	13-15 To elicit the learners' perceptions concerning the opportunities of the WBDL programme (whether it is the best way to learn English, whether or not there is confidence in the programme, and the aspects that are most liked). 24-30 To elicit the learners' perceptions about the usefulness of various aspects of the WBDL programme with respect to learning English as a foreign language. 37-45 To elicit the learners' perceptions (using a Likert scale) about the opportunities of the WBDL programme.
<i>RQ#3: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the constraints of the new WBDL programme (i.e., the attributes of the programme that generally prevent or limit the achievement of its educational objectives)?</i>	16 To elicit the learners' perceptions concerning the constraints of the WBDL programme (the aspects that are most disliked). 31-36 To elicit the learners' perceptions (using a Likert scale) about the constraints of the WBDL programme.

The closed answers required a choice of 1 from 5 options, or a dichotomous (yes or no) response. Closed responses were advantageous because the items could be answered rapidly. In contrast, open-ended questions that required long answers may have caused fatigue and/or be ignored. In addition, the compilation of closed responses could be carried out more quickly and efficiently than if open ended questions had been used (McDonough & McDonough, 1997; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). The response

variables were coded numerically with integers between 1 and 5, and entered into the SPSS data editor as categorical variables measured at the nominal or ordinal level (see Appendix I B).

3.7.4 Analysis of questionnaire responses

The statistical analysis methods included descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 17.0 following the instructions in Field (2009). Frequency tables were constructed to analyze the distributions of the questionnaire item scores. Medians were used as descriptive statistics to compare item scores ranging from 1 to 5 measured at the ordinal level.

Cross-tabulation is the construction of a table of frequencies in which one category is represented in the rows and another category is represented in the columns. Association is defined as the extent to which the two categorical variables in the cross-tabulation depend upon or co-vary with respect to each other (Agresti, 2007). Cramer's V coefficients were computed to measure the strengths of the associations between cross-tabulated variables (Field, 2009).

3.8 Interviews

The purpose of obtaining information by interviews was to address the research questions at the level of individual teachers and learners, to provide a multi-perspectival view of the WBDL programme. The advantage of interviews relative to questionnaires was that they permitted me to develop a rapport with each respondent and to assist him/her to answer, for example by clarifying questions and encouraging discussion. The disadvantage of interviews relative to questionnaires from the point of view of administering the research was that the data collection time was longer, so the number of respondents that could be physically contacted in a given amount of time was less (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). Validity issues were also implicated, since the lack of anonymity may have resulted in respondents providing false answers, e.g., because they had personal feelings to hide, or they were sensitive issues that they did not want to share (Mertens, 1998). Although it is very easy to record what people actually say at one moment in time, it is much more difficult to interpret their underlying feelings, thoughts, and intentions, or what they felt, thought, and intended at a previous moment in time. Also it is not always easy to extract from spoken words exactly how people organize their thoughts about situations in their own mind, and the meanings and perceptions they attach to situations (Patton, 1980).

3.8.1 Interview questions

If an interview is unstructured, the researcher may control or lead the flow of information, so that the respondent may provide biased answers. If the researcher does not effectively control the discussion, the interview may

digress from answering the research questions. Consequently, I used a structured interview, with a verbal questionnaire approach, as the most effective way to elicit specific items of detailed information from the respondents. The other advantage of a structured interview is that it provides information that can be compared and contrasted with information from other instruments employed in the same case study, e.g. from a questionnaire (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). In this study, I adopted the methods recommended by Merriam (1998) for conducting structured telephone interviews. Use of telephone interviews with the teachers at KAU was obligatory, since I was working in the UK and the respondents were in KSA. An electronic voice recorder was used to record everything that was said at each interview, and to archive the recorded information. In addition, notes were written down during the interview to record specific points of interest. In-depth telephone interviews were conducted with four teachers (three males and one female, two were Indians and two were Egyptians). After calling each teacher individually, I arranged the most convenient time to call back and conduct the interview for about one hour. Before starting the interview I informed the teacher that a personal voice recorder was in use, but that in order to protect their privacy, no other person would listen to the interview.

The 23 structured questions that I asked the teachers by telephone were organised systematically into Sections A, B, C, D, E, and F (Appendix II). The disadvantage of using structured questions was that the respondents were forced to fit their experiences and perceptions into my categories, which limited their choices of what information they could provide; nevertheless the advantages of providing simple responses which could be easily aggregated

and interpreted in order to answer the research questions was considered to outweigh the disadvantages. The structured interview questions directly addressed one or more of the research questions with respect to the behaviours and perceptions of the teachers, but not the students. The correspondence between the research questions and the structured interview items that aimed to answer the research questions is outlined in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Correspondence between research questions and teacher interviews

Research question	Corresponding interview questions
<i>RQ#1: How do both the teachers and learners at KAU use the new WBDL programme in practice?</i>	A) 1, 2 B) 4, 6 C) 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 E) 20, 21
<i>RQ#2: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the opportunities afforded by the new WBDL programme</i>	A) 3 B) 5 D) 13 E) 16, 17,
<i>RQ#3: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the constraints of the new WBDL programme</i>	D) 14 E) 16, 18, 19,

Phone and online interviews were also conducted with eight students during the period of field-work at KAU in November to December 2009. Many students were asked, but most refused to be interviewed. The 19 questions that I asked the students are listed in Appendix III. The questions directly addressed one or more of the research questions with respect to the perceptions of the students, but not the teachers (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6 Correspondence between research questions and student interviews

Research question	Corresponding s interview questions
<i>RQ#1: How do both the teachers and learners at KAU use the new WBDL programme in practice?</i>	2, 6, 10, 13, 18,
<i>RQ#2: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the opportunities afforded by the new WBDL programme</i>	3, 9, 12
<i>RQ#3: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the constraints of the new WBDL programme</i>	1, 4, 5, 7, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19,

3.8.2 Analysis of interview responses

The electronically recorded interviews with four teachers (named T1 to T4) and 8 students (named S1 to S8) were conducted mainly in Arabic. The Arabic responses were translated into English and transcribed into a Word document. An Arabic-English dictionary was used for clarification when necessary. If a response was misheard or misunderstood, then it was replayed to ensure the translation was as accurate as possible.

The protocols for content analysis described by Fraenkel & Wallen (2007) which are widely used by educational researchers were applied. The essential feature of the content analysis was that a direct link was established between information provided at the interviews and the research questions. Content analysis was applied to classify a transcript of the interview responses into pre-determined categories. These categories were: (a) Descriptive information about the teachers' and learners' use of the WBDL

programme in practice (to address RQ#1); (b) The teachers' and learners' perceptions concerning the opportunities afforded by the WBDL programme (to address RQ#2); (c) The teachers' and learners' perceptions concerning the constraints afforded by the WBDL programme (to address RQ#3). The units of the content analysis were individual verbatim sentences or phrases that could be classified into one of the four predetermined categories. The information classified into each category was analyzed interpretively, using judgments based on the manifest or latent meaning of the sentences, in order to formulate answers to the research questions.

The responses of the teachers and students were aggregated because the research questions explicitly stated that the participants were "both the teachers and learners at KAU". The responses of the teachers and the students referred to one WBDL programme and they could not logically be disconnected. Although the teachers and students looked at the programme through different lenses, their focal point was the same.

A classification scheme was developed to code each recorded phrase, sentence or paragraph into a generic and a specific level. The generic level or theme was one of the three research questions which the sentence or paragraph was perceived to answer. The research questions had already been identified before the interviews were conducted. Therefore the generic classification was a top-down, deductive, or *a priori* approach. In contrast, the specific levels or sub-themes within each theme were determined using a bottom-up, inductive, or *a posteriori* approach. The sub-themes were unknown before the start of the analysis. Each sub-theme was determined by pre-viewing all the responses within each theme. Responses that consistently

reflected a sub-theme were then selected and grouped together. For the initial generic level of classification, each sentence or paragraph was initially coded with RQ1, RQ2, or RQ3 to identify the corresponding research question. For the specific level of classification, each sentence or paragraph was sub-coded with a letter of the alphabet, e.g. RQ1a, RQ1b, RQ1c, etc., to identify the sub-theme (see Appendix IV).

3.9 Observations of online classes

The advantage of observing events in a naturalistic setting is that essential truths about a social situation can be revealed that may be completely missed by other types of methodology (Bernard, 2000; Babbie, 2009). Questionnaires and interviews depend entirely on the knowledge and perceptions of the respondents regarding what they think happens, or what did happen, or what might happen in the future, and the researcher has to assume that the respondents provide valid and reliable information. Unfortunately, the respondents' information may not be valid or reliable, for several reasons, including non-response errors, self-selection bias, response bias, and deliberate falsification or misrepresentation (Bernard, 2000). By observing the online classes at first hand I was empowered to experience the events that respondents could only write about in a questionnaire or talk about at an interview. I was able to collect rich information including nuances and subtleties that could be missed by other methodologies. Fraenkel & Wallen (2007:523) emphasized that the main strength of observations made in natural classroom settings was that "it provides the researcher with a much more comprehensive perspective than do other forms of educational research". Consequently, an essential component of this case study was to

observe the online classes to complement the information obtained using survey methods.

Fraenkel and Wallen (2007:516) pointed out that researchers using qualitative research methodologies in educational settings rarely describe in detail how they record their observations, stating “Unfortunately this remains a major problem” and “...hence it is often difficult to determine the reliability of the observations”. They also suggested (2007:524) that “there is usually no way to check the validity of the conclusions” and “observer bias is almost impossible to eliminate”. For this reason, the methods developed to record the observations of the online classes in this study are described in detail.

3.9.1 Analysis of observations

The observations of a sample of online classes aimed to provide rich information to address the research question “RQ#1: *How do both the teachers and learners at KAU use the new WBDL programme in practice*”. The general aim of the observations was (a) To provide a detailed factual description or portrayal of the events that took place in the online classes, with emphasis given to what was taught (i.e. the objectives, topics, contents, and skills learnt) how it was taught (i.e., the pedagogic and affective strategies implemented by the teachers) and the types of technical problems experienced; (b) To classify, code and interpret these events; and (c) To construct a “holistic cultural portrait” or “big picture” (Creswell, 2002:60) implying a pulling together of the observations in all their complexity. The observations were not underpinned by the testing of hypotheses, since the observed events in the online classes could not be predicted in advance. The

interpretivist approach to analyzing the events was based on the general concepts of a holistic and emic perspective, contextualization, a thick description, and non-judgmental orientation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). A holistic perspective demanded that I interpreted the observed events with reference to the cultural dimension of the participants. Emic refers to the qualitative analysis of human behaviour from the point of view of someone who understands their culture, i.e. an insider's view, as opposed to an etic perspective, i.e., an outsider's view, which should be culturally neutral (Headland et al., 1990). Contextualization implied that I interpreted the observations in a broader context i.e., with respect to the educational environment outside the online classrooms, specifically the teaching and administration of WBDL courses at KAU and e-learning schemes in general. A thick description involved reporting detailed observations, and implied the inclusion of quotations from the participants and copies of the field notes I wrote at the time of the observations. An attempt was made to ensure that everything observed was accurately portrayed, interpreted and reported, so that the online classes would come alive for the reader of this dissertation. Non-judgmental orientation required me to be impartial and refrain from using biased or distorted personal value judgments. The validity of the collected information depended on my own integrity to observe and record events accurately, and so it was essential to be self-critical and implement a protocol that avoided observer bias.

3.9.2 Pilot study observations

Before carrying out the main study observations at KAU a pilot study was conducted in a live classroom with one of my supervisors. The purpose was to

test and develop appropriate methods before conducting the main study. A live class was observed for one hour and different types of observation sheet and check list was tested.

3.9.3 Reflections on the pilot study observations

I found that the use of a pro-forma or template to record observations was difficult and time consuming. The best method was to write detailed field notes every two minutes on a blank sheet of paper. It was, however, found useful to complete a check list (Appendix V) at a later time, whilst reviewing the field notes, to provide a summary of the observations made in each class.

Bernard (1994) suggested that three types of field notes are written by social scientists: field jottings, a field diary, and a field log. Field jottings are simple quick notes which can be expanded later. A field log is a running account of how researchers plan to spend their time in the future and how they actually spent it in reality. A field diary is a personal record of feelings, opinions, and perceptions. The field notes written in this study did not comply with Bernard's classification. My field notes were similar to those defined by Fraenkel & Wallen (2007:516) as "detailed notes researchers take in the educational setting (classroom or school) as they observe what is going on. They are the researcher's written account of what they hear, see, experience, and think..." The field notes written for the purpose of this study did not include interpretation of the observed events, and were not, unlike the responses to the questionnaires and interviews, concerned with the perceptions of the teachers or the students. The field notes were not reflective, i.e., they did not mention what I was thinking about at the time of the observations. The field

notes were purely descriptive. They recorded only factual information, including the reconstruction of the online dialogue between the teachers and the students, accounts of observed events, and summaries of what happened, at the time that they happened.

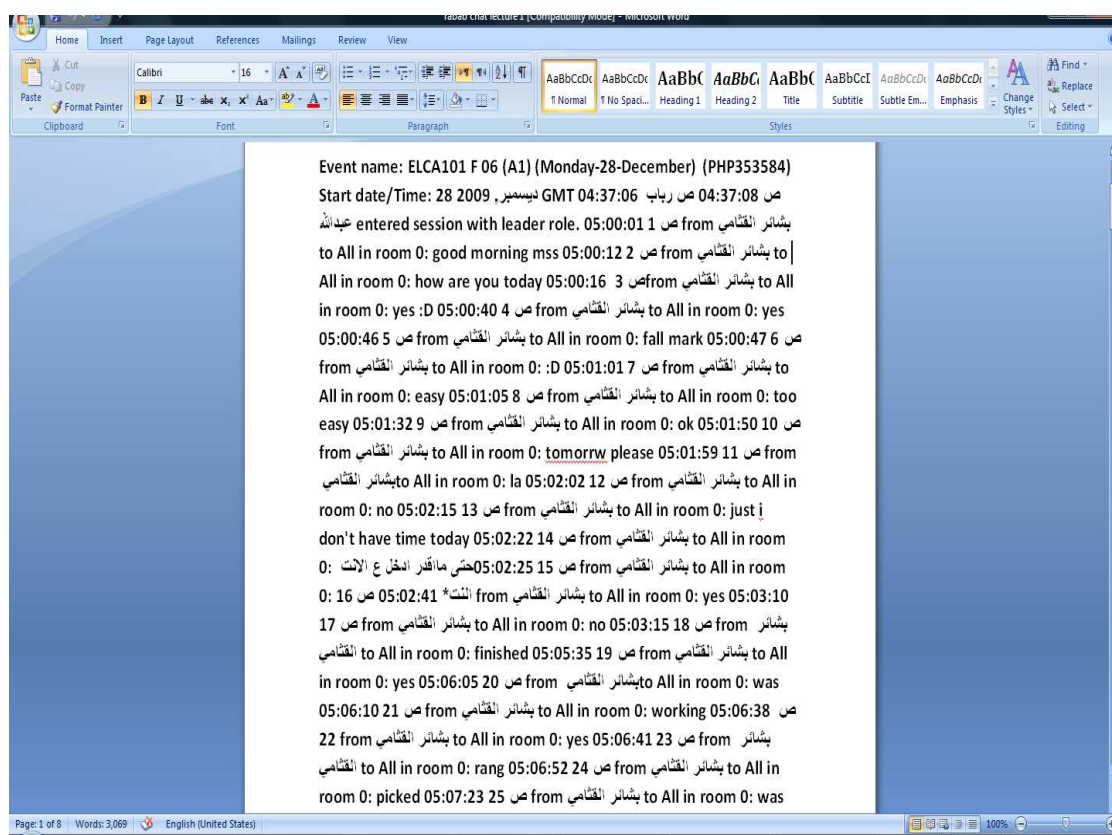
3.9.4 Access to the system

The research programme was delayed because online access to the system was not initially given, since I did not have a schedule to teach and was not enrolled as a student at KAU. After contacting admissions, deanship and other staff at KAU, the teachers were approached for permission to use their usernames and passwords. The teachers were initially hesitant to provide their account details but cooperated after they were assured that they were not being judged, and that the research aimed only to observe technical issues and the relationships amongst students and teachers. Another delay was experienced because the KAU computer system went down after the floods in Jeddah on 25th November 2009. The system returned on the 8th December but with access problems. On 25th December the WBDL website could not be displayed. When access was obtained on 26th December, all the previous recorded lectures were erased. Despite these problems, 30 online classes conducted by two male teachers and one female teacher held between 18th October 2009 and 1st February 2010 were observed. The original intention was to observe more classes and teachers; however, because of limited time and technical problems, it was possible to observe only 30 classes and 3 teachers. All the classes were for students in their foundation year, which is divided into two main sections (majors), Arts and

Economics. All the students had passed their preparatory year of general subjects, including English, Arabic, Computer Skills, and Islamic Culture.

The role I played was that of a passive onlooker, and not a participant in the online classes. The students did not know that observations were being made. Permission was obtained from the teachers to access the system, using their usernames and passwords, in order to observe the recorded classes. It was impossible to observe the online classes in real time because only one person could access the system. It was not possible to log in when the teacher was online, because the teacher would get disconnected. The system was accessed to make the observations only during the night (after midnight, Saudi time) when no live online classes were being conducted. Observing the recorded classes had the advantage that the recordings could be paused or fast-forwarded, so that a missing or misunderstood word or sentence could be reviewed. The disadvantage was that the recorded classes could not be downloaded to a computer, or uploaded to an MP3 player or iPod. Also, it was not possible to rewind the recordings. The rewind button returned the recording back to the beginning, which caused frustration. The online classes did not have a specific subject or title referring to the name of each class. It was frustrating and time consuming to work through each recording one by one in order to find a certain class. It was not possible to view the online chats between the teachers and the students in the recordings, but the chats could be viewed in the reports sections. The chat file was saved to the system as a note pad, and pasted into a Word document (an example is given in Figure 3.2); however, it was difficult to read the text, because of all the timestamps displayed every few seconds.

Figure 3.2 Example of online chat saved as a Word document



3.9.5 Content analysis of field notes

The field notes were typed into a Word document and a content analysis of the transcript was performed. The contents of the field notes were analyzed individually, reading them phrase by phrase, sentence by sentence, and writing an appropriate code next to each phrase or sentence. This open-ended method was found to be much more useful than using any kind of proforma, template, observation sheet, or check-list.

A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the information recorded in the field notes was performed, using a broad focus to obtain a holistic view of the observed events. The observed events were classified into different

categories, as follows: (1) The date, time, duration, and student attendance at the online classes; (2) The objectives of each online class; (3) The topic areas, specific contents, and skills learnt in each online class; (4) The structure and organization of the online classes; (5) The frequencies of specified categories of behaviour of the teachers and the students during the online classes; and (6) The frequencies of technical problems experienced during the online classes.

The behaviour of the teachers and the students in the online classes was difficult to classify. Several coding schemes have been devised and used by other researchers to classify interactions between teachers and learners in natural classroom settings. These codes are tallied to facilitate analysis of the frequencies at which different types of behaviour are observed. Several schemes were reviewed for the purposes of this study. Amidon & Haugh (1967) divided student-teacher interactions into teacher talk and student talk. Teacher talk was classified into 10 codes recording the indirect influence of the teacher. Flanders (1970) devised an instrument to determine how much time was devoted to teacher talk and how much time was devoted to student talk. The outcome was the two thirds rule, which says that about two-thirds of classroom time is devoted to talking. The person talking is the teacher for about two-thirds of the talking time, whilst about two-thirds of the teachers' talk is directed talk. Walberg (1986) coded seven key elements necessary for effective teaching, namely engaged academic learning time, use of positive reinforcement, cooperative learning activities, positive class atmosphere, higher-order questioning, cues and feedback, and use of advance organizers. Heron (1989) identified six categories of intervention between students and

teachers. The first three categories, that reflect an authoritative style of teaching, are (1) prescriptive (giving advice, directions and instructions to the students), (2) informative (providing factual information to the students), and (3) confronting (challenging the views of the students). The next three categories, that reflect a facilitative style of teaching, are (4) cathartic (releasing tension in the students, e.g. by laughter), (5) catalytic (reflecting, asking questions, or drawing out information from the students), and (6) supportive (encouraging students to generally discuss their views without criticism, and approving their answers to questions).

None of the previously used schemes was, however, found to be fit for the purpose of analyzing the patterns of behaviour of the participants in the online classes, or for addressing the question of how both the teachers and learners at KAU used the WBDL programme in practice. The reason for not employing or adapting other schemes was that they were formulated manifestly to evaluate verbal interactions in F2F teaching situations. Coding schemes based on observations of teacher talk and student talk could not, however, be justified for evaluating the patterns of behaviour of the teachers and students in the online classes because the observed interactions were clearly not F2F. Some interactions were not entirely verbal (e.g., the use of online chat symbols) and therefore focusing only on conversation was inappropriate. It was considered that a different method of classification was necessary to categorize and analyze the patterns of behaviour and other events that were peculiar to participants operating in an e-learning environment. Emphasis was given to the pedagogic and affective strategies used by the WBDL teachers, the typical types of student behaviour observed in the e-learning situation, and

the technical problems experienced by both the teachers and students. A series of colour and numerical codes were used to identify different types of behaviour and technical issues (see Appendix VI).

3.10 Reliability

Reliability in the context of social science is a measure of the extent to which a construct is consistently measured by an instrument (Hogan et al., 2000). A construct is a unifying theme or concept concerning the behaviours, experiences, and/or perceptions of respondents that can be extracted from the participants' responses. This study focussed on two constructs, specifically "opportunities" and "constraints" integrated into the research questions and title of this dissertation. The aim of reliability analysis is to estimate the internal consistency and uniformity of numerically coded questionnaire responses with respect to the measurement of the defined construct(s). Reliability analysis indicates how well the items hang together, how much they inter-correlate, and how precisely one or more groups of items tap the same latent unifying construct(s).

Reliability analysis was performed to determine if the questionnaire items consistently measured and identified two constructs. The reliability of the "constraints" construct was estimated by computing Cronbach's *alpha* for item 31 (lack of student confidence) item 33 (time consuming use of computers); items 34 and 35 (complications and technical problems) and Item 36 (insufficient understanding of English terminology). The reliability of the "opportunities" construct was estimated by computing Cronbach's *alpha* for items 32 (computers are useful aids to learning); 39 (building relationships) 40

and 41 (increasing numbers of students) 42 (more effective interaction) 43 (more guidance, discussion, and questions) 44 (improvement in English learning relative to secondary school) and 45 (useful and effective e-learning of English skills). The results (table 3.7) indicated that the constructs of constraints and opportunities were reliably measured by the questionnaire items. Cronbach's *alpha* exceeded the threshold level of .7 which is conventionally applied to indicate an adequate level of internal consistency reliability (Cronbach & Shavelson, 2004).

Table 3.7 Reliability analysis of questionnaire items

Construct	Items	Cronbach's <i>alpha</i>
Constraints	31 lack of confidence	.716
	33 time consuming	
	34 complications	
	35 technical problems	
	36 insufficient understanding	
Opportunities	32 computers are useful aids	.934
	39 building relationships	
	40 & 41 increasing students	
	42 more effective interaction	
	43 more guidance	
	44 improvement in English learning	
	45 useful and effective	

3.11 Validity

Validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, correctness, and usefulness of the instruments used in social science research, and the warranty of information collected and inferred from such instruments. Validity is a multi-dimensional concept. It is essential to consider content validity,

criterion validity, construct validity, external validity, and internal validity when conducting educational research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007).

Content validity refers to the structure and substance of an instrument, and considers if the items and format are appropriate to address specified research questions. A pilot study was therefore essential to develop the content validity of the questionnaire used in this research. Criterion related validity refers to whether or not the information obtained using one instrument concurs with the information obtained using another instrument. In this study criterion related validity was tested by triangulation, i.e., by comparing and contrasting information collected by the use of questionnaires, interviews, and observations of online classes. Construct related validity refers to the extent to which the constructs being measured by an instrument accurately explain the real behaviour and/or perceptions of people. Although a construct may be reliably measured (e.g., using Cronbach's *alpha*) this does not necessarily imply that the construct is valid. For example, several respondents may provide similar inaccurate answers to questions (Mertens, 1998). Such answers may collectively be reliable, but nevertheless, their inaccuracy invalidates the construct under investigation. I attempted to ensure construct validity in this study by providing as much evidence as possible using a mixed method approach to explore the constructs of opportunities and constraints with respect to the WBDL programme at KAU from multiple perspectives.

External validity is the extent to which information can be extrapolated or generalized from the sample to the population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). One criticism of case study methodology is that its dependence on a single

situation of interest may render the results incapable of generalization to other cases, and so the conclusions may have local significance but do not have any external validity (Yin, 1994). Nevertheless, I believe that the results of this study may still be of value outside KAU, since the research questions are relevant to all teachers developing or implementing WBDL courses in English language.

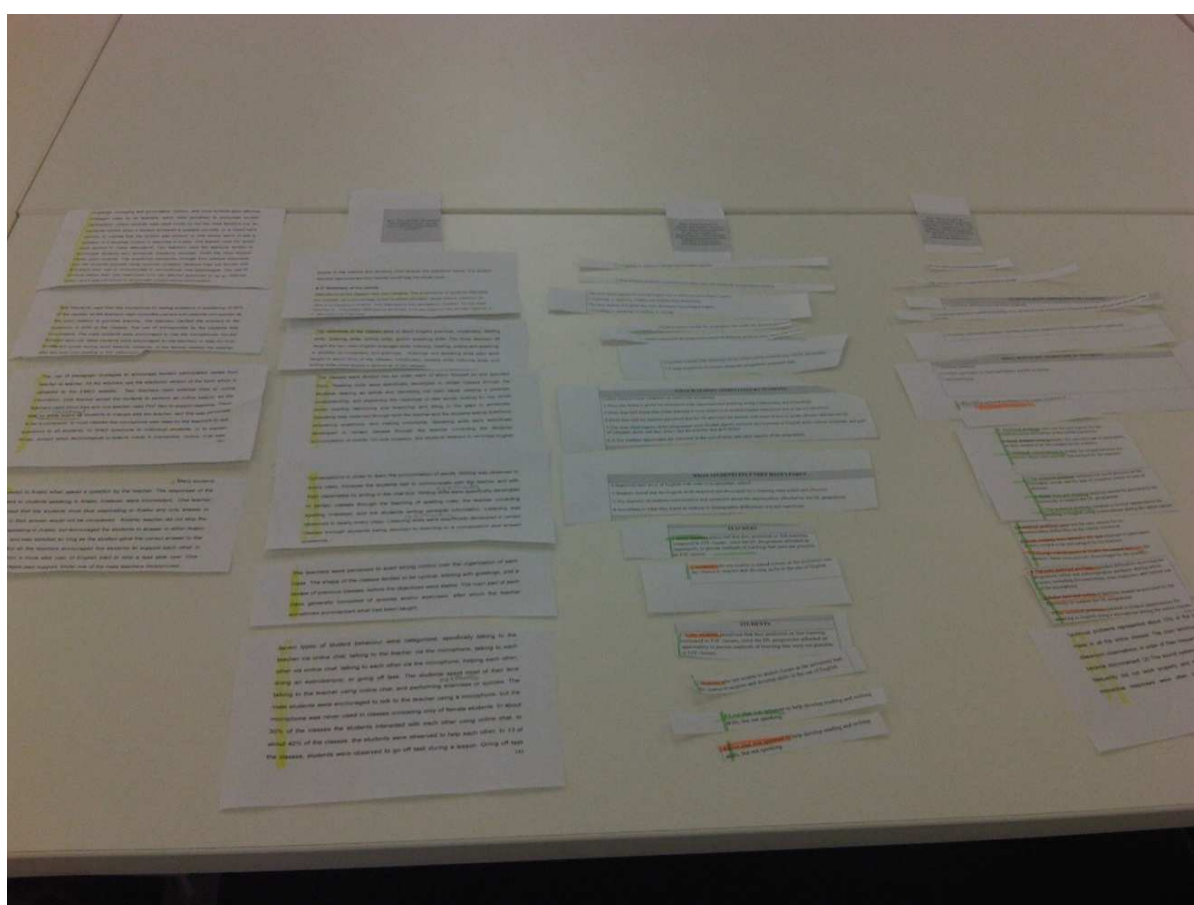
3.12 Triangulation

Triangulation, involves comparing and contrasting information derived from multiple sources (Denzin, 1997). With respect to research in education, triangulation usually requires two or more research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). Triangulation is generally used to overcome the weaknesses and biases which may arise from the use of only one method. If the findings obtained using different methods lead to consistent outcomes then the outcomes are more likely to be credible; however, different sources of qualitative information are not necessarily equivalent, since what respondents say they do is not necessarily the same as what they do in reality. Contrasting findings should not be missed, since they are equally as important as consistency (Denzin, 1997).

The triangulation strategy used in this study was to categorize each stakeholder and to compare the information collected from each. The stakeholders were the students (whose perceptions were elicited using questionnaires and interviews); the teachers (whose perceptions were elicited using interviews) and myself (whose perceptions were derived from observations of online classes). Triangulation involved colour coding each

section of text describing the perceptions of each stakeholder, green for teachers, orange for students, and yellow for my observations (Figure 3.3). Each section of text was cut out and attributed to one of the three research questions. After the sections had been classified it was possible to compare and contrast directly the information obtained from the teachers, the students, and my observations.

Figure 3.3 Example of triangulation by colour coding of text



For example, comparison of the responses to the questionnaire, the interviews, and my observations revealed inconsistencies amongst and between the sources regarding the acquisition and development of different types of English language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) during the online classes (see pages 210-211). Triangulation revealed very

consistent agreements between the students' and the teachers' perceptions regarding the opportunities afforded by e-learning at KAU (see page 223).

3.13 Ethical issues

Since the study took place at a well-known institution, it was important that I obtained formal permission from the administration before carrying out field work.

When making ethical considerations, confidentiality of the participants is an important issue. A consent form was attached to the questionnaire which assured participants that their confidentiality would be respected and that their anonymity was assured. The participants were asked to indicate their gender and year of study, but were not required to identify themselves in any other way. They also received assurances that their responses would only be used for legitimate research purposes, and that by returning the completed questionnaires, it would be understood that they thereby agreed to take part in the study.

Additional ethical considerations were necessary to take the cultural dimensions of the Arab world into consideration. According to Hofstede (2001; 2009) these include loyalty to the in-group, gender role differentiation, aversion to expressing themselves as unique individuals, and low tolerance towards taking risks. Since I am a Saudi, I was sensitive to these cultural dimensions from an emic or insider perspective.

All students were given the opportunity to answer the questionnaire in Arabic or English. They all avoided the risk of responding in English and preferred to

answer the questionnaire in Arabic. Similarly, the interviews were conducted mainly in Arabic. The questionnaire and interview responses were translated from Arabic into English. Different patterns of thought and linguistic devices are known to give rise to communicative as well as textual problems in the translation of Arabic to English (Shiyab, 2006). An English translation can only approximate certain patterns of thought and linguistic devices that are indigenous to Arabic. There is a possibility, therefore, that the English translations may not have accounted for all the potentialities of meaning or conveyed the totality of the messages embedded in the Arabic responses.

Some Saudi females are very conservative, and are reserved about offering personal opinions, especially in front of males, which is a family tradition in KSA. During the recorded interviews, I had to assure the female teachers and students that no males would hear them. This ensured that they felt comfortable and relaxed enough to speak freely.

The teachers made me aware that they felt very uncomfortable about any kind of external assessment of their activities. The teachers hesitated before they permitted me to observe their classes, and kept asking exactly what was being observed. The teachers had to be constantly reassured that I was not there to judge the quality of their work, but only to observe student-teacher interactions and to identify technical problems and other constraints.

The students were extremely reluctant to discuss their own learning experiences. Some of the interviewed students asked several times if anyone would discover their identities. I had to reassure the students they were not being personally evaluated and that their replies were completely anonymous.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 General introduction

This chapter presents the results of the case study. It begins (4.2) with the responses to the questionnaire, describing the demographic characteristics of the students, and their use of computers and the Internet, before describing and interpreting their perceptions about the WBDL programme. The second section (4.3) presents the results of the qualitative analysis of information recorded in interviews with students and teachers. The final section (4.4) interprets the observations made in the online classes.

4.2 Questionnaire

The demographic characteristics, the use of computers and the Internet, and the perceptions of the respondents concerning the WBDL programme are described.

4.2.1 Demographic characteristics

The sample of 240 students included 115 males and 125 females. The majority (82.5%) were aged 20 or over (Table 4.1). Over a half (55.4%) were full time students, the others were students employed in private or public sectors (Table 4.2). 64.2% were degree majors in Economics and Administration and 46.8% in Arts and Humanities. 59.2% resided in Jeddah, and 40.8% came from outside Jeddah (Table 4.3).

Table 4.1 Cross-tabulation of gender and age

			Age (years)			Total
			17-19	20-22	23+	
Gender	Male	Frequency	11	39	65	115
		% of Total	4.6%	16.3%	27.1%	47.9%
	Female	Frequency	31	53	41	125
		% of Total	12.9%	22.1%	17.1%	52.1%
Total	Frequency		42	92	106	240
	% of Total		17.5%	38.3%	44.2%	100.0%

Table 4.2 Cross tabulation of gender and occupation

			Occupation			Total
			Full time student	Student & private sector employee	Student & public sector employee	
Gender	Male	Frequency	32	46	37	115
		% of Total	13.3%	19.2%	15.4%	47.9%
	Female	Frequency	101	14	10	125
		% of Total	42.1%	5.8%	4.2%	52.1%
Total	Frequency		133	60	47	240
	% of Total		55.4%	25.0%	19.6%	100.0%

Table 4.3 Cross tabulation of the major and place of residence

			Place of residence		
			Jeddah	Outside Jeddah	Total
Major	Arts & Humanities	Frequency	40	46	86
		% of Total	16.7%	19.2%	35.8%
	Economics & Administration	Frequency	102	52	154
		% of Total	42.5%	21.7%	64.2%
	Total	Frequency	142	98	240
		% of Total	59.2%	40.8%	100.0%

The cross-tabulations (Tables 4.1 to 4.3) indicated that the sample included male and female students, full time and employed students, majoring in different degrees, living in and outside Jeddah. No specific group of students appeared to be over-represented or under-represented. The sample was not skewed towards any particular demographic category. This analysis fulfilled the requirement to provide evidence that the sample included respondents from all or most demographic sectors of the target population, and not just a selective fraction.

4.2.2 Use of ICT

The majority (89.2%) of the respondents replied that they had not pursued an online course before. Most (60.0%) thought that a combination of both distance learning and the traditional F2F classroom was best when learning English, but only 15.4% perceived that distance learning was the best. The learners had good access to ICT. Nearly all (95.4%) of the students had personal access to an Internet connection. 50% owned both a laptop and a

personal computer and also had personal Internet access. Only 2 students did not own either a laptop or personal computer or have personal access to the Internet (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Cross-tabulation of computer ownership and Internet connection

			Internet connection		
			No	Yes	Total
Computer ownership	None	Frequency	2	5	7
		% of Total	.8%	2.1%	2.9%
	Personal computer	Frequency	4	27	31
		% of Total	1.7%	11.3%	12.9%
	Laptop computer	Frequency	3	77	80
		% of Total	1.3%	32.1%	33.3%
	Laptop & personal computer	Frequency	2	120	122
		% of Total	.8%	50.0%	50.8%
	Total	Count	11	229	240
		% of Total	4.6%	95.4%	100.0%

82.5% of the respondents used a broadband (DSL) connection and 14.6% used 3G. Less than 1% used dial-up, or USB, or had no personal Internet access. The four possible responses to item 11 in the questionnaire asking about previous computer experience were “Less than average”, “Average”, “Above average, or “High experience”. The use of the term “average” was a subjective perception of each student’s own computer experience, relative to what they thought to be the norm. The levels of experience were variable.

5.8% responded “Less than average”, whilst 63.3% reported “Above average” or “High” (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Cross-tabulation of computer ownership and experience

			Level of computer experience				Total
			“Less than average”	“Average”	“Above average”	“High”	
Time on line per day	< 1 hour	Frequency	2	3	3	1	9
		% of Total	.8%	1.3%	1.3%	.4%	3.8%
	1 to < 3 hours	Frequency	3	21	20	14	58
		% of Total	1.3%	8.8%	8.3%	5.8%	24.2%
	3 to < 6 hours	Frequency	6	31	50	21	108
		% of Total	2.5%	12.9%	20.8%	8.8%	45.0%
	> 6 hours	Frequency	3	19	31	12	65
		% of Total	1.3%	7.9%	12.9%	5.0%	27.1%
Total		Frequency	14	74	104	48	240
		% of Total	5.8%	30.8%	43.3%	20.0%	100.0%

It was expected that students who had more computer experience would spend more time on line per day than those with less experience, but no correlation was observed. The time spent online per day varied from < 1 hour to > 6 hours. Less than half (45%) spent 3 to 6 hours per day on line. The 3.8% who spent < 1 hour on line and the 27.1% of who spent > 6 hours per

day online included learners from all four categories of computer experience (Table 4.5).

The majority (84.2%) of the respondents accessed the WBDL programme at home (Table 4.6). 35.4% used the programme in the morning and 41.3% in the evening. The afternoon was the time when the smallest proportion of students used the programme (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 Cross-tabulation of the place and time of use

Place			Time			Total
			Morning	Afternoon	Evening	
Place	Home	Frequency	76	47	79	202
		% of Total	31.7%	19.6%	32.9%	84.2%
	Work	Frequency	2	2	3	7
		% of Total	.8%	.8%	1.3%	2.9%
	Elsewhere	Frequency	6	5	15	26
		% of Total	2.5%	2.1%	6.3%	10.8%
	Home & elsewhere	Frequency	1	1	2	4
		% of Total	.4%	.4%	.8%	1.7%
	Work & elsewhere	Frequency	0	1	0	1
		% of Total	.0%	.4%	.0%	.4%
	Total	Frequency	85	56	99	240
		% of Total	35.4%	23.3%	41.3%	100.0%

4.2.3 Perceptions

The total numbers of “Yes” responses for selected items were tallied in order to identify which aspects of the programme were liked the most or liked the least. Since the respondents were permitted to provide more than one response, the total number of responses to each item was greater than 240. The tally of “Yes” answers for each selected item, as a percentage of the total number of “Yes” answers for all items was computed to facilitate relative comparisons. With respect to the most liked aspects, the responses were approximately evenly divided between development of English skills (25.1%) learner autonomy (24.2%) and gain of computer skills (22.3%). Practice and drill was not so highly liked (18.7%) and the reduction in the cost of study and other aspects were most liked by less than 10% of the responses (Table 4.7)

Table 4.7 Aspects of the programme that were liked the most

Liked the most	Tally of “Yes” responses	Percent
Development of English skills	82	25.1%
Learner autonomy	79	24.2%
Gain of computer skills	73	22.3%
Practice and drill	61	18.7%
Reduction of cost of study	20	6.1%
Others	12	3.7%
Total	327	100.0%

The aspect of the programme that was least liked by the students was technical problems, indicated by over half (58.8%) of the responses, followed

by no face-to-face interactions and reduction of social interaction by 30.6% (Table 4.8). Self motivation and other aspects were least liked by less than 11% of the responses.

Table 4.8 Aspects of the programme that were liked the least

Liked the least	Tally of "Yes" responses	Percent
Technical problems	188	58.8%
No face-to-face interaction	65	20.3%
Reduction of social interaction	33	10.3%
Self motivation	24	7.5%
Others	10	3.1%
Total	320	100.0%

33.1% of the responses indicated that online chatting was perceived to be of most use and benefit, with fewer responses for emails, forums and discussion groups, and least for FAQs and others (Table 4.9). When asked how they most liked to interact with other students, however, over half of the responses (53.2%) were for emails (Table 4.10). Live classrooms (Centra) were preferred in 45.0% of the responses, whilst 39.2% preferred independent study, and 15.8% preferred both (Table 4.11).

Table 4.9 Features that were of most use and benefit

Feature	Tally of “Yes” responses	Percent
Chatting	145	33.1%
Emails	118	26.9%
Forums & Discussion groups	99	22.6%
FAQs	59	13.5%
Others	17	3.9%
Total	438	100.0%

Table 4.10 Preferences for methods of interaction

Interaction	Tally of “Yes” answers	Percent
Emails	199	53.2%
Chat room	100	26.7%
Discussion groups	60	16.0%
Other	15	4.0%
Total	374	100.0%

Table 4.11 Preferences for Centra and/or EMES

Preferences	Tally of “Yes” responses	Percent
Live classrooms (Centra)	108	45.0%
Independent study (EMES)	94	39.2%
Both (Centra & EMES)	38	15.8%
Total	240	100.0%

The students were asked in item 25 if they found the programme useful for learning reading, listening, writing, and speaking (Table 4.12). The most frequent “Yes” responses were for listening (30.9%) followed by relatively equal percentages for speaking (24.9%) reading (22.8%) and writing (21.4%).

Table 4.12 Most useful skills

Skills	Tally of “Yes” responses	Percent
Listening	160	30.9%
Speaking	129	24.9%
Reading	118	22.8%
Writing	111	21.4%
Total	518	100.0%

They were asked in item 27 which aspects of English they had developed the most (Table 4.13). The most frequent responses were for listening (32.8%) followed by relatively equal percentages for speaking (24.3%) reading (20.8%) and writing (22.0%). Cramer’s V coefficient = .802 indicated a very strong correlation between the aspects of English that the students perceived to be the most useful, and the aspects of English they perceived to have developed the most. With respect to language content, 41.7% considered that online learning was useful for learning grammar, 34.6% perceived it was useful for learning vocabulary, and the remainder responded that it was useful for learning both grammar and vocabulary or had no opinion (Table 4.14)

Table 4.13 Aspects of English developed the most

Skills	Tally of "Yes" responses	Percent
Listening	112	32.8%
Speaking	83	24.3%
Writing	75	22.0%
Reading	71	20.8%
Total	341	100.0%

Table 4.14 Most useful language content

Content	Frequency	Percent
Grammar	100	41.7%
Vocabulary	83	34.6%
Grammar & vocabulary	49	20.4%
No opinion	8	3.3%
Total	240	100.0%

When asked about the course website, the majority of the students provided positive responses. Over two thirds (67.1%) of the respondents liked or strongly liked the layout of the website (Table 4.15) whilst 89.6% considered that the website was easy or very easy to access (Table 4.16).

Table 4.15 Layout of course website

Layout	Frequency	Percent
Like	115	47.9%
Strongly like	46	19.2%
Strongly dislike	45	18.8%
No opinion	29	12.1%
Dislike	5	2.1%
Total	240	100.0%

Table 4.16 Ease of access of course website

Ease of access	Frequency	Percent
Easy to access	153	63.8%
Very easy to access	62	25.8%
Difficult to access	24	10.0%
Very difficult to access	1	.4%
Total	240	100.0%

The responses to items 31 to 45 were numerically coded from 1 to 5. These responses are presented as frequency distributions (Tables 4.17 to 4.19). Since the scores were ordinal categories and not interval measurements the medians were appropriate to compare the responses to each item (Field, 2009). If the respondents tended to disagree with the item then the median score was less than 3. If the respondents tended to agree with the item then the median score was greater than 3.

Five items aimed to identify constraints. The median scores for item 31 (not confident about computer skills); item 33 (working with computers is time

consuming); item 34 (computers are too complicated); and item 35 (insufficient English terminology) were less than 3, indicating the tendency for the students to disagree (Table 4.17). The median score for item 35 (facing technical problems) was greater than 3, indicating the tendency for the students to agree.

Table 4.17 Items concerned with constraints

Item	1	2	3	4	5	Median
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	
31 Not confident about computer skills	45 (18.8%)	98 (40.8%)	59 (24.6%)	29 (12.1%)	9 (3.8%)	2.0
33 Working with computers is time-consuming	45 (18.8%)	127 (52.9%)	53 (22.1%)	10 (4.2%)	5 (2.1%)	2.0
34 Computers are too complicated	40 (16.7%)	127 (52.9%)	57 (23.8%)	12 (5.0%)	4 (1.7%)	2.0
35 Facing technical problems	41 (17.1%)	26 (31.3%)	36 (15.0%)	75 (31.3%)	62 (25.8%)	4.0
36 Insufficient specialist English terminology	62 (25.8%)	18 (7.5%)	65 (27.1%)	80 (33.3%)	15 (6.3%)	3.0

Over half of the respondents (59.6%) strongly disagreed or disagreed that they were not confident about their computer skills. Over two thirds of the respondents (71.7%) strongly disagreed or disagreed that working with

computers was time consuming. A similar proportion (69.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that computers were too complicated. Over a half (57.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that they faced technical problems, whilst 17.1% disagreed that they faced technical problems. Over a third of the students (39.6%) agreed that the specialist English terminology taught in the programme (e.g., technical words referring to computer hardware, software and the use of the Internet) was not sufficient. Evidence is provided to conclude that the most important constraint, agreed by over a half of the students, was facing technical problems. The theme of constraints was reliably measured, indicated by the Cronbach's alpha value of .716 for the responses to the five items (see Table 3.7).

Eight items aimed to identify opportunities. The median scores were all greater than 3, indicating a tendency for the respondents to agree with the items (Table 4.18). There was a strong agreement amongst the students that computers are a useful aid to learning. 85.9% of the respondents strongly agreed (61.7%) or agreed (24.2%) with this item. Over two thirds of the respondents (67.5%) strongly agreed or agreed that the programme promoted interaction with classmates and the building of strong relationships and friendships.

Table 4.18 Items concerned with opportunities

Item	1	2	3	4	5	Median
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	
32 Computers are a useful aid to learning	27 (11.3%)	3 (1.3%)	4 (1.7%)	58 (24.2%)	148 (61.7%)	5.0
39 Interaction with classmates and building strong relationships	47 (19.6%)	11 (4.6%)	20 (8.3%)	84 (35.0%)	78 (32.5%)	4.0
40 Expected increasing numbers of enrolled students	37 (15.4%)	6 (2.5%)	8 (3.3%)	78 (32.5%)	111 (46.3%)	4.0
41 Should be more KAU majors applying in the future	28 (11.7%)	1 (.4%)	3 (1.3%)	53 (22.1%)	155 (64.6%)	5.0
42 Allows a more effective interaction than face-to-face classes	43 (17.9%)	34 (14.2%)	34 (14.2%)	61 (25.4%)	68 (28.3%)	4.0
43 More chance for the teacher to guide, discuss, and answer questions	37 (15.4%)	12 (5.0%)	22 (9.2%)	115 (47.9%)	54 (22.5%)	4.0
44 Improved level of English relative to secondary school	48 (20.0%)	15 (6.3%)	28 (11.7%)	98 (40.8%)	51 (21.3%)	4.0
45 English skills obtained by e-learning are useful and effective	37 (15.4%)	12 (5.0%)	22 (9.2%)	115 (47.9%)	54 (22.5%)	4.0

Almost 80% of the respondents (78.8%) strongly agreed or agreed that they expected increasing numbers of enrolled students on the programme. An even higher proportion (86.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that there should be more KAU majors applying in the programme in the future. Over a half (53.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that the programme allowed a more

effective interaction than face-to-face classes. A higher proportion (70.45%) agreed or strongly agreed that the programme provided more chance for the teacher to guide, discuss, and answer questions. Nearly two thirds (62.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that the programme improved their level of English relative to secondary school. An even higher proportion (70.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that English skills obtained by e-learning were useful and effective. The median scores of 4.0 or 5.0 reflected the tendency of the respondents to agree or strongly agree with the items. Evidence is provided to conclude that a unifying theme of the responses was that the majority of students were positive and optimistic about the opportunities afforded by the programme. This theme was very reliably measured indicated by the Cronbach's alpha value of .934 for the eight items (see Table 3.7).

The remaining responses to the questionnaire addressed general questions concerning the delivery of the programme (Table 4.19). Over two thirds of the students (69.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that the teacher covered the objectives of the online course very well. An even higher proportion (73.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that the assignments presented during the course were clear. The median scores of 4.0 indicated that the students in general agreed that the objectives of the course and the assignments were well delivered by their teachers.

Table 4.19 Items concerned with delivery

Item	1	2	3	4	5	Median
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	
Teacher covered the objectives	40 (16.7%)	10 (4.2%)	23 (9.6%)	95 (39.6%)	72 (30.0%)	4.0
The assignments were clear	38 (15.8%)	8 (3.3%)	17 (7.1%)	101 (42.1%)	76 (31.7%)	4.0

4.2.4 Statistical association

It was expected that the responses to the questionnaire items would not be strongly associated with, dependent upon or systematically shaped by the demographic and other characteristics of the respondents (e.g., their sex, age, place of residence, computer experience, time online per day, type of Internet connection, degree major, and occupation). With respect to items 20 to 30 the Cramer's V coefficients for all but two of the items were less than 0.2, indicating little or no association (Table 4.20). Two cross-tabulations were weakly associated indicated by Cramer's $V = 0.24$ for item 25 (I find this method useful in learning the following skills: Speaking) versus sex, and Cramer's $V = 0.27$ for item 27 (Which aspect of English have you developed the most?:Speaking) versus sex. A higher proportion of male students than female students perceived that the programme was useful for learning speaking skills. A higher proportion of males than females perceived that speaking was the aspect of English that they developed the most.

Table 4.20 Cramer's V coefficients between questionnaire items and student characteristics

Item	Sex	Age	Residence	Experience	Time online	Internet Connection	Major	Occupation
20 Use Chat	0.15	0.07	0.16	0.10	0.08	0.11	0.00	0.12
20 Use Email	0.03	0.07	0.05	0.14	0.10	0.14	0.04	0.07
20 Use FAQs	0.09	0.15	0.10	0.08	0.11	0.11	0.04	0.11
20 Use Forums & Discussion	0.09	0.06	0.08	0.10	0.08	0.16	0.17	0.08
21 Prefer live classrooms	0.09	0.09	0.15	0.11	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.09
22 Layout of website	0.19	0.20	0.15	0.14	0.16	0.16	0.13	0.15
23 Access to website	0.10	0.12	0.06	0.13	0.10	0.13	0.06	0.16
24 Suitable level of English	0.04	0.07	0.03	0.13	0.15	0.16	0.07	0.10
25 Useful for Listening	0.02	0.08	0.05	0.14	0.11	0.13	0.07	0.09
25 Useful for Reading	0.12	0.14	0.07	0.16	0.08	0.11	0.08	0.14
25 Useful for Speaking	0.24	0.02	0.03	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.06	0.18
25 Useful for Writing	0.05	0.03	0.01	0.13	0.11	0.11	0.01	0.04
26 Useful for Grammar	0.18	0.15	0.00	0.09	0.17	0.10	0.07	0.17
26 Useful for Vocabulary	0.20	0.06	0.07	0.04	0.16	0.11	0.05	0.08
27 Listening most developed	0.03	0.09	0.03	0.07	0.10	0.14	0.02	0.08
27 Reading most developed	0.02	0.17	0.00	0.05	0.13	0.14	0.01	0.06
27 Speaking most developed	0.27	0.04	0.04	0.09	0.11	0.15	0.04	0.16
27 Writing most developed	0.02	0.10	0.06	0.11	0.09	0.11	0.02	0.05
28 Grammar most developed	0.17	0.17	0.07	0.08	0.15	0.12	0.04	0.10
28 Vocabulary most developed	0.12	0.08	0.02	0.07	0.12	0.09	0.02	0.05
29 Use Books	0.03	0.13	0.17	0.08	0.06	0.12	0.20	0.11
29 Use Handouts	0.02	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.10	0.18	0.09
30 Like Chat	0.07	0.12	0.07	0.05	0.14	0.15	0.04	0.10
30 Like Forums and discussion	0.05	0.05	0.09	0.13	0.15	0.18	0.09	0.07
30 Like Email	0.01	0.08	0.08	0.13	0.04	0.17	0.01	0.13

A matrix of Cramer's V correlation coefficients was computed to determine if the demographic characteristics of the respondents were correlated with their responses to five items concerning constraints (Table 4.21). Most of the coefficients were less than 0.2, indicating little or no correlation. Three cross-tabulations were weakly correlated. Cramer's $V = 0.24$ for item 33 (Working with computers is time consuming) versus sex; Cramer's $V = 0.23$ for item 31 (Not confident about computer skills) versus computer experience; and Cramer's $V = 0.25$ for item 31 (Not confident about computer skills) versus computer experience. Males and females had different perceptions concerning whether or not working with computers is time consuming. Students who perceived that they were not confident about their computer skills and who considered that computers were too complicated were mainly those who reported that they had "less than average" computer experience.

A matrix of Cramer's V correlation coefficients was also computed to determine if the demographic characteristics of the respondents were correlated with their responses to eight items concerning opportunities (Table 4.22). All of the coefficients were less than 0.2, indicating little or no correlation. The responses were not associated with sex, age, place of residence, time spent online every day, type of Internet connection, degree major, or occupation. The students appeared to respond to the questionnaire as a unified and homogeneous group with respect to their perceptions of the opportunities afforded by the programme.

Table 4.21 Cramer's V coefficients between constraints and student characteristics

Item	Sex	Age	Residence	Computer experience	Time online	Internet connection	Major	Occupation
31 Not confident about computer skills	0.20	0.1	0.10	0.23	0.16	0.15	0.17	0.13
33 Computers are time-consuming	0.24	0.2	0.14	0.15	0.17	0.14	0.19	0.14
34 Computers are too complicated	0.17	0.12	0.15	0.25	0.19	0.14	0.16	0.13
35 Facing technical problems	0.16	0.11	0.14	0.10	0.13	0.15	0.19	0.16
36 Insufficient specialist terminology	0.18	0.15	0.12	0.20	0.12	0.10	0.16	0.01

Table 4.22 Cramer's V coefficients between opportunities and student characteristics

Item	Sex	Age	Residence	Computer experience	Time online	Internet connection	Major	Occupation
32 Computers are a useful aid	0.16	0.15	0.16	0.15	0.22	0.17	0.09	0.16
39 Interaction and relationships	0.19	0.09	0.21	0.11	0.21	0.12	0.19	0.13
40 Expect increasing students	0.19	0.17	0.13	0.12	0.15	0.14	0.13	0.14
41 More KAU majors applying	0.16	0.07	0.13	0.13	0.19	0.17	0.08	0.18
42 More effective interaction than F2F	0.18	0.14	0.14	0.11	0.14	0.17	0.13	0.15
43 Teacher to guide/discuss/answer	0.13	0.15	0.24	0.10	0.13	0.16	0.13	0.14
44 Improved level of English	0.13	0.18	0.16	0.08	0.19	0.12	0.11	0.19
45 Skills are useful and effective	0.17	0.13	0.18	0.13	0.22	0.14	0.17	0.18

4.2.5 Reflections on the questionnaire

There is evidence to conclude from the questionnaire responses that the WBDL course at KAU afforded beneficial opportunities for Saudi students to learn English. The students in general agreed that the objectives of the course and the assignments were well delivered by their teachers. The students perceived that the programme promoted interactions between classmates, and between learners and teachers. Most students perceived that the programme improved their level of English and that the language skills they acquired and developed (mainly reading, writing, and listening) were useful and effective. A unifying and reliably measured theme was that the majority of students were positive and optimistic about the opportunities afforded by the WBDL programme at KAU.

There was evidence to indicate that the course may be constrained by a number of issues. The construct of constraints was reliably measured by the questionnaire. The limited opportunity for students to meet in person, and experience social interactions, was disliked. The need for more personal social contact between the students was identified but could not be explored by use of the questionnaire. More than half of the students experienced personal difficulties in the use of computer technology, the Internet, and associated specialist English terminology. Technical problems were the most highly disliked aspect of the WBDL programme. A correlation between limited previous experience and perceived difficulties in the use of computers was found. The questionnaire responses did not, however, provide explicit information about exactly how these issues constrained the learning process.

The responses of the students were not strongly correlated with, dependent upon, or systematically shaped by, the demographic differences that existed between them. There was, however, a difference between males and females with respect to their perceptions of the usefulness of the programme for developing English speaking skills. The male students perceived that they acquired and developed better skills in speaking English than the females. Males and females also had different perceptions concerning whether or not working with computers is time consuming. The reasons for these differences could not be ascertained.

It is evident that the quantitative analysis of the responses to the questionnaire items provided insufficient information about the opportunities and constraints of the WBDL programme at KAU to answer the research questions in detail. The analysis did, however, signal numerous opportunities and constraints which could be explored in richer detail through qualitative analysis of the responses to the interviews with the teachers and the students, and the observations of the online classes. The choice of a mixed methods approach therefore appeared to be justified for the purposes of this case study.

4.3 Interviews

This section describes the transcription, classification, coding, aggregation, and interpretation of the interview responses. The results are presented in three parts, followed by the key points. Each part focuses on one theme, providing the answers to one research question. The coded responses to each theme are listed in Appendix VI.

4.3.1 Use of the WBDL program in practice

The first theme of the qualitative analysis referred to RQ1 *“How do both the teachers and learners at KAU use the WBDL programme in practice?”* Ten specific sub-themes were identified using the codes RQ1a to RQ1j.

Online lectures usually started in the afternoon (RQ1a). Although there were a few lectures in the morning, most were shifted from the morning, to permit more working students with other commitments to attend. Every teacher had a weekly time schedule of lectures which he/she had to follow. T4 preferred to deliver online lectures in the evening, because he had other teaching commitments in the morning and afternoon and so he needed time to rest and prepare. T3 reported that the teachers had access to the WBDL system at all times, although they generally only accessed the system to prepare and deliver lessons, and to send emails to students at least once a day. Pre-recording was not generally permitted, and therefore most online classes were presented live to enable the teachers to interact in real time with the students; however, T2 said that she pre-recorded lectures if there were network problems or other reasons for not

presenting a live class (RQ1b). T1 reported that the teachers were not required to conduct their online classes in a specific place, and they had no specific room to conduct a lesson. The connections might be in an office, either alone, or with other teachers who are not teaching or in a teaching lab, or at home (RQ3g). T2 reported that “I use my laptop from bed sometimes when teaching online” (RQ1b).

T3 described the types of communication in the online classes (RQ1i): “We have different means of communications with our students. We use text chat and video conferencing. Students can see or communicate with us verbally during the online session. Also we have asynchronous communication with students through email and forums embedded in the e-learning environment which we are using. We use both synchronous in real live time and asynchronous where they don’t have to be with me at the same time”. The use of videoconferencing was not confirmed by the students, all of whom reported that webcams were available but not generally operated during online classes. T4 stated that “we don’t use the webcams because it’s very difficult for some students to get access to such heavy lines for Internet” (RQ1c). Most of the two-way communication between teachers and students was by live chatting using Centra (RQ1i).

Three teachers agreed that they applied their own style of teaching and chose the methods of communication that they preferred. However, there was some uniformity, because they all used similar technology (RQ1d). T2 stated “We have our own way of teaching of course but after every class we sit together and have an informal chat”. S1 confirmed that “The way of teaching is different from one

teacher to another” (RQ1d). The overall impression of the students (RQ1d) was that the quality of the teaching ranged from “good” (S3 and S7), through “very good” (S5) and “excellent” (S4 and S6) to “more than excellent” (S1).

T1 and T2 stated there was a formally prescribed syllabus, but they applied it in a flexible way. If they did not complete the syllabus, they reduced the amount of teaching material, depending on how fast or slow they perceived a particular group of students was learning and understanding. T2 stated that “From our experience it’s better to work on the materials more and make sure that the students understand better rather than run through the course without having them understand (which also applies on campus as well as e-learning)” but if the syllabus was completed, then there was time for revision (RQ3c). All the online classes were recorded on Centra. S8 complained that the recorded files were not classified by subject and so the students had to go through every file, one by one, to find the file they wanted, which was perceived to be difficult and time consuming (RQ3h). S1 reported that some lectures could not be played or were not even recorded (RQ3h).

Three students perceived that they developed strong relationships with each other. S7 stated “just like F2F students” (RQ1g). Student bonding developed electronically via email, online chat, MSN and Yahoo Messenger, but some met in person. S1 reported that “there are even visits and meetings between me and close classmates”; however, S3 in contrast reported that the relationships between classmates did not go further than online (RQ1g). T4 reported that the most confident, competent, and academically able students assisted those who

were less confident, less competent, and less able (RQ3d). Every classroom included a few more able students who facilitated peer group learning by encouraging other students who were shy or reluctant to communicate; however, this was not encouraged by T4 if they communicated in Arabic (Table RQ3d).

All of the teachers reported that a strong rapport developed between themselves and their students even though there was no visual or physical contact (RQ1h). Two students reported that their relationships with teachers were “good” and two stated that the teachers were “cooperative”. S7 said “There is the chance for us to speak with the teacher at anytime and ask questions more than regular F2F students” (RQ1h). The exact nature of the relationship between the students and teachers was difficult to describe, leading T1 to state “Something goes on and that thing is unheard” (RQ1h). T3 perceived that because there was no visible and physical contact, the DL teachers were more helpful and sympathetic to the DL students than F2F students stating that “we use more positive reinforcement for the students as compared to ordinary classrooms so with this factor we developed an excellent rapport (RQ1h).

Synchronous chat in real time was the main method of communication during the online classes, through which the teachers asked questions, and the students replied (RQ1i). T3 pointed out that “the most interesting part here is the Centra system which allows me as a teacher to get in touch directly and communicate with my students. They have the chance to meet, they have a change to see and listen to me and express themselves and practise the language online”. Email, discussion forums, and FAQs were also embedded in the e-learning

environment, which were asynchronous methods of communication, i.e., the students did not have to be on line at the same time as the teachers. T1 and T2 reported that the teachers and students had to meet certain criteria with respect to their communications. The teachers stressed that not participating in online classes was detrimental, since they would not benefit if they did not participate. T1 and T4 reported that the teachers were required to send one email to each student per day (RQ1i). T1 stated that “We check our emails two or three times during the day and whenever we get opportunity we immediately reply”. Generally the teachers sent the same email to all students informing them about something. S3 reported, however, that “Sometimes when there is something important we are supposed to know the teachers don’t send us emails which eventually causes the students who haven’t attended the lecture problems because they don’t know about those important things” (RQ3b). All students were required to participate in the discussion forums. The students asked many questions in the forums about things they are were not sure about (RQ1i).

Assessment was divided into two parts, one was continuous (40%) and the other was the summative final examination (60%). The continuous assessment included participation, assignments, and quizzes (Table RQ1f). T1 stated that “Every session they are responding to our questions and discussions and activities which they have to answer and practise”. There was a minimum of 5 compulsory assignments, but if the teachers considered that the students needed more practice, then they set more assignments. 10 quizzes were compulsory, but there was no formal schedule. T1 stated “Often we give more than 10”. Most

assessments were done through the chat box in which students were required to answer online questions in real time. T4 also reported “We have 5 marks on their interaction in the forum, so all of them have to participate”. The students were given the opportunity to repeat the assignments to correct mistakes. T4 pointed out that “We never discourage them if the assignment is wrong, we give them equal opportunity again. We give them a deadline of 4 or 5 days where they can repeat the assignment”.

There was no online summative final examination. The WBDL students sat the examination like traditional students, on campus. T1 reported that the examination was conducted in KAU or at 4 or 5 other centres outside Jeddah and that “Normally they come here because they like to see the instructor and because they have done some work they feel proud of that so they want to meet us” (RQ1f). S6 complained about this arrangement, stating “I want to be able to take the exams in centres in Yanbu, instead of having to travel to one of the main centres to take the exam” (RQ3f).

4.3.2 Opportunities

The second theme of the qualitative analysis referred to “*What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the opportunities afforded by the new WBDL programme*”. Four specific sub-themes were identified using the codes RQ2a to RQ2d.

The opportunities were classified into (a) extrinsic opportunities for students outside the university; (b) preferences for e-learning over F2F classes; and (c)

intrinsic opportunities to develop language skills through student teacher interactions and use of technology in online classrooms.

Access to learning and further qualification was perceived by three of the teachers to be a desirable extrinsic opportunity afforded by the WBDL programme. S1 confirmed that “it gave me the opportunity to pursue my studies” (RQ2a). The WBDL programme was seen as an opportunity for students to be awarded a degree like campus students, particularly for those who wish to work and study at the same time, and who are not able to attend regular classes. Although some were young students who just graduated from high school, many of the e-learning students were perceived by T1 and T3 to be more responsible and mature, since they were older, and may have families, and were paying for their education. T1 and T2 perceived that many WBDL students were highly motivated because they know that there was something tangible at the end of the e-learning programme for them, in the form of promotion and/or more qualification (RQ2a).

Two teachers and three students perceived that e-learning was preferable to F2F classes (RQ2b). T1, however, perceived that “We can’t say this is better or that is better because each program has its own advantage” whilst T4 considered that “Both have their plus and minus points”. T2 and T3 preferred e-learning because they felt more involved in the teaching process, and felt closer to the students, despite the problem that the visual and physical elements of teaching, using body language and gestures, were missing. Three students perceived that they preferred e-learning to F2F classes because it encouraged more interaction with

their peers and the teachers, was less threatening, and reduced shyness (RQ2c). S1 reported “WBDL lessens the threat and panic, so even if we did mistakes were not scared because we were mainly dealing with a screen and a keyboard” whilst S2 stated “It breaks the barriers and makes students lessen the shyness”.

With respect to learning opportunities linked to the use of technology, online classes were perceived to enhance teaching by using interactive tools which were not available in traditional F2F classes. They also provided an opportunity for students who were unable to attend the classes to play back recordings at their own convenience. T1 pointed out “They get to listen to the recorded lectures and do assignments and also the interactive tools we use like the email on EMES” (RQ2a). There was disagreement amongst the teachers about which skills were developed the most in the live online classroom. T1 pointed out that problems associated with the use of microphones tended to limit the development of speaking skills. S4 confirmed that “We don’t get enough time for speaking which basically doesn’t improve and strengthen our learning of the language” (RQ3b). T1 and T4 considered that online chat developed writing skills “because of the presence of the chat box a lot of students were reluctant to speak” (RQ2c). T2 encouraged the students to speak, stating “From the beginning I give them a relaxing atmosphere by saying it’s OK to make mistakes. I even tell them you don’t see each other so no need to worry about your grammar, accuracy, fluency, etc. Even if you want to speak, feel free don’t be shy, I want you to make mistakes”. T2 emphasized the importance of developing listening skills in the online classroom, stating “I started using a new and

excellent technique to enhance the listening skills. I shared some listening from specific educational websites with them and did exercises in listening or grammar". T2 also considered that "Homework assignments, quizzes, and forums enhance their Internet browsing skills. They surf the Internet, they search for related topics, and they also post their own topics on forums" (RQ2c).

T3 perceived that the development of language skills in the online class varied according to the teacher's chosen methodology. He stated that if the teacher concentrated on the communicative approach then the student could develop language skills as in the F2F classroom situation. If the teacher did not speak or encourage the students to speak or interact verbally then the students would resort to text chat so that writing had more opportunity to be developed than other language skills (RQ2c). This further qualified S1's statement that "The way of teaching is different from one teacher to another" (RQ1d).

4.3.3 Constraints

The third theme of the qualitative analysis referred to "*What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the constraints of the new WBDL programme?*" Eight specific sub-themes were identified using the codes RQ3a to RQ3h.

The perceived constraints with regards to the experience of e-learning were classified into (a) the technical problems during the online classrooms (b) the restricted use of microphones (c) the limited time available to complete the syllabus and (d) the lack of segregation of students according to their previous experience with computers and their academic abilities. Complaints were also

voiced which were not directly associated with the experience of e-learning, but which were nevertheless perceived as constraints to the programme, including (a) the arrangements for assignments and assessments and (b) the need for more teacher training.

Numerous technical problems were reported by the students. S3 and S8 perceived that disconnections were the main problem. S3 also reported that “either the sound is not clear or it keeps cutting off” (RQ3a) and that “Accessing the course through EMES always gives us problems - the screen freezes or kicks us out (RQ3h). S8 mentioned the break in the delivery of the course when the server went down due to the floods in Jeddah, stating “we stayed for 2 weeks without studying, after that we got a message on our mobiles saying that the site is working and we can log in” (RQ3h).

From the teachers’ perspective, T1 and T2 reported that there was too much pressure on the University server. T2 stated “Yesterday I was trying to access the lecture on time and Centra kept on kicking me out whenever I tried to log in and gave me a message “run time error”. All the teachers were concerned about the problem of disconnections, and T1 commented “They disappear and come back and say sorry but what can I do? I personally believe that they haven’t done it intentionally”. There was concern that the students did not get much opportunity to speak in English using a microphone during the online classes. There were technical problems when using the microphone, including slow responses and intermittent cutting off, which interfered with the pace of teaching and learning. Live chat in Centra was the main method of communication, which

helped to develop reading and writing skills, but not speaking skills. T1 and T2 expressed particular concern about the breakdown of communications during the online classes. T2 stated “Sometimes they are getting the sound broken into inaudible sort of conversation”. T1 and T2 both suggested that better lines and technical facilities should be provided by the University to support the programme (RQ3a). Technical problems were not the only reason for the communication difficulties in the online classroom. Some students were naturally shy and reluctant to participate, so they needed to be encouraged by the teacher (RQ4.3b).

The students and the teachers disagreed as to whether time was a limiting factor. S1 and S5 perceived there was “more than enough time” whilst S6 commented that she could not handle the fast pace of the lectures (RQ3c). T2 stated “It allows me to cover the syllabus on time” whereas T4 considered that the time was too short to deliver the syllabus, and recommended that more hours per week should be devoted to the programme, stating “Not satisfied with the time given which is 10 hours a week. It should be 14 to 15 hours, then we would manage the thing in a better way” (RQ3c). Another problem perceived by T3 and T4 was the that working students who, due to other commitments, were only able to attend on a part-time basis, or who could only access the recorded classes, did not have enough time to fit in all the activities and assignments that were necessary to complete the DL programme (RQ3e).

The online classes were not segregated according to the different ability levels of the students, which concerned T3 and T4 (RQ3d). The teachers stated that more

experienced or more academically able students may become annoyed by students whose level is lower than them, because they are perceived to slow the pace of learning. Mixed ability classes may also encourage weaker students to repeat or copy what the more able students are doing without necessarily understanding what they are doing. There is also the problem that some students have limited computer experience, when they start the programme, e.g., in the maintenance of Microsoft Windows and Internet Explorer, and in the use of Microsoft Office. Consequently, time is wasted in classes because these students require extra help from the teacher. T3 and T4 recommend that the students should be placed into different classes according to their different levels of ability, and there should be an entrance examination or placement test, to check the computing and English skills of the students before they begin the DL programme. T3 and T4 also suggested that students with limited computer experience should be given some kind of training before they are accepted on the programme (RQ3d).

There were complaints about the existing arrangements for assignments and assessments (RQ3f). T4 was concerned that the quizzes and assignments which have to be returned in three or four days may not be done by the students themselves, since somebody else may be doing the work for them, commenting that “Emails and quizzes and assignments require honesty from the student’s side” . There was concern from T3 that the automatic system being used to grade the quizzes was not accurate. He reported that “sometimes the students gave the correct answers but they got negative feedback from the system”. Also,

if a student became disconnected during an assessment, he/she was awarded a zero mark, which was considered to be unfair. T4 suggested that more emphasis should be placed on the assessment of speaking skills, e.g., using oral presentation tests, and the assessment of writing skills, e.g. using English comprehension tests (RQ3f).

Lack of teacher training was perceived to be a constraint. The teachers received basic training in the use of Centra and EMES but no training in teaching in an online-classroom. It was suggested by T3 that more intensive training should be provided for those who teach on the DL programme (RQ3g).

4.3.4 Reflections on the interviews

The information derived from the interviews provided considerably more explicit information than the questionnaires about the use, opportunities, and constraints of the WBDL programme from the students' and teachers' perspectives. The qualitative analysis of the interviews responses complemented and expanded upon the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire responses.

With respect to the research question “RQ#1 *How do both the teachers and learners at KAU use the new WBDL programme in practice?*” the interviews elicited information about online access to the programme by teachers and students, the use of technical resources, the quality of teaching, the schedule and coverage of syllabus, the level of technical support, the communication in the online classrooms, the relationships between students and teachers, and the methods of assessment.

With respect to the research question “*RQ#2: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the opportunities afforded by the new WBDL programme*” the improved access to learning and qualifications, and the chance to acquire and develop skills in the use of English by students who could not attend classes at the University campus were perceived to be important opportunities. Some students and teachers perceived that they preferred on line learning and teaching compared to F2F classes, since the programme afforded an opportunity to pursue methods of teaching and learning that were not possible in F2F classes (even though these opportunities were not necessarily realized in practice).

The responses to the questionnaire pointed towards technical problems as the main constraint of the WBDL programme, but the interviews provided much more detailed information to address the research question “*RQ#3: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the constraints of the new WBDL programme*”. From the students’ perspective the main technical problems included difficulties accessing the programme online and communication problems during online classes, including disconnections, slow responses, and limited use of the microphone. From the teachers’ perspective the technical problems included too much pressure on the University server, and the lack of a backup system in case of disasters. There was a general feeling that better lines and technical facilities should be provided by the University to support the WBDL programme. The technical problems resulted in limited opportunities for speaking in English using a microphone during the online classes. Live chat was perceived to help develop reading and writing skills, but not speaking. Technical problems

were not the only reason for the communication difficulties in the online classroom. Some students were naturally shy and reluctant to participate, so they needed to be encouraged by the teachers. Although conversations in Arabic developed between the students, these were actively discouraged by one of the teachers.

There was disagreement as to whether time constrained the programme. Some students and teachers perceived that they did not have enough time to fit in all the activities and assignments that were necessary to complete the programme, whereas others considered there was more than enough time. The online classes were not segregated according to the different skill levels of the students with respect to their experience in the use of computers and their English language abilities. It was perceived that students with limited abilities slowed down the pace of learning of the more able students. There was concern that the assignments and assessments were not effective methods of evaluating the students' skills in the use of English. Limited training in online teaching was also perceived to be a constraint.

4.4 Observations

The contents of the field notes written whilst observing 30 recorded online classes were analyzed and interpreted to address RQ#1 *“How do both the teachers and learners at KAU use the new WBDL programme in practice”*. The results of the content analysis are presented systematically as follows: (1) The times, durations, and attendances at the online classes; (2) The objectives of each online class; (3) The topic areas, specific contents, and skills learnt in each online class; (4) The organization of the online classes; (5) The strategies of the teachers and the behaviour of the students during the online classes; (6) The technical problems experienced during the online classes; (7) A summary of the key findings.

4.4.1 Time, duration, and attendance

The 30 recorded online classes were conducted by three English language teachers between 18th October 2009 and 2nd February 2010. The two male teachers (Teacher A and Teacher B) delivered evening classes to male students starting at 5:30, 6:30, or 7:00 pm. The female teacher (Teacher C) taught in the morning, starting at 8:00 am (except for one class observed in February (the second semester) which was at 6:30 pm. The duration of the classes varied from 25 minutes to 2 hours and 7 minutes with an average of 1 hour and 36 minutes. Class 3 was unusual, because it was cut short after only 25 minutes due to serious technical problems (Table 4.23).

Table 4.23 Attendance at online classes

Class	Teacher	Date	Time	Duration h:min	Attending students	Absent students	Enrolled students	% Attendance
1	A	10/18/2009	5:30	1:20	18	13	31	18/31 = 58%
2	A	10/19/2009	5:30	1:50	16	14	30	16/30 = 53%
3	A	10/20/2009	5:30	0:25	19	11	30	19/30 = 63%
4	A	10/21/2009	5:30	1:28	17	13	30	17/30=57%
5	A	10/24/2009	5:30	1:31	16	13	29	16/29 = 55%
6	A	10/25/2009	5:30	1:25	18	13	31	18/31= 58%
7	A	10/27/2009	6:30	2:10	18	13	31	18/31= 58%
8	A	10/28/2009	6:30	2:10	18	13	31	18/31=58%
9	A	12/8/2009	7:00	1:24	13	19	32	13/32=41%
10	A	12/9/2009	6:30	1:40	12	21	33	12/33=36%
11	A	12/12/2009	6:30	1:40	9	23	32	9/32=28%
12	A	12/13/2009	7:00	1:08	10	22	32	10/32=31%
13	B	12/13/2009	7:00	1:10	14	17	31	14/31=45%
14	A	12/14/2009	6:30	1:51	12	21	33	12/33=36%
15	B	12/14/2009	6:30	1:43	18	14	32	18/32=56%
16	B	12/15/2009	7:00	1:15	13	19	32	13/32=41%
17	B	12/16/2009	6:30	1:43	12	18	30	12/30=40%
18	B	12/26/2009	6:30	1:47	17	15	32	17/32=53%
19	B	12/27/2009	7:00	1:15	17	15	32	17/32=53%
20	B	12/30/2009	6:30	1:42	13	19	32	13/32=41%
21	B	1/3/2010	6:30	1:11	12	19	31	12/31=39%
22	B	1/4/2010	6:30	1:42	16	16	32	16/32=50%
23	B	1/5/2010	7:00	1:25	16	15	31	16/31=52%
24	C	1/6/2010	8:00	2:07	11	14	25	11/25=44%
25	C	1/9/2010	8:00	2:00	16	19	35	16/35=46%
26	C	1/10/2010	8:00	1:39	10	15	25	10/25=40%
27	C	1/27/2010	8:00	1:33	8	15	23	8/23=35%
28	C	1/30/2010	8:00	2:00	7	32	39	7/39=18%
29	C	1/31/2010	8:00	2:00	9	16	25	9/25=36%
30	C	2/1/2010	6:30	1:49	17	15	32	17/32=53%

It was not compulsory for students to attend every class since the programme is flexible. Consequently, student attendance was variable. The total number of students enrolled in each class ranged from 23 to 39; however, the attendance was substantially lower, ranging from 7 on 30th January to 19 on 20th October. The proportion of students attending each class (i.e., the number of students attending as a percentage of the number enrolled) varied from 18% on 30th January to 63% on 20th October. The attendance was consistently high during October, ranging from 53% to 63%.

No classes were held after the KAU computer system went down due to the floods in Jeddah on 25th November 2009 until the system returned on 8th December. During the following 5 days, from 8th to 13th December, access to the system was limited, and attendance fell to between 28% and 45%. Thereafter, attendance tended to fluctuate, between 18% and 56% (Table 4.24). The attendance varied between the male and female teachers. The average attendances between October 2009 and January 2010 were 49% and 47% for the classes conducted by the male Teachers A and B respectively. The average attendance for the female Teacher C in January and February in contrast, was 39%, somewhat lower than those for Teachers A and B. The lowest attendance, 18% on 30th December 2009, was for a class conducted by Teacher C. The total numbers of students attending each class (observed as names on an online list) were generally completed during the first five minutes of the session. There was no formal attendance register at the start of each class. Some teachers checked to see how many students were attending before they started, whilst others

started the class right away, without checking. Students were sometimes late attending a class, even close to the end, claiming (via online chat) that they could not attend sooner due to technical problems, either from their own connections or from the university website, which sometimes did not allow them to enter.

4.4.2 Objectives

The objectives of the programme were to teach English grammar, vocabulary, reading skills, listening skills, writing skills, and/or speaking skills (Table 4.24).

The three teachers taught the four main skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking, in addition to vocabulary and grammar. Between 4 and 6 aspects of English language were taught in each class (apart from Class 3 which was cut short). Grammar and speaking skills were each taught in about 50% of the 30 classes. Vocabulary, reading skills, listening skills, and writing skills were taught in all of the classes.

There was a major difference between the three teachers with respect to the objective of teaching the skill of speaking English. Teacher A consistently emphasized speaking skills in nearly all of his classes; however, speaking skills were observed to be an objective of Teacher B in only 3 of his classes. Teacher C (the female teacher) was never observed to teach speaking skills.

Table 4.24 Objectives of online classes

Class	Teacher	OBJECTIVES						Total
		Gram-mar	Vocab-ulary	Reading skills	Listen-ing skills	Writing skills	Speak-ing skills	
1	A			1	1	1	1	4
2	A	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
3	A	X	X	X	X	1	X	1
4	A	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
5	A	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
6	A	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
7	A	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
8	A		1	1	1	1	1	5
9	A		1	1	1	1	1	5
10	A		1	1	1	1	1	5
11	A	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
12	A		1	1	1	1		4
13	B		1	1	1	1		4
14	A	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
15	B	1	1	1	1	1		5
16	B	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
17	B		1	1	1	1	1	5
18	B	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
19	B	1	1	1	1	1		5
20	B	1	1	1	1	1		5
21	B		1	1	1	1		4
22	B		1	1	1	1		4
23	B		1	1	1	1		4
24	C		1	1	1	1		4
25	C		1	1	1	1		4
26	C		1	1	1	1		4
27	C	1	1	1	1	1		5
28	C		1	1	1	1		4
29	C	1	1	1	1	1		5
30	C	1	1	1	1	1		5
Total		15	28	29	29	30	14	
%		50.0%	93.3%	96.7%	96.7%	100.0%	46.7%	

1 = Clearly observed; X = Not observed due to technical problems; Blank = Not clearly observed.

4.4.3 Topics, contents, and skills learnt

The topic areas and the specific contents of each class are outlined in Table 4.25. The classes were divided into six units, each of which focused on one topic (Neighbourhood, Cities, and Towns; Health Care; Shopping and e-commerce; Friends and Family; Men and Women-Making Friends; and Sleep and Dreams).

Reading was observed in nearly all classes. Reading skills were specifically developed in certain classes through reading an article and identifying the main ideas (e.g. Class 2); reading a passage, understanding, and explaining the meanings of new words (e.g. Class 10); looking for key words whilst reading, known as skimming and scanning (e.g. Classes 11 and 29) and filling in the gaps in sentences (e.g. Class 29). Speaking was observed in about half the classes, through both the teacher and the students asking questions, answering questions, and making comments. Speaking skills were developed in certain classes through the teacher correcting the students' pronunciation of words when they were speaking spontaneously, or reading out loud (e.g. Classes 2, 5, 6, 10). On one occasion (Class 12) the students listened to recorded English conversations in order to learn the pronunciation of words.

Table 4.25 Topics and contents of online classes

Class	Topic	Content
1	Objectives of the course	Introductory class
2	Unit one: Neighbourhood, Cities and Towns	Vocabulary words and their meanings, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, reading an article and identifying main ideas
3	None	There were many serious technical problems, so the class was cut short, and lasted for only 25 minutes.
4	Unit one: Neighbourhood, Cities and Towns	Opposites, prepositions, punctuation, grammar structure of a sentence, jumbled words, nouns, articles, regular and irregular verbs/nouns, guessing the meanings of words, adjectives of nationality
5	Unit one: Neighbourhood, Cities and Towns	Listening to conversations and answering questions on Contractions, guessing meanings of words and listening for main ideas, spelling
6	Unit one: Neighbourhood, Cities and Towns	Possessive adjectives, demonstrative adjectives, verb to be, declarative statements, interrogative statement, how to form questions
7	Unit one: Neighbourhood, Cities and Towns	Listening for reductions, how to pronounce and spell contractions
8	Unit one: Neighbourhood, Cities and Towns	Difference between formal & informal writing, reductions, contractions, how to look for context clues when listening, stressed words
9	Unit four: Health Care	Reading passage about food that will make them healthy, explaining new words and giving examples. No listening because of poor connection
10	Unit four: Health Care	Pronunciation, explaining meanings of new words, reading passages

Table 4.25 Continued

Class	Topic	Content
11	Unit two: Shopping and e-commerce	How to look for key words when reading (skimming and scanning), pronunciation, explaining meanings of new words, compound sentences, opposites
12	Unit two: Shopping and e-commerce	Pronunciation, explaining meanings of new words, listening to conversations [the teacher recorded the lesson for them because of the massive technical problems]
13	Unit two: Shopping and e-commerce	Reading passages and looking for main ideas (skimming and scanning)
14	Unit two: Shopping and e-commerce	Simple present, present continuous, spelling rules, infinitives, spelling of verbs ending in “-ing”. The present continuous with (wh) questions
15	Unit three: Friends and Family	Pronouns, exercises on vocabulary,
16	Unit three: Friends and Family	Compound sentence, conjunctions, listening for main ideas
17	Unit three: Friends and Family	Listening to a passage and answering questions, reductions, reading passages
18	Unit three: Friends and Family	Conjunctions, difference between compound and simple sentences, pronunciation, listen for main ideas, reductions
19	Unit four: Health Care	explaining to them small talks and topics and places pronunciation, looking for main idea in listening, getting meaning from the context
20	Unit five: Men and Women- Making friends	Countable/uncountable nouns, usage of A, AN and THE, the usage of SOME & ANY, measurement words (i.e. a bar of soap), quantifying expressions, few & little, possessiveness
21	Unit six: Sleep and Dreams	Meanings of words, reading, pronunciation, looking for main ideas in the passage (skimming and scanning)

Table 4.25 Continued

Class	Topic	Content
22	Unit six: Sleep and Dreams	Writing skills (punctuation, jumbled sentences, listening for main ideas, gap filling, stressed words, pronunciation, agreeing and disagreeing words
23	Unit six: Sleep and Dreams	Model of exam, Using agreeing and disagreeing expressions, meaning from the context,
24	Unit six: Sleep and Dreams	Meanings of words, reading and looking for main ideas (skimming and scanning), pronunciation
25	Unit six: Sleep and Dreams	Using capital letters in writing, listening to a conversation, vocabulary preview, guessing the meanings of new words, listening for main ideas
26	Unit six: Sleep and Dreams	Vocabulary preview, stress words, pronunciation numbers, distinguishing between teens and tens talking about your dreams
27	Unit six: Sleep and Dreams	Past continuous, simple past, affirmative and negative statements, WH questions
28	Unit six: Sleep and dreams	Gap fill exercises in listening, listening for main ideas in conversations, meanings of words
29	Unit six: Sleep and Dreams	Looking for main ideas in reading (skimming and scanning), knowing meanings of words, gap fill
30	Unit six: Sleep and Dreams	Flow chart, vocabulary review, simple past of verbs, gap filling, spelling in past tense, irregular past verbs, voiceless and voices sounds, negative in simple past

Writing was observed in every class, because the students had to communicate with the teacher and with their classmates by writing in the chat box. Writing skills were specifically developed in certain classes through the teaching of spelling

rules (e.g., Classes 5 and 14); the teacher correcting spelling mistakes (e.g., Class 6) and the students writing personal information (e.g., Class 8).

Listening was observed in nearly every class. Listening skills were developed in certain classes through students being required to listen to a recorded English conversation and answer questions (e.g., Classes 5, 6, 7, and 8).

4.4.4 Organization

The organization of all of the online classes generally followed a similar pattern (Table 4.26). The teachers were perceived to exert strong control over the organization of each class. The shape of the classes tended to be cyclical, starting with greetings, and a review of previous classes, before the objectives were stated. Quizzes and exercises were the essential feature in 90% of classes.

In all of the classes, the teachers and students started with greetings, generally taking less than 2 minutes. Greetings were mainly in Arabic between individual students, but in both English and Arabic between the students and the teacher. The students asked about each other (e.g., “how are you”?) and there was often joking and laughing between themselves and the teacher. All teachers started by opening the EMES website containing the course material. The teacher returned to the place in the course book where they stopped in the last class, and in about three quarters (73.3%) of the classes, the teacher reviewed quickly what material was covered in the previous class, as a reminder to the students, before starting something new.

Table 4.26 Organization of online classes

Class	Teacher	Greetings	Review	Objectives	Quizzes & Exercises	Summary
1	A	1		1	1	
2	A	1	1	1	1	
3	A	1	X	X	X	X
4	A	1	1	1	1	1
5	A	1	1	1	1	1
6	A	1	1	1	1	
7	A	1	1	1	1	1
8	A	1	1	1	1	
9	A	1		1		
10	A	1		1		
11	A	1		1	1	
12	A	1	1	1	1	
13	B	1		1	1	
14	A	1	1	1	1	
15	B	1	1	1	1	1
16	B	1		1	1	1
17	B	1	1	1	1	
18	B	1	1	1	1	1
19	B	1	1	1	1	1
20	B	1	1	1	1	1
21	B	1	1	1	1	
22	B	1	1	1	1	
23	B	1		1	1	
24	C	1	1	1	1	
25	C	1	1	1	1	
26	C	1	1	1	1	
27	C	1	1	1	1	
28	C	1	1	1	1	1
29	C	1	1	1	1	
30	C	1	1	1	1	1
Total		30	22	29	27	11
%		100.0%	73.3%	96.7%	90.0%	33.3%

1 = Clearly observed. X = Not observed due to technical problems. Blank = Not clearly observed.

In all classes (apart from Class 3, coded by X in Table 4.26, because it was aborted due to serious technical problems) the formal teaching started by the teacher stating the objectives, describing what material would be covered, specifically what skills would be learnt today. In 90% of the classes, the teacher then presented controlled practice in English. The main part of each class generally consisted of exercises, including quizzes. Some quizzes required the students to answer questions posed by the teacher, either individually or by everyone, which were assessed formatively, with immediate feedback from the teacher during the class. Other quizzes consisted of written tests, which were submitted for subsequent summative assessment.

Finally, at the end of each class the teacher sometimes summarized what had been taught. At this point, the teacher might also answer students' questions about the exams, assignments, technical problems, timings and so on.

4.4.5 Student behaviour

Seven types of student behaviour were categorized: (1) talking to the teacher via online chat (2) talking to the teacher via the microphone (3) talking to each other via online chat (4) talking to each other via the microphone (5) helping each other (6) doing an exercise/quiz and (7) going off task. The students never talked to each other using a microphone therefore only 6 categories are included in Table 4.27.

Table 4.27 Observations of student behaviour

Class	Teacher	Talk to teacher (chat)	Talk to teacher (mic)	Talk to each other (chat)	Help each other	Exercise/quiz	Off task
1	A	1	1			1	
2	A	1	1			1	
3	A	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	A	1	1			1	
5	A	1	1			1	
6	A	1	1			1	1
7	A	1	1			1	1
8	A	1	1	1		1	1
9	A	1	1			1	1
10	A	1	1			1	
11	A	1	1			1	
12	A	1				1	
13	B	1				1	
14	A	1	1			1	
15	B	1				1	
16	B	1	1			1	
17	B	1	1		1	1	
18	B	1	1			1	
19	B	1				1	
20	B	1		1	1	1	
21	B	1		1	1	1	
22	B	1	1	1	1	1	1
23	B	1		1	1	1	1
24	C	1		1	1	1	1
25	C	1			1	1	1
26	C	1			1	1	1
27	C	1			1	1	1
28	C	1		1	1	1	1
29	C	1		1	1	1	1
30	C	1		1	1	1	1
Total		29	15	9	12	29	13
%		96.7%	50.0%	30.0%	40.0%	96.7%	43.3%

1 = Clearly observed. X = Not observed due to technical problems. Blank = Not clearly observed

In all but one of the classes (excluding Class 3, which was cut short due to technical problems) the students communicated with the teacher using online chat, and performed exercises or quizzes. In about 50% of the classes the male students talked to the teacher using a microphone. The microphone was never used in Classes 24 to 30, which were the classes consisting only of female students, conducted by a female teacher (Teacher C). In about 30% of the classes the students interacted with each other using online chat. In about 40% of the classes, including all classes conducted by Teacher C the students were observed to help each other; however, Teacher A did not condone peer support.

In 13 of the classes, students were observed to go off task during a lesson; however, going off task only represented about 1.5% of the total number of observations. Going off task implied that if a student attended an online class this did not necessarily imply that he/she would actively participate. Sometimes if the teacher left for one minute to check a technical problem, a few students were observed to chat about general things not related to the lecture. Another example was when one student sent a link of a movies website to the chat box. When asked by the teacher what this link was about, the student apologized, saying that the link was copied before the class, and pasted into the chat box by mistake. The teacher was disturbed, and told the students that it was best for them to concentrate on the lecture instead of wasting their time on other things. Some students signed into an online class but it was observed that they did not interact with the teacher. This may have been because they were not physically present in front of their computers, or because they were doing other things. In all

classes, a few students were observed never to participate, although they were in attendance, since their names could be seen on the online list. The teachers generally responded by telling these students that they were grownups, and it was for their own benefit to attend and participate in the classes. If they did not participate, then they would be upset when they were awarded low grades.

4.4.6 Pedagogic strategies

The observations of the online classes focused on the different strategies used by the teachers to manage the presence of the students and to encourage active student participation. Special attention was given to classifying pedagogic strategies (e.g., checking presence, asking questions, clarifying answers, controlled practice, explaining, prompting, and encouraging) and affective strategies (e.g. greetings, emotional support and humour). The use of Arabic and the use of different types of technology were analyzed. Thirteen pedagogic strategies were observed being used by the teachers in the online classes (Table 4.28). The use of pedagogic strategies to encourage student participation varied from teacher to teacher. In 29 out of the 30 classes (excluding Class 3 which was cut short) the teachers were observed to check the presence of students, and actively encourage them to participate, mainly by use of directed questions.

Table 4.28 Observations of pedagogic strategies

Class	Teacher	Using Course Book	Using External Files/Links	Using Word Files	Explaining (Mic)	Explaining (Chat)	Clarifying	Controlled Practice	Q to all (Mic)	Q to all (Chat)	Q to one (Mic)	Q to one (Chat)	Encouraging peer support	Discouraging peer support
1	A	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1			1
2	A	1			1		1	1	1	1				
3	A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	A	1			1		1	1	1	1				1
5	A	1			1		1	1	1		1			1
6	A	1			1	1	1	1	1		1			1
7	A	1		1	1		1	1	1		1		1	
8	A	1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1		1	1
9	A	1	1	1	1	1			1	1		1		
10	A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1			
11	A	1	1		1		1	1	1		1			
12	A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1					
13	B	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
14	A	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1			
15	B	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
16	B	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
17	B	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
18	B	1		1	1		1	1	1		1			
19	B	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			

Q = Asking a directed question. 1 = Strategy was clearly observed. X = Strategy was not observed due to technical problems.
Blank = Strategy was not clearly observed.

Table 4.28 (Continued) Observations of pedagogic strategies

Class	Teacher	Using Course Book	Using External Files/Links	Using Word Files	Explaining (Mic)	Explaining (Chat)	Clarifying	Controlled Practice	Q to all (Mic)	Q to all (Chat)	Q to one (Mic)	Q to one (Chat)	Encouraging peer support	Discouraging peer support
20	B	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			
21	B	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			
22	B	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
23	B	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			
24	C	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
25	C	1			1	1	1	1	1		1		1	
26	C	1			1	1	1	1	1		1		1	
27	C	1			1	1	1	1	1		1		1	
28	C	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	
29	C	1			1	1	1	1	1		1		1	
30	C	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	
Total		29	9	20	29	20	27	27	29	16	25	8	10	5
%		96.7%	30.0%	66.7%	96.7%	66.7%	90.0%	90.0%	96.7%	53.3%	83.3%	26.7%	33.3%	16.6%

Q = Asking a directed question. 1 = Strategy was clearly observed. Blank = Strategy was not clearly observed.

In all classes, the three teachers used the electronic version of the course book which is uploaded to the EMES website. Teachers A and B occasionally (in less than one third of the observed classes) used external links to online information when teaching such as websites of online dictionaries. One teacher asked the students to use Google to search for words or topics. In addition to well known websites for example, BBC for learning English, one teacher used the original McGraw website when facing technical problems on the EMES website in order not to waste time. Two of the teachers used Word files and one teacher used PDF files to support teaching. Examples are provided in Figures 4.1 and 4.2.

In all classes the microphone was used by the teachers to ask questions to all students, to direct a question to one student, or to explain things, except when technological problems made it impossible (e.g. Class 3). Online chat was less frequently used than the microphone for asking questions or explaining. In 90% of the classes, all the teachers used controlled practice with exercise and quizzes as the main method to promote learning. The teachers clarified the answers to the questions in 90% of the classes.

The use of microphones by students to speak in English was inconsistent. The male students were encouraged to use the microphones all of the time but the females were not. The male teachers called the male students, saying, for example “Come on use your microphones, don’t be shy”. It was evident that the male teachers stressed that male students should use the microphones, whereas it was not essential for the females to use microphones at all during the classes.

Figure 4.1 Screen shot of a Word document used in an online class

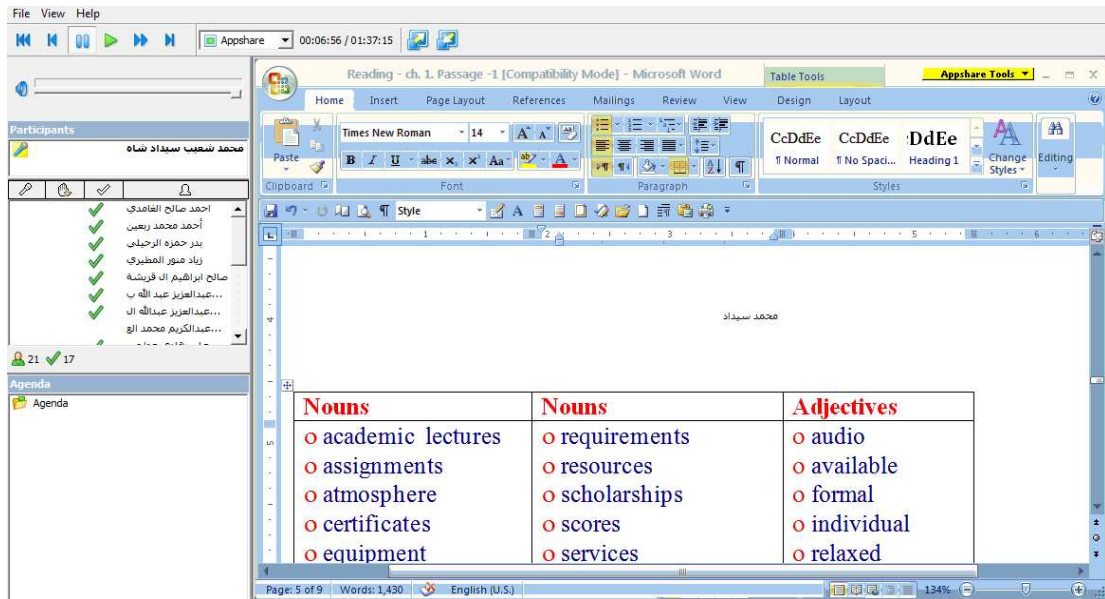
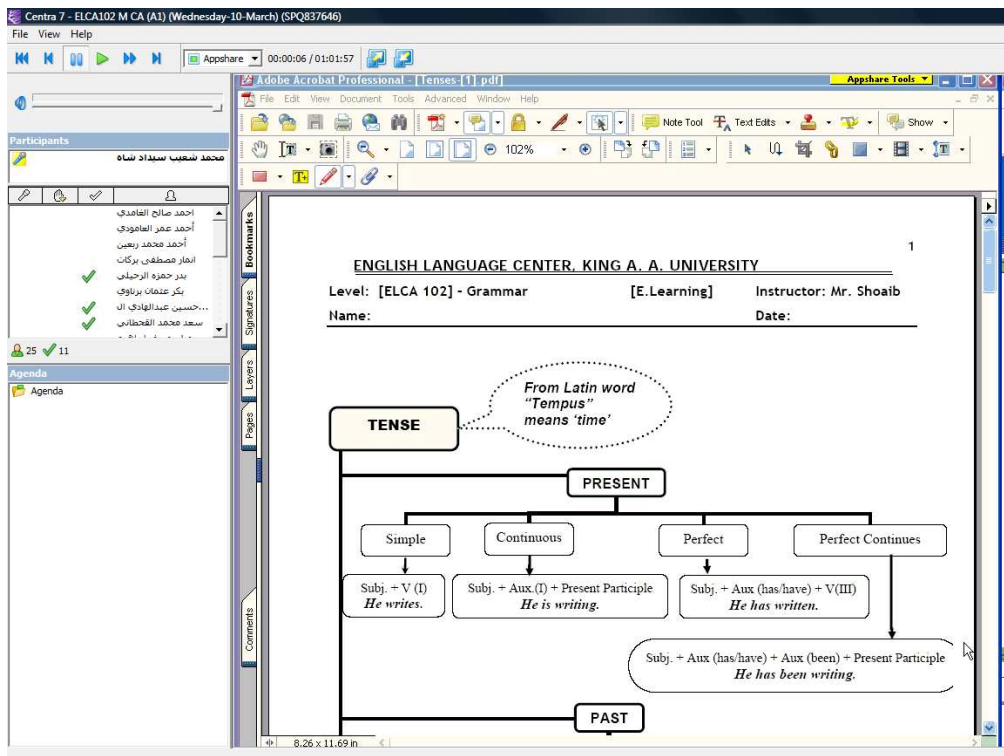


Figure 4.2 Screenshot of a PDF file used during an online class



Consequently, no females were observed to use microphones. Male students were encouraged by the teachers to read out loud at different points during most lessons; however, in the female classes the teacher was the only one who spoke out loud in the classroom.

A major feature of the student-teacher interactions was that students frequently answered in Arabic when asked a directed question by the teacher. This was because their delivery in English was observed to be slow and inconsistent, so they struggled to answer questions in English. The responses of the teachers to students responding in Arabic, however, were inconsistent. One teacher demanded that the students must stop responding in Arabic and only answer in English or their answer would not be considered. One student typed *Momken Ajaweb?* ممكن أجاب in chat (Can I answer in English?) and was told by the teacher to respond in either English or Arabic. The teacher did not stop the students communicating in Arabic, but encouraged the students to answer in either Arabic or English, and was satisfied so long as the student gave the correct answer to the question.

Not all the teachers encouraged peer support in class, e.g., when a more able user of English tried to help a less able user. The female teacher (Teacher C) strongly encouraged peer support in all of her classes, whereas the male teachers (Teachers A and B) did not. Teacher A discouraged peer support in 5 out of 12 of his classes.

4.4.7 Affective strategies

Four types of affective strategy (cathartic interventions) were observed being used by the teachers in the online classes (Table 4.29). Greetings, encouragement, including prompting, humour, and use of online symbols were affective strategies used by all teachers, (apart from Class 3 that was cut short). All classes started with greetings. Encouragement was observed in over 90% and humour in about 90% of the classes. The system has a feature facilitating the use of symbols to communicate, the use of which varied between the teachers. Symbols were used mostly by the two male teachers (A and B) in over half of the classes but rarely by the female teacher. These symbols express feelings such as sadness, happiness and laughter (similar to the emoticons used in conventional Internet messengers such as MSN and Yahoo). The symbols were used by the teachers to encourage students e.g., by an applause symbol when a student answers a question correctly, or a raised hand symbol, to indicate that the student is present, or that he/she wants to ask a question or a laughing symbol, in response to a joke. Teacher B used the raised hand symbol when checking attendance when he first entered the class. He also used symbols to encourage student participation by calling their names, and to see if they were available. Sometimes in the middle of the class he asked students who were not participating to use the raised hand symbol to check their attendance.

Table 4.29 Observations of affective strategies

Class	Teacher	Greetings	Encouragement	Humour	Symbols
1	A	1	1	1	1
2	A	1	1	1	
3	A	1	X	X	X
4	A	1	1	1	1
5	A	1	1	1	1
6	A	1	1	1	
7	A	1	1	1	1
8	A	1	1	1	1
9	A	1	1	1	
10	A	1	1	1	
11	A	1	1	1	
12	A	1	1		
13	B	1	1		1
14	A	1	1	1	1
15	B	1	1	1	1
16	B	1	1	1	1
17	B	1	1	1	1
18	B	1	1	1	1
19	B	1	1	1	1
20	B	1	1	1	1
21	B	1	1	1	1
22	B	1	1	1	1
23	B	1	1	1	1
24	C	1	1	1	1
25	C	1	1	1	
26	C	1	1	1	
27	C	1	1		
28	C	1	1	1	
29	C	1	1	1	
30	C	1	1	1	
Total		30	29	26	17
%		100.0%	96.70%	86.70%	56.70%

1 = Clearly observed. X = Not observed due to technical problems. Blank = Not clearly observed

Two teachers (A and B) used the applause symbol to encourage students who answered questions correctly, whilst Teacher C rarely used symbols. She encouraged students orally by saying “excellent” or “very good”. I perceived, through their positive responses, that the students enjoyed using symbols.

The students in the classes of Teacher B who used symbols much of the time were observed to be more active than the students in the classes where the teacher did not use symbols. In classes 25 to 39 (where Teacher C rarely used symbols) the students tended to talk to each other more and go off task (recorded in Table 4.28) than in the other classes, where symbols were frequently used.

4.4.8 Technical problems

Next to observing the behaviours of the teachers and students, technical problems were the most frequent observations. Since technical problems were perceived in the responses to both the questionnaires and the interviews as major constraints to the WBDL programme, a detailed analysis of the problems experienced during the online classrooms was performed.

Technical problems represented about 15 % of the total number of observations made in the 30 online classes. The main technical problems that dominated the classroom observations, in order of their frequency were: (1) Students logged off or became disconnected (representing 57% of the total number of observations of technical problems); (2) The sound system was poor, including the fact that the microphones frequently did not work properly and there was background

interference (representing 17%); (3) Interactive responses were often slow or absent (representing 13%); (4) Technical difficulties were experienced with the system, related to the inefficiency of the computer network, including failures logging in and uploading teaching materials (representing 13%).

Disconnections were the most frequently observed problem (Table 4.30). The frequency of disconnections ranged from 5 to 29 per class, with an average of 13 per class. The highest frequency of disconnections occurred when the KAU computer system went down after the floods in Jeddah on 25th November 2009. The system returned on 8th December but with access problems. The frequency of disconnections declined after 27th December.

Table 4.30 Frequency of disconnections

Date	Disconnections	Date	Disconnections
10/18/2009	15	12/15/2009	19
10/19/2009	10	12/16/2009	25
10/20/2009	7	12/26/2009	25
10/21/2009	11	12/27/2009	25
10/24/2009	8	12/30/2009	9
10/25/2009	9	1/3/2010	9
10/27/2009	10	1/4/2010	15
10/28/2009	9	1/5/2010	12
12/8/2009	24	1/6/2010	8
12/9/2009	18	1/9/2010	9
12/12/2009	22	1/10/2010	6
12/13/2009	22	1/27/2010	6
12/13/2009	11	1/30/2010	5
12/14/2009	29	1/31/2010	6
12/14/2009	11	2/1/2010	9

Most of the technical problems, however, could not be blamed on the floods. Field notes written during two classes, on 13th and 14th December before the floods are presented in Table 4.31 to provide specific examples. The problems are coded 1 = logging off/disconnection; 2 = sound/microphone problem; 3 = slow/absent response; 4 = network problem. The field notes emphasize how these four types of technical problem intruded regularly at 2 to 6 minute intervals, throughout each class. They often distracted the teachers who reported what was happening to the students.

One of the practical implications was that teachers were sometimes forced to record some sessions for the students in order not to waste time. For example, in Class 12, Teacher B tried his best to interact with the students in many ways, but was unable to because of technical problems. The teacher told the students that he will record the class, so they could listen to it later. The recorded class included reading and listening activities, and the teacher acted just as if the students were participating in a live class, even though the class was recorded. Another of the practical implications was the need for teachers to spend time troubleshooting, doing technical fixes, and calling for technical support which were was observed to be a feature of every online class. A further practical implication was that technical problems were disadvantageous to the students' assessments. The teachers uploaded quizzes and exams to the website and students had to answer the questions online. If a student became disconnected then he/she would lose the whole mark.

Table 4.31 Examples of technical problems

Time	Teacher B Class 13 13-December-2009	Code
2m	T says the mics look like they are not working	2
4m	One S became disconnected	1
6m	One S became disconnected	1
	The S tries to speak through his mic but no sound comes out	2
	One S became disconnected	1
	T said that whoever tries to use the mic gets logged off	2
10m	One S logged off	1
12m	One S became disconnected	1
14m	One S became disconnected	1
	One S became disconnected	1
	T is saying I know there is a lot of network problems from the S side	4
16m	One S became disconnected	1
	One S became disconnected	1
20m	T says it looks like they are not getting his voice or are getting it late	2
26m	One S became disconnected	1
28m	One S became disconnected the total is 8 S	1
30m	One S became disconnected	1
32m	Student became disconnected	1
	T says that half the S can't hear him and half can't see the chat box	2
34m	Another S disconnected	1
36m	One S became disconnected	1
38m	One S became disconnected	1
40m	One S became disconnected	1
44m	One S became disconnected	1
48m	One S became disconnected	1
50m	Nobody is responding	3
56m	One S became disconnected	1
66m	There is a mistake in the computer network	4
68m	T apologizes for the bad network they are having	4
70m	T told S even for us we're having problems in uploading the file	4
72m	T telling the S about the problems he is facing as well	4

Table 4.31 Continued

Time	Teacher B Class 14 14-December-2009	Code
<2m	One S became disconnected	1
	Another S became disconnected	1
	There is no sound of a mic so far	2
4m	There is a problem from EMES	4
	The system refuses to respond	3
	One S became disconnected	1
6m	Another is disconnected the total is 6	1
	Sound interference. I can hear other teachers talking	2
	One S became disconnected	1
8m	One S became disconnected	1
12m	One S became disconnected	1
14m	One S became disconnected	1
18m	One S gets disconnected	1
	One S became disconnected	1
20m	T tells a S yes I know lots of S can't log in	4
	One S became disconnected	1
22m	You can hear teachers in the background which is disturbing	2
	One S says he has problems with his mic	2
24m	You can hear the T's voice coming out of the S speakers	2
	One S became disconnected	1
	S is saying in chat that he is having problems with the system	4
	One S became disconnected	1
32m	T says I think there is a problem,	4
34m	One S became disconnected	1
38m	One S became disconnected	1
	The S doesn't answer and T says I think he has a problem with his mic	2
	The S doesn't respond to question of T	3
40m	The S doesn't reply to question of T	3
	The S doesn't reply, T says "We have weak signal so my voice might reach him after 5 minutes!"	2
	T says it looks like people in Jeddah have problems with their networks	4
46m	One S gets disconnected	1
48m	There is a loud noise in the background of T	2

4.4.9 Reflections on the observations

The overall impression was that the online classes provided a very restricted English language learning experience which was dictated by the teachers using a predetermined curriculum and constrained by cultural issues and technological problems. Each class followed a similar limited format in which the content was prescribed by the course book. The shape of each class tended to be cyclical, starting with greetings, and a review of previous work, before the objectives were stated. The main part of each class generally consisted of controlled practice (quizzes and/or exercises) performed by each individual student, after which the teacher generally clarified the answers to questions and summarized what had been done. The students were not encouraged to communicate with each other in spoken English. Writing and reading was the main method of interaction in every class, because the students communicated with the teacher mainly through the chat box. The students spent most of their time reading and responding to the teacher's questions by online chat. There was no white board for students to interact with the teacher, and this was perceived to be a constraint which restricted communication between the teachers and the students. Gender segregation resulted in a disparity of opportunities to speak in English. The male students were encouraged to use a microphone to talk to the teacher in English and read out loud at different points during most lessons. The teacher often responded by correcting the students' mispronunciation of words. The microphone was never, however, observed to be used in classes consisting only of female students.

Greetings, prompting and encouraging, humour, and using symbols in the chat box were affective strategies used by all teachers to encourage active participation. Symbols were used mostly by the two male teachers. The use of pedagogic strategies to encourage student participation also varied from teacher to teacher. The use of online resources was limited.

Communication between students in the classrooms was strictly controlled by the teacher, but the responses of the teachers to students spontaneously speaking in Arabic or encouraging each other in class were inconsistent.

Technical problems were a very important issue that intruded at regular intervals in every online class that was observed. It was difficult for the teachers to implement pedagogic strategies when students were continuously logging off and becoming disconnected, when the sound system had a poor quality, when interactive responses were slow or absent, and when technical difficulties were experienced related to the inefficiency of the computer network, including failures logging in and uploading teaching materials. The lack of an organised system to classify, label, and locate specific recorded classes was also identified as a serious constraint.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 General introduction

This chapter draws the findings of the study together. In the first section (5.2) the research questions are addressed and (5.3) the results are compared and contrasted with those of other published case studies. The theoretical and practical significance of the study for the wider field of educational technology in support of language teaching is discussed with special reference to opportunities (5.4) and constraints (5.5). The final section (5.6) summarizes the findings.

5.2 Research questions

This case study began with the aim of addressing three research questions:

RQ#1: How do both the teachers and learners at KAU use the new WBDL programme in practice?

RQ#2: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the opportunities afforded by the new WBDL programme (i.e., the attributes of the programme that are most helpful in achieving its educational objectives)?

RQ#3: What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the constraints of the new WBDL programme (i.e., the attributes of the programme that generally prevent or limit the achievement of its educational objectives)?

Information was collected using a mixed methods approach, including questionnaires (240 students), personal interviews (8 students and 4 teachers), and field notes derived from observations of 30 online classes. The students and teachers included respondents from most demographic sectors of the target population. The interpretation of the information was mainly qualitative, although quantitative methods were applied to analyze the questionnaire responses. Issues of reliability and validity were in part addressed by a strategy of triangulation.

5.2.1 Use of the WBDL programme

The first question: “*How do both the teachers and learners at KAU use the new WBDL programme in practice?*” was addressed by summarizing the observations of the online classes, complemented by information from the questionnaires and interviews.

Overall, the programme was determined by a prescribed curriculum based on the use of a course book. Each class focused on one specified pre-determined topic. The teachers exerted very strong control over the events that were observed in each class. The objectives of each lesson were defined by the course book and there was little interactivity or differentiation by task or outcome. The teachers did not seem to gradually switch from cognitively and linguistically undemanding tasks to cognitively and linguistically demanding tasks as recommended by in the Quadrant Model of Cummins (1991).

The pattern of each lesson was repetitive and cyclical starting with greetings and reminders of what had been done in the previous classes, followed by stating the objectives, then giving students exercises and quizzes, and finally some teachers summarized and gave feedback on what had been taught.

The students' attendance was variable, at times very low (18% of the total number enrolled) and at best moderate (63%) with no systematic pattern. Probably linked to the poor attendance levels was the observed poor participation of many students in the online classes. In 13 (43%) of the classes, students were observed to go off task. Going off task meant that the students were not actively participating. Sometimes if the teacher left to check a technical problem, the students were observed not to work, but to chat about general things not related to the lesson. In all classes, a few students were observed never to participate, although they were known to be in attendance, since their names could be seen on the online list. The teachers generally responded by telling these students that they were grownups, and it was for their own benefit to attend and participate in the classes. If they did not participate, then they would be upset when they were awarded low grades. Some students did not appear to participate at all, and were possibly not even listening, or they were doing something else. For example, one teacher stated at the interview "they have some office work, so they are sitting on a chair in front of the computer, doing their work, and taking classes at the same time".

The teachers' comments at the interviews emphasized that encouraging active student participation was a major issue. Accordingly, I observed the teachers in

the online classes use numerous affective strategies (e.g. greetings, prompting, encouraging, humour, and using symbols in the chat box) at regular intervals to persuade the students to participate.

The primary source of information observed in use by all teachers in the online classes was the electronic version of the course book which was uploaded to the EMES website. Students were not required to buy this book unless they wanted to. It was not ascertained whether using the book conferred any advantages. The three teachers admitted that they applied their own style of teaching and chose the methods of communication they preferred. However, uniformity was achieved since they all used the same technology with the same course book.

Although one of the teachers said that videoconferencing was used, this was not confirmed by the students, all of whom reported that webcams were available but not generally operated during online classes. I did not observe the use of videoconferencing.

Triangulation between the questionnaire responses of the students, the responses of the students and teachers at the interviews, and my own classroom observations revealed that writing and reading were the most practised skills during the online classes. The teachers' interview responses consistently indicated that speaking was the least well developed of the four skills in the online classrooms. I also observed that speaking in English was in general the least frequent interaction. One of the students confirmed at interview that "We don't get enough time for speaking which basically doesn't improve and

strengthen our learning of the language”. There was disagreement amongst the teachers about the reasons for not speaking English. Two teachers commented that “because of the presence of the chat box a lot of students were reluctant to speak”. Another teacher believed that technical problems associated with the use of the microphones restricted the development of speaking skills. I observed that there were opportunities for students to speak English out loud during the online classes, but the microphone was only used by male students. Female students were not encouraged to speak in English. In the female classes the teacher was generally the only one reading out loud or speaking English spontaneously. There is a cultural reason to suggest why male and female students were encouraged differently by the teachers. Some families in KSA are very conservative and do not feel comfortable when a female’s voice is heard speaking alone. This may be the reason why female students were not encouraged to use a microphone or read out loud by the teacher. In addition, the hesitancy to use microphones may be a reflection of the Saudi cultural dimensions of low levels of individualism and high levels of in-group collectivism (Hofstede, 2001; 2009). The female students feel less confident to express their personal identity in front of others and/or they are reticent about making mistakes in front of their classmates. It appeared that speaking English by female students raised what Krashen (1981) termed the affective filter, acting as a barrier to language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem and/or anxiety are hypothesized to raise the affective filter and create a mental block that hinders language acquisition.

Of course some kind of speaking practice did take place and the questionnaire indicated that some students (24.3% of the respondents) perceived that they had developed speaking skills the most. This contrasted with my observations revealing that the amount of English spoken in the classes was limited compared to writing and reading. The reasons for limited development of speaking may be associated with psychological factors. According to Krashen (1981) learners with high self-confidence are better equipped to succeed in speaking a second language. Nunan (2009) suggested that reluctance to speak a foreign language was associated with lack of motivation, anxiety, and shyness. It is therefore possible that the students who reported that they had developed speaking skills had, by taking part in the programme, acquired greater confidence, or they were less anxious than before. It might also be the case that the limited speaking practice they experienced was very highly valued.

The use of the target language (English) and Arabic in the online classes was inconsistent. There was no agreed policy about the use of Arabic in class. One teacher demanded that the students must stop responding in Arabic and only answer in English or their answer would not be considered. Another teacher did not stop the students speaking in Arabic, but encouraged the students to answer in either Arabic or English, and was satisfied so long as the student gave the correct answer to the question. Similarly there was no agreed policy about peer encouragement. Not all the teachers supported peer encouragement, e.g., when a more able user of English tried to help a less able user. One teacher strongly encouraged peer encouragement whilst one teacher did not.

There were restricted opportunities for meaningful English language interaction and few authentic materials were introduced. I observed few attempts to provide information from the Internet. Two teachers occasionally used external links to online information. Only once were the students asked to perform an online search for information. There was little emphasis on language learning strategies and few opportunities for students to contribute their own personal experiences, or to connect to learning activities outside the classroom.

Reading and writing were observed in every class and these skills appeared to develop over the programme. Whilst listening to English was observed in all the lessons, and was liked by the majority of students, it was not perceived by all teachers to be a valuable opportunity for language learning. Only one teacher emphasized the importance of developing listening skills in the online classroom. The questionnaire revealed that synchronous online classrooms (Centra) were preferred by 45.0% of the respondents whilst 39.2% preferred independent study, and 15.8% preferred both. 33.1% of the respondents perceived that online chat was the most use and benefit, with fewer responses for asynchronous interactions (emails, forums, discussion groups, and others). When asked how they most liked to interact with other students, however, over half of the responses (53.2%) were for emails. I observed that reading and writing in the chat box was the main method of interaction between students and teachers in the online classes, although as with email, the way to use the chat box was not formally taught. I perceived, through observing increased levels of participation, that the students, that the students enjoyed using the chat box, particularly the

symbols. The frequent use of symbols by the students was probably because they are an easy option. Symbols eliminate the stress of having to write or speak and students are probably familiar with and enjoy the use of symbols to communicate informally in instant messengers such as MSN and Yahoo.

5.2.2 Opportunities

The second research question: “*What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the opportunities afforded by the new WBDL programme (i.e., the attributes of the programme that are most helpful in achieving its educational objectives)*” was addressed using the results of the questionnaire survey and interviews with teachers and students.

The students’ responses about the opportunities afforded by the WBLD programme were generally very positive. Over half of the students agreed that e-learning was more effective than face-to-face classes. A higher proportion agreed that the programme provided more chance for the teacher to guide, discuss, and answer their questions. Nearly two thirds agreed that the programme improved their level of English relative to secondary school. An even higher proportion agreed that the English skills obtained by e-learning were useful and effective. Most students perceived that e-learning offered a wider range of strategies than F2F teaching including increased learner autonomy and participation in forums and discussion groups.

The key opportunity identified by both the teachers and students at the interviews was to enable access to learning at a distance either from their homes or places

of work. 41% of the students surveyed in this study lived outside Jeddah, and 45% were employed, so they could only study on a part time basis. Both students and teachers were receptive to e-learning. The WBDL programme was perceived to provide a structured opportunity to access language instruction with controlled practice which was cost and time effective. Students and teachers perceived valuable opportunities for understanding grammar and the acquisition of listening, reading and writing skills. Most students reported that they had made progress. In general most students and teachers were positive about the WBDL programme.

The patterns of responses to the questionnaires and the interview questions amongst the students and between the teachers and students were generally consistent. Statistical analysis indicated that the frequency distributions of the responses to the questionnaire did not vary significantly with respect to the demographic characteristics of the students (e.g., their sex, age, place of residence, computer experience, time spent online per day, type of internet connection, degree major, or occupation). Amongst the students, however, there was one major difference related to gender. A higher proportion of male than female students perceived the programme was useful for learning speaking skills, and that speaking was the aspect of English that they developed the most. The male students were more appreciative of opportunities to practise speaking skills, an outcome of their greater use of the microphone. There was a call from the female students for a female technical support team because they were reluctant to receive technical support only from males.

5.2.3 Constraints

The third question “*What do both the teachers and learners perceive to be the constraints of the new WBDL programme (i.e., the attributes of the programme that generally prevent or limit the achievement of its educational objectives)?*” was addressed using all available information. The main constraints for both learners and teachers were technical difficulties experienced during the synchronous online classes and the asynchronous review of recorded classes. The questionnaire revealed that over a half of the students agreed that they faced technical problems, and those students with limited computer experience perceived that working with the online technology was time consuming and complicated. The questionnaire responses did not, however, provide explicit information about exactly what the technical problems were, or how, if at all, they hindered the learning process. Interviews with teachers, and observations in the online classes revealed rich details about numerous technical problems in order of their frequency including: (1) Students unexpectedly logged on and off or became disconnected; (2) The sound system was poor, including the microphones frequently did not work properly and there was background interference; (3) Student-student and student-teacher interactions using online chat were constrained by slow or absent responses and (4) The inefficiency of the computer network resulted in failures of logging in and uploading and downloading files, and problems associated with the assessment of online tests. Technical problems disrupted the flow of communication between teachers and students, slowed down the lessons, and prevented the teachers from knowing

which students were present. The teachers perceived that some students experienced more technical problems than others, and called for the less skilled students to have more training in the use of software and hardware before they enrolled on the WBDL programme.

The filing system for recording the online classes was disorganized. The absence of a backup for the recorded lessons was a particular problem after the network went down after the floods in Jeddah and the recordings were lost. Each recording did not have a title, so that it was frustrating and difficult to find and refer back to a specific lesson covering a certain topic. There was no search engine to locate a specific file. The absence of playback (rewind button) meant that it was only possible to start at the beginning of a recording. It was not possible to replay and review a specific section. There were other communication problems which were not directly related to technology. Teachers may not have taken advantage of opportunities for interaction because they appeared to lack understanding of appropriate communicative pedagogy. Some students explained that they were shy or otherwise reluctant to participate and found ways to avoid it.

It was not possible to determine if the numerous technological problems were causally linked to the restricted pedagogic strategies, and/or the low participation levels of the students. It is possible, however, that the problems experienced with technology directly caused the teachers not to take advantage of enhancing the students' learning experience through higher levels of interaction. It is also possible that the technological problems and/or the pedagogic strategies resulted

in some students being reluctant to fully participate. It can only be speculated what might happen if the technology was better. Many students were observed attempting to use the microphone, but they faltered when difficulties were experienced; consequently it is predicted that better sound technology might lead to improved levels of verbal interaction. It is more difficult, however, to predict the impact of video technology. No attempt to use a web cam was observed. Using the current system therefore, it would appear to be difficult for the teachers to take advantage of some of the latest developments in the e-learning sector such as screen-casting tools (the technology which enables teachers to create video recordings directly in their browser and make the video available online so that the students can stream and see the video directly) and other developing technologies such as wireless mobile computing, personal digital assistants, videoconferencing, and the latest VLEs that enhance the experience of distributed learning. It is predicted that the online classes might flow more smoothly if better technologies were available; however, access to the latest technology would probably not influence the overriding pedagogical approach. The WBDL course was designed simply as an online version of a text-book and did not provide any opportunity for the teachers to develop their own style of communicative teaching, or to use authentic materials which catered for the individual learning styles or educational background of each student. The teachers were expected to be in charge of each class, to follow a certain number of units in an allotted time, and to conduct assessments based on online tests. The teachers found it difficult to deviate from a prescribed schedule. This is a

cultural norm in Saudi Arabia, where courses are based on text books, and where traditional patterns of power and conformity in the classroom are well established. Students who were brought up to believe that the teacher was the main provider of information may have found it difficult or would have been unsettled by requests to participate in discussion groups or forums where they were required to research information for themselves and/or to express their own ideas in a public domain. A further factor to consider is that of teacher confidence and training. The teachers had only received training in the basic features of the software and hardware and may have lacked the technical skills, motivation, and/or pedagogical understanding for setting up effective discussion groups, forums, and other interactive activities. Overall, it appeared as if the teachers were attempting to adapt their F2F teaching strategies to the online classroom, which is generally considered to be an inappropriate approach (Haavind, 2000).

5.3 Comparison with other case studies

Five similarities between the findings of this case study and previously reported case studies in developing countries were found. Firstly, the positive orientation to e-learning at a distance was evidenced in other studies (Sakar 2009, Wang 2008 and Al-Oraini 2007) suggesting that in principle learners in different contexts are receptive to this style of learning. Secondly, technical difficulties were reported in other studies (Mensah et al 2009, Wang 2004, Al-Asmari 2005, Aldojan 2007 and Sakar 2009) including limited internet access and technology, power cuts, limited equipment, image or sound break-up, delay in sound, blurry pictures in videos and frequent disconnections which impacted on learning

outcomes. Thirdly, the need for more training of teachers specifically to support e-learning was recognised in other case studies (Gallogly 2005, Malik & Shabbir 2008, Yildiz 2003, and Jarwan & Hamran 2009). Lack of confidence and technical ability related to limited training may result in teachers being directly responsible for a slower pace of learning. Fourthly, learning gains were suggested in other case studies (Al-Oraini 2007). A particular benefit for learning reading and writing rather than listening and speaking was noted by Hsu & Sheu (2008) and Krish & Wong (2009) suggesting that the technology seemed better suited to text rather than to voice. Finally, the reluctance of some students to participate in all the online activities, and the need for teachers to provide strong encouragement, was perceived to be a constraint. Nunan (2009) similarly suggested that the intrinsic reluctance of some students to participate was a major challenge facing teachers of languages. Reluctance to participate was associated with linguistic factors (e.g., difficulties in transferring grammar, syntax, and vocabulary from the first to the target language) and (b) psychological factors (e.g., lack of motivation, anxiety, and shyness). The reluctance of female Arab students to express themselves in public was identified as the manifestation of a cultural dimension that may have restrained their communication in the online classes.

Numerous differences were found between the results of this case study and others, specifically the role of the teacher, gender issues, the use of discussion groups and forums, the level of satisfaction of the students, the diversity of

student attitudes to e-learning, the comparison between DL courses and F2F courses, and the use of technology.

Al-Asmari (2005) reported that ICT provided an opportunity for the role of the teacher to shift from an authority to a facilitator. This was not observed in my study, where the teachers dominated most of the activities observed in the online classes.

Gender issues are prevalent in Saudi Arabia where the education of males and females is conventionally segregated (Jarwan & Hamran, 2009; Dabaj & Basak, 2008, and Al-Jarf 2005; 2006). Discomfort is experienced when males are mixed with females. Dabaj & Basak (2008) found that female students were more positive than male students towards e-learning, whereas Jarwan & Hamran (2009) revealed no differences between males and females. In my study, a higher proportion of male than female students perceived the WBDL programme was useful for learning speaking skills, and that speaking was the aspect of English that they developed the most. The male students were more appreciative of opportunities to practise speaking skills, an outcome of their greater use of the microphone. There was statistical evidence from the questionnaire responses to indicate that females found working with computers more difficult than males. In all other respects the responses of the males and females to the questionnaire items regarding their preferences and perceptions towards the WBDL course were equivalent.

Krish & Wong (2009) revealed that serious attempts were needed to support the online exchange and sharing of information within and between teachers and students in online courses. These included discussion groups and forums and other opportunities for student input via online chat and interactive whiteboards. Wang (2004) also concluded that the use of whiteboards was an effective method of synchronous online interaction. In contrast, the use of whiteboards was not observed in this case study, and only 16% of the students reported in the questionnaire that they interacted in discussion groups and forums.

Most (60%) of the students in this case study reported in the questionnaire that they were not entirely satisfied with distance learning, and perceived that a combination of both distance learning and F2F interaction was best when learning English. Only 15 % perceived that e-learning alone was the best. Higher levels of satisfaction with e-learning were reported elsewhere by Al-Jarf (2008) and Nkhosi (2009). The negative attitudes to e-learning at KAU were clearly dominated by technical problems, reported in over 60% of the responses, followed by no F2F interaction, reported by 31%. More positive and higher diversities of student attitudes towards online learning were reported elsewhere (Nkhosi, 2009; Krish & Wong, 2009; Al-Khashab, 2007; Chen and Wang 2008, Okita 2003, and Ghani & Daud 2006).

Other case studies have revealed a direct and positive comparison between online learning and F2F classes (Yildiz & Change, 2003 and Al-Asmari 2005). In this study, however, only about a half of the students agreed in the questionnaires that the WBDL programme allowed a more effective interaction

than F2F classes. One reason for the more positive attitudes of students towards e-learning found elsewhere was that blended learning, combining both F2F and online classes, which was not observed at KAU, was particularly well used and enjoyed by students (Al-Jarf 2008). Secondly, interactive activities such as discussion groups and forums have been built into other course designs facilitating an extensive exchange of information and ideas enjoyed by most students (Maungsamai 2003, Chen & Wang 2008, Nkhosi 2009).

5.4 Reflections on opportunities

The concept of opportunities, as it applied to this case study, was consistently and reliably measured by the questionnaire, indicated by Cronbach's $\alpha = .934$ for the numerically coded responses to items concerning confidence in the use of e-learning technology, building relationships, expectations about student numbers, classroom interactions, and developing skills. Triangulation between the questionnaire and interview responses revealed that the teachers and students were well aware of the potential opportunities afforded by WBDL. Most of the respondents agreed in the questionnaires and at interview that the WBDL programme promoted interaction and the building of relationships. With respect to learning opportunities linked to the use of technology, online classes were perceived to enhance teaching by using interactive tools which were not available in traditional F2F classes. Most respondents agreed that the programme allowed more effective interaction than F2F classes. A higher proportion agreed that the programme provided more chance for the teacher to guide, discuss, and answer questions. It also provided an opportunity for

students who were unable to attend the classes to play back recordings at their own convenience. The viability of the programme appeared to be maintained through the inherent belief that e-learning at KAU was a beneficial development, and I found little evidence of resistance. In contrast, in the 1990's a cultural resistance to e-learning was identified in Arab states (e.g. Abdelraheem, 2006) but this was not observed in my study. A possible reason could be that young people in KSA nowadays are extensively exposed to mass media and technology so they are more open to the idea of learning online. Accordingly, 86% of the students in the questionnaire survey perceived that computers are a useful aid to learning. The interviewed teachers at KAU were all very positive about the opportunities afforded by the course, even though they were aware of the infrastructure problems, including the poor quality of the technology and the lack of dedicated space to conduct online teaching. The teachers were self-selected and had confidence in the use of ICT. They were not resistant as described by Aldojan (2007) but were optimistic, without over-hyping the use of new technology as suggested by Williams & Goldberg (2005). It appeared, however, that the current KAU propaganda on their website concerning e-learning expresses excessive optimism, bearing in mind that this study revealed numerous technical and other constraints. This case study revealed that the opportunity to apply technology to support communicative language teaching (CLT) at KAU was not fully realized. The teachers observed in this study mainly acted as authority figures and modellers of grammar and the correct form of language whereas in the communicative approach the focus is on the meaning of

language and the teachers act mainly as facilitators. Many of the opportunities which ICT is reputed to bring to the English language teacher (Warschauer et al., 1998; 2000) summarized by the acronym ALIVE (Authenticity Literacy Interaction Vitality Empowerment) were not apparent.

Online chat was the most commonly used method of synchronous interaction between the teachers and the students, whilst the pedagogical advantages of asynchronous communication, including discussion groups and forums were not realized. The WBDL programme was in practice designed to be synchronous, and it was not meant to be accessed at any time other than when the teacher was present. Although an opportunity was provided to access recorded lessons at the students' convenience, this was perceived to be a second best approach, and was not well supported by the disorganised system of filing and the problems experienced in accessing specific recordings.

Digital multimedia resources were used sparingly during the online classes, authentic materials such as newspapers, magazines, and other English media used widely in the West were rarely accessed, and there were few opportunities for students to record and review their language performance. Opportunities to individualise learning were not taken, taking into account the individual abilities and learning styles of the students (Nunan, 1991; 1999). The WBDL course was essentially designed for beginners so that the content was not perceived to be appropriate for more advanced English learners.

5.5 Reflections on constraints

The concept of constraints as it applied to the title of this case study was consistently and reliably measured by the questionnaire, indicated by Chronbach's $\alpha = .716$ for the responses (based on items concerning technological and terminological issues associated with the use of computers and the internet). Triangulation between the questionnaire and interview responses and the observations of online classes also revealed consistently recorded constraints.

Twenty years ago, distance learning students had to overcome many technological constraints in order to study online successfully (Bates, 1996); however recent technological advances mean that e-learning is an easier option. Distance learners needed access to powerful computers and to know how to use them. They needed a modem with a sufficient speed to download web pages and files using a dial-up connection. Before the introduction of broadband technology, they needed a telephone line that could be dedicated for several hours a week to working on line, an Internet service provider capable of explaining how to log on, and they had to bear the cost of the calls. If they were on a party line or lived in an area where the local telephone company did not provide SLIP or PPP connections they would have to travel elsewhere to an area where it was provided. The questionnaire survey and interviews conducted in this study indicated, however, that most of the learners had excellent access to ICT. Virtually all owned a personal computer or laptop and had fast broadband, DSL, or 3G connections at home. Less than 1% used dial-up or had no personal

internet access. Over half of the students disagreed that they were not confident about their computer skills. Over two thirds disagreed that working with computers was time consuming and complicated. Consequently the technological obstacles reported by Bates (1996) were perceived not to be so prevalent in this case study.

Distance learning without F2F communication creates a psychological and communications space to be crossed, which is termed the transactional distance (Moore, 1997). This space can be a potential source of misunderstanding between the inputs of teachers and learners, acting as a constraint to e-learning. A transactional distance between teachers and students was identified in this study. Most students stated in the questionnaire and at the interviews that they would have liked some kind of F2F communication so it can be assumed that they felt some sense of transactional distance, which led at certain times (such as near their examinations) to students experiencing the anxiety of not understanding the teacher's lesson. The teachers also revealed in the interviews that the lack of visual contact with students made them feel uncomfortable. Moore (1997) suggested that the most highly interactive electronic teleconference media which permit the most intensive, personal, individual, and dynamic dialogue are most likely to bridge the transactional distance; however, no electronic medium, no matter how interactive its potential, can bridge the transactional distance if controlled by teachers who do not take full advantage of its interactivity, or if it is used by learners who do not participate fully with their

teachers. The results of this case study provide an example of how the potential was there to bridge the transactional distance but it was not fully realized.

5.6 Reflections on theoretical issues

Comparison with Laurillard's Conversation Framework (Table 5.1) revealed the deficiencies in the WBDL programme with respect to feedback from the teachers, opportunities for reflection, and adaptive teaching.

Table 5.1 Comparison with Laurillard's Conversational Framework

Electronic tools	Use	Constraint
Email	The requirement is that a teacher must send at least one e-mail to each student per week, and the student must reply. Usually emails are sent in response to student questions/complaints or to inform them about exams or assignments.	Restricted opportunities for feedback and reflection.
Forums	Students comment on a topic provided by the teachers (5 marks awarded)	Restricted opportunities for feedback and reflection.
Video-conferencing	Not used	No opportunities.
Audio-conferencing	Used by the male teachers to ask questions and by the male students to answer/ask questions. Never used by female students	Restricted opportunities for feedback and reflection. Adaptive teaching was not carried out.

Narrative (telling or imparting knowledge) appeared to be the only component of Laurillard's Conversational Framework that the teachers performed effectively. Most students in the questionnaires and at the interviews agreed that the course was well delivered by the teachers. Evidence for other types of interactions was

conflicting. There were some opportunities for the teachers to provide synchronous feedback, by spontaneously providing the answers to questions, or correcting language errors; however, asynchronous feedback by email appeared to be somewhat limited, and there were few formal opportunities for the students to enter into dialogues with the teachers to discuss the course or to be reflective about their learning (Table 5.1).

For example, the teachers asserted that there were strict requirements for sending emails to students; however, one of the students reported “Sometimes when there is something important we are supposed to know, the teachers don’t send us emails, which eventually causes the students who haven’t attended the lecture problems because they don’t know about those important things.” In contrast, another student reported “They [the teachers] are very cooperative and helpful and always in contact with us as much as they can”.

It was evident that the flow of information was generally from the teacher to the learners. Students were not observed to discuss issues with each other or with the teachers; they were only observed to ask or to answer directed questions. The emphasis was on low level recall, encouraged by prompts. The students were not encouraged to be reflective and engage in deep learning. The teachers were observed to adapt their teaching spontaneously during an online class, for example by simplifying a task, but they did not use feedback to plan a wider range of activities or to offer a differentiated approach to teaching.

The WBDL course implemented only the first two stages of Mayes & Fowler's Conceptualization Cycle, in which the teachers focused mainly on primary courseware (the online course book) and secondary courseware (online tests). High level learning was not promoted through the use of tertiary courseware permitting extensive student-student and teacher-student interactions, e.g., using discussion boards, video-conferencing, online simulations, and shared workspaces. Only one of the stages in Salmon's Five Stage Model was implemented, specifically the information stage (exposing the learners to online course materials and activities). There were little or no opportunities for student acclimatization to the VLE, online socialization, extensive interaction, or the achievement of learning outcomes through the learners taking responsibility for their own learning. The consequences of these constraints were a restricted approach to teaching and learning. A surface engagement of students with learning was evidenced by low levels of participation and relatively poor attendance at the online classes.

This case study was similar to one reported by Laurillard et al. (2000) in which a teacher simply allowed an online text book to speak for itself, rather than place the book into a menu of diverse e-learning activities. Teaching and assessment were all subservient to the book. This made the WBDL at KAU analogous to the traditional type of DL course in which text books were sent to students which were studied independently.

Considering the literature on both language learning and technology it is evident that dialogue should conceptually lie at the heart of the design of an e-learning language programme. Bussmann (1996:253) defines a language as “a vehicle for the expression or exchanging thoughts, concepts, knowledge and information as the fixing and transmission of experience and knowledge.” Consequently, to learn a language effectively, thoughts, concepts, knowledge and information must be transmitted between the participants of an educational community. If the students could interact more meaningfully in English, using the communicative approach, they should be able to benefit more from the learning experience (Mitchell, 1994; Richards, 2005; Nunan, 2009). However, such meaningful exchanges between the members of the online classes were not observed in this case study. Language within this programme was more about form rather than content and meaning. The model of language learning was restricted and as an application of technology was a directed rather than open learning or networked approach.

Educational theory, such as language acquisition theory, provides a lens through which to see an activity. It abstracts from reality in order to focus on an aspect of reality, hence theories are not all encompassing or exclusive. Language acquisition theories provide a way of understanding what was happening in this programme at KAU and, more importantly, what was not happening. In particular the teaching of the English language that I observed at KAU was not clearly underpinned by any of the conceptual principles underlying L2 acquisition, such as the Inter-language Theory (Selinker, 1972), the Acculturation /Pidginization

theory (Schumann, 1978) the Multidimensional Model (Clahsen, 1987) the Universal Grammar Theory (Chomsky, 1986), Krashen's (1981) theory of second-language acquisition, or the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996). The students I observed were not encouraged by the teachers to acquire language subconsciously, as does a child. They were forced into a conscious learning mode, which is the opposite of Krashen's theory, for example, by being required to memorize vocabulary and grammar based drills. The students were not part of a natural learning environment in which they acquired language through becoming aware of the gaps in their knowledge and understanding. They did not, following Long's hypothesis, reach such self-realization through authentic conversational interaction, since they were not encouraged to seek out the knowledge they lacked in order to produce it later when needed. The learners were not given ample opportunity to interact and express themselves in English with others, and to identify with the culture of the English language, which is a common feature of language acquisition theories. The teachers did not appear to understand that they should be prepared to talk less, listen more, and become active facilitators of their students' learning. Constructivist principles were not applied. Most of the students did not generally have the confidence to express themselves freely in English without constraint and the teachers did not have the motivation to take advantage of the benefits a communicative approach. The practical implications of the input hypothesis (Krashen, 1981) were not implemented. I could find no evidence that natural communicative input was the key to designing the WBDL syllabus, ensuring that each individual learner would

receive input that was appropriate to his/her current stage of linguistic competence. Although the students were presented with cognitive challenges my observations indicated that such challenges were relatively undemanding and were context reduced, limited to low level recall, fitting into the top left hand quadrant of Cummins's (1991) model. There was no indication that the students even knew the purpose of learning English or the settings in which English would be used. I found that the WBDL programme effectively promoted formal knowledge of the English language and helped in the acquisition of reading and writing skills; however, it provided limited opportunities for students to acquire and develop conversational skills in English or to use English when faced with new or authentic situations.

Another theoretical lens is provided by e-learning theories and earlier in the thesis Laurillard's Conversational Framework, Maye's & Fowler's Conceptualization Cycle, and Salmon's Five Stage Model were discussed. Again these provide a lens through which the use of technology can be viewed, and again help explain what did not happen, i.e. the interaction and negotiation of meaning between teachers and learners. The WBDL programme at KAU was found not to be underpinned by any type of recognizable e-learning model promoting deep learning through high levels of student-teacher interaction with constructive feedback and reflection. The programme was based on the idea that progressing through the content of an online course book constituted e-learning. When language acquisition theory was applied in the context of this case study it pointed towards a lack of focus on communicating in English and using authentic

language materials in the online classroom. There was clearly a mismatch between the theoretical issues that underpin communicative language teaching and the focus of the WBDL course on the development of reading and writing skills.

5.7 Reflections on contextual issues

There are several reasons why the observed state of affairs at KAU might have developed. Firstly, the use of course text books dominates education in many different contexts at KAU, and elsewhere in KSA and the Middle East (Al-Shumaimeri, 2001; Brock & Levers, 2007) so this is not a unique situation. Secondly, there is a cultural dimension to be considered. Communicative Language Teaching, Laurillard's framework and other e-learning models emphasize the need for extensive student-teacher and student-student interactions, and teachers and students are perceived to be equal participants in an educational community; however, in Saudi society it is not the cultural norm for students and teachers to interact freely in this way. The teacher is more of an authority figure who transmits information and the students are passive receivers (Abdelraheem, 2006; Al-Shumaimeri, 2001). Thirdly, following the cultural dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance (Hofstede, 2001; 2009) it is possible that the teachers prefer to avoid the risk of using Internet resources, so they play safe, and focus on the most readily available material, the course book. I found no direct evidence to support this possibility at KAU; however, previous studies have revealed the reluctance of some Saudi teachers to risk using Internet resources (Alebaikan & Troudi, 2010; Al-Wehabi et al., 2008). Depending mainly

on the course book at least ensured uniformity of style across several teachers, and permitted a pre-determined body of knowledge to be transmitted to the students within a time-limited schedule, which could be examined summatively. Finally, all of the language teachers were non-native speakers of English (two were Indians and two were Egyptians) so that Western views on communicative language teaching and higher education in general were not prevalent.

5.8 Limitations of this study

A threat to external validity was that the structure and size of the sample was not under my control, but was a convenience sample. The 240 respondents to the questionnaire were recruited from those students who enrolled for the WBDL programme between 2008 and 2009, and who also attended the KAU examination centre where they received the questionnaire. The teachers and students who I interviewed were all volunteers. Most of those I approached at KAU refused to be interviewed. No attempt was made to ensure that the sample accurately and completely represented the target population as a whole. I could not ensure (e.g., through the use of random numbers) that each member of the target population had an equal probability of being sampled. A random sample may have done this and random sampling may also have ensured that self-selection bias was not an issue, since students and teachers who volunteer to respond to a questionnaire or interview survey may have different perceptions to those who do not volunteer to answer (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). Nevertheless, few researchers in education employ random samples, as confirmed by Fraenkel

& Wallen (2007:106) who stated that “In the vast majority of studies that have been done in education, random samples have not been used.” The main reason for the widespread use of non-random samples is that when time, money, and other resources are in short supply, and when a rapid response is required but a low response rate is expected, as in this study, then a convenience sample is “the only option a researcher has” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007:100). A convenience sample is acceptable for educational research purposes if demographic information about the participants is known. If such information is available, then an assessment can be made as to whether or not the sample includes students from all or most sectors of the population, and not just a selective and biased fraction (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). To comply with this requirement, demographic information for all respondents was collected and analyzed. It was found that they represented a cross-section of the population with respect to gender, age, place of residence, experience, time online, type of internet connection, degree major, and occupation.

The information collected for the qualitative analysis represented the comments of only 8 students and 4 teachers, all of whom agreed to be interviewed, and therefore there may have been a response bias. The views of the much larger population of students and teachers who did not agree to be interviewed could not be represented. The absence of certain individuals from a case study may constitute a validity issue if they represent a recalcitrant group who intentionally did not participate for a particular reason, and whose responses would be significantly different to those who actually participated (Yin, 1994). Information

obtained by casual conversation, and not by formal interviews is therefore considered to be relevant here. Whilst working at KAU, I became aware of some students who intimated that they were unhappy about the WBDL programme. None of the students in this category volunteered to be interviewed and they may not have responded to the questionnaires, yet their voice should be heard. These students were clearly disinterested in the online-classes. They attended the WBDL programme simply because it was the only opportunity they had for obtaining a qualification and not because they thought that e-learning was necessarily the best way. This view was partially confirmed by one of the interviewed students who said she was forced to study through distance learning because of the big demand on university places and there was no other choice.

Not all WBDL students came to KAU during the examinations and could not respond to the questionnaire, since some attended one of the other three examination centres in KSA, depending upon which was nearest to their residence; however the loss of these students was not considered to bias the sample. Fraenkel & Warren (2007:171) stated that “absence from class, on the day of testing, for example, would not in most cases favor a particular group, since it would be incidental rather than intentional”. The choice of students to attend examination centres outside KAU was considered to be “incidental rather than intentional” and did not create a skewed sample.

The internal validity of this study also requires consideration i.e., the extent to which the observations were influenced by unknown or uncontrolled factors. Some potential threats to the internal validity of case studies in education

research include the history effect, the Hawthorne effect, and the implementation threat. The history effect is the possibility that some unanticipated event(s) happened during the time course of the case study (e.g., a change in the course objectives and/or the implementation of new learning methods) that influenced the outcomes (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). No changes in education policy occurred in this case study; however, a critical unanticipated event did occur which was out of the control of the teachers, students, and researcher. The KAU computer system went down after the floods in Jeddah on the 25th November 2009 and access returned on 26th December, when all previously recorded lectures were erased. These events coincided with the observations of online classes therefore the field notes I made at that time reflected an elevation of technical problems. This disruption also restricted the number of online classes that I could observe.

The Hawthorne effect describes any short term reactivity of participants to a situation in which they are being investigated. For example, participants in a case study may feel obliged to behave or respond in an unusual or abnormal way in order to satisfy an observer or interviewer (Jones, 1992). Since both the students and teachers in this study were sensitive about being investigated, there is a small possibility that a Hawthorne effect might have influenced the outcomes. The extreme sensitivity of both teachers and students would probably not be an issue if the case study was carried out at a University in the UK, where students and teachers are accustomed to detailed external scrutiny of the quality of teaching and learning. For example, audit and review teams from the QAA

(Quality Assurance Agency) carried out over 160 assessments of teaching quality at University departments in the UK during 2008-2009 (QAA, 2009). Teachers and students in KSA however, are not immersed in the advanced culture of quality assurance that pervades the academic environment in the UK, Students at KAU do not have to develop Personal Development Planning (PDP) portfolios, and they did not appear to me to display outwardly the personal characteristics of self-assured independent learners. The perception that they were being picked out and personally evaluated was an issue of cultural and ethical sensitivity which, in my opinion, severely limited the numbers of students and teachers who volunteered to contribute to this study and may have slightly influenced their responses to my questions.

Implementation threats refer to difficulties experienced in interpreting information because the constructs being measured lack evidence of validity and/or reliability. The implementation threat was taken into account in this study through the critical evaluation of reliability and validity. Opportunities and constraints were considered to be reliable and valid constructs which warranted detailed study.

5.9 Reflexivity

The significance of this case study cannot be described as cross-cultural, since it did not aim to explicitly compare the activities of one culture with another, nor was it concerned with acculturation, discrimination, racism, or cultural stereotypes (Trimmer & Warnock, 1992); however, my personal perspective was cross-cultural, since my life has been strongly influenced by both Arab and

Western cultures. My experience of educational systems in the KSA, USA, Canada, and UK provided me with the ability to reflect on the findings from different cultural perspectives, so that I could exceed the boundary of the mono-cultural (Arab) context in which the WBDL course at KAU was embedded.

Since I used an interpretive approach, I could not assume a value-neutral stance. I was aware that my cross-cultural background may have influenced my interpretation of the findings. Since I am a stakeholder, I was inexorably implicated in the phenomenon being studied, and my personal viewpoint may have led me to be selective as to whose voices were heard and to dwell on certain aspects of the research more than others. I was, however, aware of the need for reflexivity (Holland, 1999). In order to interpret the findings without bias, and to prevent my own value judgments from contaminating the conclusions, I attempted to control my cross-cultural viewpoint by being self-critical. I iterated between my interpretation of the findings, my personal experiences and beliefs, the theoretical and pedagogical frameworks that underpinned the research, and the excellent advice and constructive feedback that I received from my English supervisors.

5.10 Summary of key points

Six key points arising from this case study, focussing on what I perceived to be the salient opportunities and constraints of the programme, are summarized in Table 5.2. Only one key point refers to the opportunities. Five points refer to the constraints. The constraints were therefore clearly outweighed by the

opportunities. The key points are summarized with reference to what happened, why I believe it happened, and what I considered the consequences were.

Table 5.2 Key points of discussion

What happened	Why it happened	Consequences
A unifying theme was that the participants were very positive and optimistic about the potential opportunities afforded by e-learning	Expectations for increasing numbers of students, effective online interactions, and acquisition of English language skills.	The viability of the programme appeared to be maintained through the underlying belief that e-learning through the medium of CentrEM was an advantageous development at KAU.
The attendance levels were relatively low and active participation in the online classes was limited.	Possibly due to the high frequency of technological problems linked to shallow engagement with e-learning.	Encouraging student participation was a major issue. The teachers used affective strategies (e.g., greetings, prompting, humour, and using symbols in the chat box) to persuade the students to participate.
Technological problems intruded at regular 2-6 minute intervals during the online classes.	Poor infrastructure.	Disrupted the flow of communication between teachers and students, slowed down the lessons, and prevented the teachers from knowing who was present
Some students experienced more problems than others.	Students with different levels of skills in computing and English language were not segregated.	Disrupted the flow of communication between teachers and students, and slowed down the lessons. Both teachers and students called for segregated classes.
Female students were not encouraged to speak in English using the microphone.	Cultural dimension.	Female students were disadvantaged because they did not develop skills in speaking English.
Absence of a clear underlying theoretical framework for teaching and learning a foreign language to support e-learning and foreign language learning based on recommendations in the literature.	The teachers tried to adapt F2F classroom strategies to the e-learning environment.	ICT was used only as a platform for instruction and to provide access to learning materials (mainly the course book). There was little opportunity for extensive communicative interaction, high level e-learning and reflection.

CHAPTER SIX

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 General introduction

This section provides recommendations (6.2) for learners, teachers, and the institution with (6.3) suggestions for future research and finally (6.4) the general conclusion are presented.

6.2 Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the evidence obtained from use of questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. They are provided with full recognition of the constraints which challenge the development of e-learning at KAU.

6.2.1 Learners

Not all learners were seriously committed to the WBDL programme. The students should make every attempt to attend the online classes and commit fully to them. It is appreciated that some students are working or have other commitments at the same time as studying; nevertheless they should recognize that effective time management is a beneficial professional skill that needs to be acquired and developed in addition to the use of English language whilst attending the WBDL programme. The constructive use of time is beneficial in any aspect of life. Knowing what the goals and options are and organizing time and resources to

achieve them are the cornerstones of good self management (Counseling and Development Centre, 1999). It should also be emphasized that lack of participation will ultimately lead to a low grade qualification which will not benefit future career prospects.

Students should attempt to make e-learning more exciting and relevant to their needs by accessing authentic materials in the English language such as online books, newspapers, magazines, and educational websites and interacting with each other online in English.

6.2.2 Teachers

The time span of each online lesson should be not more than 50 minutes so that students do not lose their concentration and interest. Teachers should formally monitor student attendance in each class. A feature could be introduced which indicates to the teacher that the student is idle when not using the computer for a certain length of time. Teachers should not just rely on the online course book for information; they should be more confident in the use of ICT, engage more creatively with the online programme, and in collaboration with learners, take more advantage of authentic English language materials on the Internet. They could also use more video files, audio files and Microsoft Powerpoint slides in Centra, to make the online learning experience more diverse, interesting and enjoyable. WBDL teachers should organize professional development seminars or discussion forums where they can learn from each other's and the learners' experiences.

6.2.3 Institution

Before enrolling on the WBDL course students should be tested in English and ICT skills. Students with inadequate computing skills should be given an intensive training course during the foundation year to learn more about how to use the system. The online classes should not contain students with mixed abilities since this interferes with the delivery of the programme. The classes and the curriculum should be divided according to the different levels of ability of the learners.

The institution should be aware that enrolment on the WBDL course involves financial hardship to many students. Students should not necessarily have to buy hard copies of the course books, since it is not so easy for students living outside Jeddah to buy them. WBDL students could be supported financially by offering them deals with internet providers and computer stores. For example, Bates (1996) described a WBDL course in which a low-cost rental scheme or free loans of computers was implemented. There was a technology fee per course imposed on all students, in addition to their tuition fees. This fee was used to support students, improve the local area network, provide docking ports for portables, and make easy access to public computers available in public places on campus.

The poor Infrastructure is clearly a problem, but technical issues can be resolved in time, assuming the capacity of the system can be expanded. There should be a 24/7 help desk for technical support available for all WBDL students. There

should be a hotline dedicated only to female students, because some females are reluctant to call for support from males.

The online classes should ideally be timed flexibly, so that they are suitable for individual student circumstances. Some students have called for classes in the mornings and others in the evenings. For students who are unable to attend in real time, all of the online classes should be recorded and made available for review at any time. Each of the files containing the recorded classes should be properly indexed, with date, time, and topic, and backed up in case of server breakdown. There should be a rewind facility to access any part of the recording, not just the beginning and the end. Ideally it should be possible to download the files to a computer or upload to an MP3 player, iPod, or iPhone.

Methods of assessment should be changed so that students who are disconnected through no fault of their own during an online test should not be penalized. It should be possible to sit examinations offline so that a student is not awarded a zero mark due to disconnection. Students should, however, be warned that plagiarism (permitting someone else to answer the questions, or directly copying another's work) will be severely penalized. The teachers could check whether students had copied material directly from the Internet using online products such as Turnitin (www.turnitin.com).

Formal methods of quality assurance should be developed, including regular opportunities for the students to air their encouragements and/or complaints to the teachers, and for the teachers to be involved in teaching quality assessments

as performed routinely in Universities throughout the UK (QAA, 2009). The introduction of Personal Development Planning (PDP) portfolios, designed to build a capacity in students to reflect upon their own learning, and to identify and develop their own study skills, habits and attitudes, may be beneficial (e.g., as described by Johnson (2007) at the University of Warwick, UK.)

60% of the students and all of the teachers commented that they would prefer more F2F interaction, implying that the development of a blended learning approach might be beneficial in the future. Blended learning is already well established at other Saudi universities and KAU may learn from best practices developed elsewhere (Alebaikan & Troudi, 2010).

Teachers should be given more privacy by offering them rooms or cubicles for conducting online classes, rather than the current situation of many teachers teaching in one room at the same time, which is a source of distraction. More training for teachers conducting online classes is required, not just in the use of the technology, but also in more innovative approaches to teaching online.

6.3 Future research

Action research is recommended, in which the WBDL teachers at KAU are personally involved in reflecting upon their work, solving technical problems, and developing innovative online pedagogic strategies for teaching English to Saudi learners. Action research is recommended because it is rooted in the needs of the practitioners rather than the aims of external researchers (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). Action research would create a local base of information and ideas that

could be used to generalize the policy and practice of e-learning at KAU. For example, I personally would have benefited from conducting online classes at KAU. This would have allowed me to experience the online programme from the teacher's perspective and to help understand how it can be developed.

Research could be conducted to determine if alternative approaches might help to elevate student attendance, encourage more active participation and promote English language acquisition. It is not known if the communicative approach would be viable in the context of Teaching English to online students at KAU, but previous research has shown that it has worked elsewhere in developing countries. Certain aspects of the communicative approach could be introduced speculatively and evaluated e.g., (a) More emphasis given to communicating meaningfully in spoken English rather than emphasis on the form and structure of the language; (b) The introduction of more authentic English language materials into the learning situation; (c) The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not just on learning the language, but also to reflect on their learning, and to be involved in the learning management process; (d) The enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning; and (e) Attempts to link classroom language learning with English language activities and their purpose outside the classroom.

The problem of female Saudi learners not acquiring and developing skills in speaking the English language needs to be resolved, taking into account the

sensitive cultural issues involved. A research programme focussing directly on the needs of female learners in the VLE would be beneficial.

Although previous e-learning models have been developed for use in Western cultures, there is a need to develop an appropriate theoretical framework to support the needs of e-learning development in the context of the cultural dimensions of Saudi Arabia.

6.4 General conclusions

This case study has contributed to global knowledge of e-learning and educational theory using innovative research methodologies and has achieved its objective of contributing to the expanding literature on e-learning.

6.4.1 Contribution to knowledge of e-learning

Despite limitations imposed by the limited number of teachers and students who volunteered to participate, this case study contributed to knowledge of e-learning by identifying a case in which technology was used to support a restricted approach to English language acquisition based mainly on grammar, listening, reading, and writing. Technology was used mainly as a platform for instruction and to provide access to learning materials (primarily the online course book).

The course was viable because it was based on an underlying belief that the use of technology was a beneficial development. The teachers and most students expressed optimism about the opportunities for e-learning in a synchronous VLE; nevertheless the attendance levels of students remained relatively low during the

period of observations and active participation was found to be limited. Encouraging student participation was therefore a major pedagogic issue. The teachers used several affective strategies (e.g., greetings, prompts, encouragement, humour, and symbols in the chat box) to persuade the students to participate. These strategies were hindered by technological difficulties which intruded at regular intervals during the lessons, including, in order of frequency: (1) Students logged off or became disconnected (2) The sound system was inadequate, the microphones frequently did not work properly, and there was background interference; (3) Interactive responses were often slow or absent; (4) Technical difficulties related to the inefficient network, including problems logging in, downloading/uploading files, and the lack of backup. Technical problems disrupted the flow of communication and prevented the teachers from knowing which students were present.

Some students appeared to be less skilled in the use of computers and the English language than others, and consequently experienced more problems. This also disrupted the lessons and caused frustration to the teachers. Female learners were particularly disadvantaged because they were not encouraged to speak in English using the microphone. This constraint was identified as a sensitive cultural issue and demands further research to provide a workable solution.

The course was not underpinned by recognizable prescriptive models of e-learning designed specifically for use in a VLE such as Laurillard's Conversational Framework. The teachers adapted traditional F2F classroom

strategies widely used in Saudi Arabia to the e-learning environment. They generally applied a behaviourist or teacher-centred approach, extracting certain elements from the Grammar-Translation and Audio-lingual methods. The principles of constructivism or communicative language learning were not in evidence. The flow of information was mainly from the teacher to the student, with emphasis on low level recall, encouraged by prompts. The students were given little opportunity to formally discuss their learning with each other or with the teachers. They were not formally encouraged to be reflective or engage in deep learning. The teachers did not use feedback adaptively to plan a differentiated approach. The curriculum was not flexible enough take into account the different abilities, learning styles, and preferences of each individual student.

This case study contributed positively to the future of e-learning at KAU by providing practical recommendations for learners, teachers, and the institution to help develop the WBDL programme.

6.4.2 Contribution to research methodology

My research methodology was innovative for four reasons. Firstly, this study was one of the relatively few performed in a developing country to successfully use mixed methods, integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies, to describe the instructional methods and identify the constraints and opportunities of a WBDL programme. Secondly, I used my unique educational and social background in the USA, Canada, UK, and KSA to apply a cross-cultural perspective that is rarely applied in research on the teaching and learning of

English as a foreign language in a mono-cultural (Arab) context. Thirdly, I developed a method of observing, categorizing and analyzing the patterns of behaviour, pedagogic strategies, and other events that were peculiar to participants operating in a synchronous e-learning environment. Finally, I attempted to overcome the extreme cultural sensitivity of Saudi learners and teachers to feeling uncomfortable about being picked out and subjected to any kind of external assessment of their activities.

6.4.3 Contribution to educational theory

This case study contributed to educational theory by attempting to integrate the conceptual frameworks of e-learning and foreign language learning into the context of KSA. My research (a) Emphasized the value of e-learning models developed in the West, such as Laurillard's Conversational Framework, to identify the deficiencies in the student-teacher interactions with respect to the WBDL at KAU; (b) Highlighted the need to link e-learning models and theories of language acquisition in order to develop and prescribe an appropriate theoretical issues dedicated to online English learning in the socio-linguistic context of KSA; and (c) Promoted the philosophy that cultural dimensions make each scene of e-learning unique, arguing against a one-size-fits-all approach. I do not believe that it is imperative for KAU to blindly follow the e-learning concepts developed in the West. Greater understanding of contextual issues must be addressed and integrated into a sound theoretical and pedagogical framework underpinning e-learning at KAU. More research on how the cultural orientation of Saudis shapes

their learning behaviour could in future help to match teaching styles to e-learning styles.

6.4.4 Personal contribution

As a consequence of conducting this case study, I believe that I have become a confident researcher with a significant contribution to make to the literature.

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APPENDIX I A
ARABIC QUESTIONNAIRE

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

عزيزي الطالب /

عزيزتي الطالبة /

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته،،،

أود في البداية أن أقدم نفسي إليكم، فأنا طالبة بمرحلة الدكتوراة ومبتعثة من جامعة الملك عبدالعزيز إلى جامعة وارك Warwick ببريطانيا، وأقوم الآن بجمع البيانات عن رسالتي لمرحلة الدكتوراة حول برنامج التعليم عن بعد (التعليم الإلكتروني/ e-learning) بجامعة الملك عبدالعزيز، وكيفية الاستفادة منه في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة ثانية وماهي الصعوبات والعقبات التي تواجهه، وكيفية الحد منها أو القضاء عليها.

هذا وقد تم اختيارك للإجابة على اسئلة الاستبيان المرفق، وليس بالضرورة ذكر الاسم ، كما أن المعلومات التي سوف يُدلي بها ستعامل بسرية تامة ولن تستخدم إلا في أغراض هذا البحث .

أرجو التكرم بالإجابة على جميع فقرات هذا الاستبيان بدقة وعدم ترك أي إجابة لأي سؤال، ومن ثم إعادته فضلا إلينا على بريدنا الإلكتروني التالي:

H.I.Kutubkhanah-al-Saied@warwick.ac.uk

وفقكم الله ولكم مني خالص الشكر والتقدير،،،

الباحثة بمرحلة الدكتوراه

حنان بنت إسماعيل كتبخانة السيد

الجزء الأول: (معلومات أولية)

أرجو التكرم بالإجابة على جميع أسئلة الاستبيان التالية بدقة، عن طريق وضع علامة (√) في المربع المناسب أمام كل سؤال، أو التظليل لإجابتك المناسبة:

1- متى تم التحاقك ببرنامج التعليم عن بعد بالجامعة :

2- الجنس:

☐ -A ذكر

☐ -B أنثى

3- العمر:

☐ -A 17 – أقل من 20

☐ -B 20 – أقل من 23

☐ -C 23 سنة فأكثر

4- ما هي الكلية الملتحق / الملتحقة بها، أو ترغب / ترغب في الالتحاق بها في الجامعة:

☐ -A كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية

☐ -B كلية الاقتصاد والإدارة

-C كلية أخرى (الرجاء ذكرها)

5- ما هو مقر إقامتك الدائم:

☐ -A مدينة جدة

☐ -B مدينة أو قرية خارج مدينة جدة

(فضلا أذكر / اذكر اسم المدينة أو القرية)

6- ما هو وضعك الوظيفي الحالي:

- ☐ A- طالب / طالبة متفرغ / متفرغة للدراسة
- ☐ B- طالب/طالبة وموظف/موظفة في القطاع الخاص
- ☐ C- طالب/طالبة وموظف/موظفة في القطاع الحكومي

7- هل تمتلك/ تملك:

- A- جهاز حاسب شخصي ☐ نعم ☐ لا
- B- جهاز محمول ☐ نعم ☐ لا

8- هل لديك اشتراك في شبكة الانترنت؟ (إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم فضلا اجب على السؤال رقم 9، وإذا كانت الإجابة ب لا فانتقل الى السؤال رقم 10):

- A- نعم ☐
- B- لا ☐

9- ما هو نوع الاتصال الذي تستخدمه / تستخدمينه في شبكة الانترنت؟

- A) dialup internet connection ☐ B) DSL internet connection ☐
- C) satellite internet connection ☐ D) USB internet ☐

10- ما هي المدة الزمنية التي تقضيها / تقضيها على شبكة الانترنت غالبا كل يوم؟

- A- أقل من ساعة ☐
- B- من ساعة إلى أقل من 3 ساعات ☐
- C- 3 ساعات إلى أقل من 6 ساعات ☐
- D أكثر من 6 ساعات ☐

11- من وجهة نظرك ماهي درجة خبرتك في إستخدام الحاسب الآلي عموماً؟

- ☐ -A خبرة عالية
- ☐ -B خبرة فوق المتوسط
- ☐ -C خبرة متوسطة
- ☐ D خبرة أقل من المتوسط

الجزء الثاني: (معلومات عن برنامج التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد في جامعة الملك عبدالعزيز)

12- هل سبق أن تلقيت / تلقيتي أي مادة أو دورة بواسطة التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد قبل التحاقك بجامعة الملك عبدالعزيز؟

- ☐ -A نعم
- ☐ -B لا

في حال الإجابة بنعم فضلاً تحديد مسمى الدورة أو المادة :

13- من وجهة نظرك ماهي الطريقة المثلى لتعلم اللغة الانجليزية ؟

- ☐ -A التعلم الإلكتروني عن بعد
- ☐ -B التعلم في داخل الفصل الدراسي فقط
- ☐ -C التعلم الإلكتروني عن بعد والفصل الدراسي معاً

14- لدي ثقة في جدوى ونجاح تطبيق التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد في جامعة الملك عبدالعزيز في تعليم اللغة الانجليزية:

- ☐ -A نعم ☐ -B لا ☐ -C محايد

15- ما هو أكثر ما يعجبك ببرنامج التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ؟

- ☐ A- كثرة التطبيق والتدريب
- ☐ B- إعطائي استقلالية في التعلم
- ☐ C- تقليل تكلفة الدراسة
- ☐ D- اكتسابي مهارات أكثر من الحاسب الآلي وبرامجه
- ☐ E- تنمية مهارات عديدة في اللغة الإنجليزية وغيرها
- ☐ H- أخرى (الرجاء ذكرها

16- ما هو أقل ما يعجبك ببرنامج التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ؟

- ☐ A- انعدام الاتصال المباشر وجهًا لوجه بين الطالب والأستاذ
- ☐ B- ظهور مشكلات فنية (كانقطاع وبطء الاتصال)
- ☐ C- يقلل الدافعية للتعلم
- ☐ D- يقلل من العلاقات الاجتماعية بين الطالب وزملائه
- ☐ E- أخرى (الرجاء ذكرها)

17- في أي الأماكن عادة تستخدم / تستخدم برنامج التعلم الإلكتروني عن بعد؟

- ☐ A- من المنزل
- ☐ B- من جهة العمل
- ☐ C- من جهات أخرى (فضلا تحديدها)

18- في أي وقت عادة تفضل/ تفضلي إستخدام برنامج التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد؟

- ☐ A- في الصباح
- ☐ B- في وقت الظهيرة ومابعدھا
- ☐ C- في المساء

19- ما هي المدة الزمنية التي تقضيها/تقضيها يوميا عادة في إنجاز الواجبات والإطلاع على محتوى المواد في برنامج التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد؟

- ☐ A- أقل من ساعة
- ☐ B- من ساعة إلى ساعتين
- ☐ C- من ساعتين إلى 3 ساعات
- ☐ D- من 3 ساعات إلى 4 ساعات
- ☐ E- أكثر من 4 ساعات

20- أي من الطرق التالية تكون أكثر إستخداما وفائدة لديك في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ببرنامج التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد بالجامعة؟ (يمكن إختيار أكثر من إجابة)

- ☐ A- دردشة
- ☐ B- المنتديات
- ☐ C- البريد الإلكتروني
- ☐ D- الأسئلة الشائعة
- ☐ E- أخرى (الرجاء ذكرها):

21- أي من الطريقتين التاليتين تفضل / تفضلي في التعلم الإلكتروني عن بعد؟

☐ -A EMES

☐ -B CENTRA (الفصلــــــــــــــــول الافتراضية)

22- ما رأيك في تصميم موقع اللغة الإنجليزية المستخدم في برنامج التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد في جامعة الملك عبدالعزيز (مثلا الالوان وحجم الخط المستخدم) ؟

☐ -A يعجبني كثيرا

☐ -B يعجبني

☐ -C لا يعجبني

☐ -D لا يعجبني أبدا

☐ -E محايد

23- ما هو رأيك في درجة سهولة دخول موقع محتوى مواد اللغة الإنجليزية؟

☐ -A الدخول سهل جدا

☐ -B الدخول سهل

☐ -C الدخول صعب

☐ -D الدخول صعب جداً

24- هل مستوى منهج اللغة الإنجليزية المقدم عبر برنامج التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد ملائم لك؟

☐ -A نعم

☐ -B لا

25- أنا أجد طريقة التعلم عن بعد ملائمة لتعلم مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية التالية: (يمكن اختيار أكثر من إجابة)

- A) reading ☐ B) listening ☐ C) writing ☐ D) speaking ☐

26- أنا أجد طريقة التعلم الإلكتروني عن بعد ملائمة لتعلم المكونات اللغوية التالية:

- A) grammar ☐ B) vocabulary ☐

27- أي مهارة من المهارات التالية في اللغة الإنجليزية قد تم تنميتها لديك أكثر من غيرها من المهارات عن طريق التعلم الإلكتروني عن بعد؟

- A) reading ☐ B) listening ☐ C) writing ☐ D) speaking ☐

28- أي من المكونات اللغوية التالية في اللغة الإنجليزية قد تم تنميتها لديك عن طريق التعلم الإلكتروني عن بعد؟

- A) grammar ☐ B) vocabulary ☐

29- ما هي المصادر الأخرى المساعدة لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية المقدمة لكم عبر برنامج التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد بالجامعة؟

- A- ملخصات ☐
B- كتب ☐
C- محاضرات عن طريق الباور بوينت ☐
D- أخرى (الرجاء ذكرها)

30- ما هي الوسائل للتفاعل مع زملائك التي تستخدمها / تستخدمينها عبر التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد؟ (يمكن اختيار أكثر من إجابة)

- A- البريد الإلكتروني ☐
B- منتديات ☐



C- الدرسية

D- أخرى (الرجاء ذكرها).....

نأمل تفضلكم بوضع علامة (√) في العמוד المناسب أمام العبارة للتعبير على درجة موافقتكم عليها أو عدم موافقتكم:

العبارة	موافق بشدة	موافق	غير موافق	غير موافق بشدة	محايد
الدرجة للموافقة	5	4	3	2	1
31- لست واثقا من مستوى مهاراتي في الحاسب الآلي					
32- يعتبر الحاسب الآلي وسيلة مفيدة للتعلم					
33- أشعر بأن استخدام الحاسب الآلي مضيعة للوقت					
34- أشعر بأن الحاسب الآلي أداة معقدة بالنسبة لي					
35- أشعر بعدم وجود أي معوقات بالنسبة لي من الناحية التقنية في استخدام نظام التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد					
36- أشعر بأن المصطلحات العلمية المتخصصة التي تقدم في مستويات اللغة الإنجليزية غير كافية					
37- أشعر بأن مدرس مادة اللغة الإنجليزية يقوم بتغطية أهداف المادة التي تدرس عن بعد بشكل جيد					
38- الواجبات التي تقدم لي واضحة					

					التفاعل مع زملائي عبر النظام يسمح لي بأن أبني علاقات وصداقات قوية معهم	39-
					أتوقع بأن يكون هناك عدد أكبر من الطلاب والطالبات في نظام التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد بالجامعة في السنوات القادمة	40-
					أشعر بأنه من المهم مستقبلا بأن تكون هناك تخصصات جديدة أخرى في الجامعة تستوعب طلاب وطالبات يدرسون على نظام التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد	41-
					أشعر بأن نظام التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد يسمح بالتفاعل الإيجابي بين الطالب والمدرس أكثر من التعليم في داخل الفصل	42-
					أشعر بأن نظام التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد يتيح الفرصة للمدرس بشكل كبير للتوجيه والإرشاد والنقاش والرد على الاستفسارات	43-
					أشعر بأن مهاراتي في اللغة الإنجليزية في المرحلة الجامعية قد تحسنت كثيرا عما كان هو عليه في المرحلة الثانوية	44-
					أشعر بأن كافة مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية التي قد تعلمتها عبر نظام التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد مفيدة وفعالة	45-

فضلا قدم / قدمي أي مقترحات تراها / ترينها ملائمة للارتقاء بنظام التعليم عن بعد بجامعة الملك عبدالعزيز؟

شاكراً لكم إقتطاع جزء من وقتكم لتعبئة هذا الاستبيان

متمنية لكم التوفيق والنجاح

APPENDIX I B

Numerically coded questionnaire items

Item	Numerical codes for variables
1. When did you join the distance learning programme at KAU?	1 = 2007/2008 2 = 2008/2009 3 = 2009/2010
2. Are you?	1 = Male 2 = Female
3. Please state your age:	1 = 17- less than 20 2 = 20- less than 23 3 = 23 and more
4. Please state the major you're studying or will be studying at KAU:	1 = Arts and Humanities 2 = Economics and Administration
5. Where do you live?	1 = Jeddah 2 = City or village outside Jeddah
6. What is your occupational status?	1 = Full time student 2 = Student and employee in a private sector 3 = Student and employee in a governmental sector
7. Do you own a personal computer:	1 = Yes 2 = No
Do you own a laptop computer:	1 = Yes 2 = No
8. Do you have access to the internet?	1 = Yes 2 = No
9. What type of internet connection do you have?	0 = No internet connection 1 = Dialup 2 = DSL 3 = USB 4 = 3G

10. Approximately how much time do you spend online every day?	1 = Less than 1 hour
	2 = 1 hour to less than 3 hours
	3 = 3 hours to less than 6 hours
	4 = more than 6 hours
11. Experience with computers	4 = High experience
	3 = Above average
	2 = Average
	1 = Less than average
12. Have you ever taken e-learning courses?	1 = Yes
	2 = No
13. According to you what is the best way of learning English?	1 = Distance learning
	2 = In-class
	3 = Combination of both
14. I have confidence about the new distance learning programme in teaching English at KAU	1 = Yes
	2 = No
	3 = No opinion
15. What are the things you like most in the new distance learning programme?	1 = Like most a lot of practice and drill
	2 = Not like most a lot of practice and drill
	1 = Like most learner autonomy
	2 = Not like most learner autonomy
	1 = Like most reduction of cost of study
	2 = Not like most reduction of cost of study
	1 = Like most gain of computer skills
	2 = Not like most gain of computer skills
	1 = Like most development of English skills
	2 = Not like most development of English skills
16. What are the things you like the least in the new distance learning programme?	1 = Least like no face to face interaction
	2 = Not least like no face to face interaction

	1 = Least like technical problems
	2 = Not least like technical problems
	1 = Least like self-motivation
	2 = Not least like self-motivation
	1 = Least like reduction of social interaction
	2 = Not least like reduction of social interaction
17. Where do you usually get online when using distance learning program?	1 = Home
	2 = Work
	3 = Elsewhere
18. When do you usually access the online course?	1 = Morning
	2 = Afternoon
	3 = Evening
19. How much time do you spend per day working on online?	1 = Less than 1 hour
	2 = One to 2 hours
	3 = Two to 3 hours
	4 = Three to 4 hours
	5 = More than 4 hours
20. What features of the new online learning programme do you mostly use and benefit from?	Chatting 1 =Yes 2 =No
	Forums and discussion groups 1 =Yes 2 =No
	Emails 1 =Yes 2 =No
	FAQs 1 = Yes 2 = No
	Other 1 = Yes 2 = No
21. Do you prefer having live online classrooms or working on your own online?	Live classrooms (Centra) 1 = Yes 2 = No
	Work on my own (EMES) 1 = Yes 2 = No
22. What do you think of the layout of the English course website?	1 = I strongly like it
	2 = I like it
	3 = No opinion
	4 = I dislike it
	5 = I strongly dislike it

23. What do you think of the ease of access to the course website?	1 = Very easy to access 2 = Easy to access 3 = Difficult to access 4 = Very difficult to access
24. Was the level of the English language presented in the DL programme suitable?	1 = Yes 2 = No
25. I find this method useful in learning the following skills:	Reading 1 = Yes 2 = No Listening 1 = Yes 2 = No Writing 1 = Yes 2 = No Speaking 1 = Yes 2 = No
26. I find online learning useful in learning the following language contents:	Grammar 1 = Yes 2 = No Vocabulary 1 = Yes 2 = No
27. Which aspect of English have you developed the most?	Reading 1 = Yes 2 = No Listening 1 = Yes 2 = No Writing 1 = Yes 2 = No Speaking 1 = Yes 2 = No
28. Which of the following aspects of English have you developed through distance learning?	Grammar 1 = Yes 2 = No Vocabulary 1 = Yes 2 = No
29. What other sources do you use in learning programme?	Handouts 1 = Yes 2 = No Books 1 = Yes 2 = No Microsoft Power point 1 = Yes 2 = No Microsoft Word 1 = Yes 2 = No
30. How do you like to interact with other students?	Email 1 = Yes 2 = No Discussion groups 1 = Yes 2 = No Chat rooms 1 = Yes 2 = No Other 1 = Yes 2 = No
31 I am not confident about my computer skills	Scores:
32 Computers are useful aids to learning	

33 I find computers time consuming	1 strongly disagree
	2 disagree
34 Computers are too complicated for me	3 no opinion
	4 agree
35 I'm not facing any technical problems in using the distance learning system (reverse scores) ^a	5 strongly agree
36 I feel that the specialist English terminology that is being taught is not sufficient	^a Reverse scores:
37 The teacher covered the objectives of the online course very well	1 strongly agree
38 The assignments presented to me during the course were clear	2 agree
	3 no opinion
39 Interacting with my classmates online allows me to build up a strong relationship with them and become friends	4 disagree
	5 strongly disagree
40 I expect an increase in the number of students enrolled in the e-learning system in the next coming years.	
41 I feel that there should be more majors in KAU applying the e-learning system in the future to give the chance to more students to enrol at the university.	
42 I feel that the e-learning system allows a more effective interaction between the student and teacher than face-to-face classes.	
43 I feel that the e-learning system gives the teacher the chance to guide, discuss and answer students' questions more than the traditional teaching.	
44 I feel that my level of English has improved much more in the university than my English in secondary school.	
45 I feel that all the English skills I have learned by e-learning are useful and effective.	

APPENDIX II

Structured interview questions for teachers

A) Background and Experience

-
- 1- Tell me a little bit about your background and experience?
-
- 2- Have you been involved in online teaching? If yes what do you think of your experience of online teaching?
-
- 3- From your own experience do you find the online teaching is better than the traditional face to face teaching? Why?
-

B) Social aspects of e-learning

-
- 4- What effect does teaching online have on relationships with students?
-
- 5- From your own experience do you think that the new e-learning programme builds up a strong relationship between teacher/students and/or students/students? And how?
-
- 6- How (for example chat, forums, emails, etc) and when do you mostly like to interact with your students?
-

C) Pedagogical aspects

-
- 7- What is the process you use for planning your online materials?
-
- 8- What do you think of the appropriateness of the English materials (level, interest, advantages and disadvantages) of the online environment?
-
- 9- Are there any significant differences between working and full time students performance?
-
- 10- When teaching your students do you and your colleagues follow the same system in teaching your students or does everyone have his/her own way of teaching? Please explain
-
- 11- What is your peak time in accessing the online learning programme at KAU and why?
-
- 12- How do you measure your student performance? (e.g. achievement tests, discussions in class, assignments, etc.)
-

D) Aspects of online learning used

-
- 13- Which aspects/contents of English (e.g. writing) you think students have developed the most through online learning?
-
- 14- Which aspects/contents of English (e.g. writing) do you think students have developed the least through online learning?
-

15- Which of the following tools do you find helpful in enhancing the students writing and why? : Forums, chats, discussion groups

E) Online teaching

16- Does online teaching allow you to cover the syllabus given to you at the required time? Or does it restrict your time of covering the syllabus?

17- What are the things you think you like the most in the new online programme at KAU? (e.g. curriculum content, other)

18- What are the things you think you like the least in the new online programme at KAU? (E.g. No in class face to face interaction, technical problems, the curriculum content, other).

19- What are the major problems and obstacles you think you face with the online learning programme at KAU specifically in teaching English?

20- What is your most favourite way of interacting with students online (discussion groups, chats, etc) and why?

21- What is your least favourite way of interacting with students online (discussion groups, chats, etc) and why

22- What would you recommend to improve the online learning system in teaching English?

F) Teacher training

23 - Have you taken any teacher training for the new online programme in order to help enhance your online teaching skills? If **Yes** can you mention the names of those teacher training courses and describe them (e.g. Period of the course, location of the course, benefits of the course etc.) and do you want more training courses? What mostly do you want to work on? If **No** could you please explain why you did not take any teacher training courses? (e.g. you did not hear about them, no encouragement from the department you work in, you feel you did not need any training, other)

APPENDIX III

Structured interview questions for students

- 1- What are the main problems you face in the DL program?
- 2- How do you find the teachers of the DL program?
- 3- What is your level of understanding to the English course being taught at KAU?
- 4- Are you in Jeddah?
- 5- Ok so how is the internet connection at your location?
- 6- Do you have any other points you would like to mention regarding the teaching of English as a foreign language via DL?
- 7- What is the speed of your internet connection?
- 8- From which city are you?
- 9- Do you find distance learning an alternative to in class face to face learning?
- 10- How do you describe the relationship between the students and the teachers and with each other in the new distance learning program?
- 11- Is the mic and cam used by female students? If your answer is no please state the reasons
- 12- Do you have any suggestions to improve the teaching process through DL?
- 13- How does the interaction happen?
- 14- Are there students who don't interact?
- 15- But in f2f classes we can say that some students are shy that's why they don't participate?
- 16- What if you faced technical problems do you have anyone to help you out?
- 17- During the final exams do you come to Jeddah? If yes do you find it as one of the constraints?
- 18- Do you feel they should've given you training courses on online learning?
- 19- What is it you don't like about the online learning program at KAU?

Appendix IV

Coding of interview responses

Code	Sub-theme		Verbatim quotation
RQ1a	Teaching schedule	T1	We have a schedule its daily the same time. And every instructor has his weekly schedule which has to follow its not random or our own. This schedule is uploaded to the internet and we have to follow the time. For example nowadays, I have classes that start from 3 and I finish around 4:50 it's a one hour and 50 minutes session.
		T3	Previous semesters we used to give the sessions in the mornings but this year we shifted the online sessions to the afternoon because the students complained because they said they have work commitments and they are not free to attend the online sessions in the morning that's why they asked to shift them to the afternoon. We usually start our classes at 3pm
		T4	For e-learning it's in the evening, normally what happens is that we already have a tough schedule in the morning and right after that for example sometimes we have classes up o 3 o'clock from 8-3. Exactly at 3 o'clock our e-learning session starts so we don't have spaces in between to take some rest or something so I think this afternoon session was more difficult to manage so once we had to take them at 5 or 6 in the evening it was more easy to manage because we were fresh at that time and we had time to plan again I think evening is better than afternoon classes.
RQ1b	Teacher's access to the programme	T1	The distance learning centre is not far away from our area/office so often we go there .
		T2	Anytime, I have an access even to the lectures. I don't have an exact time of the lecture and yet still I can access the systems. The last semester we even used to record the lectures, if I had something for example, so it's better to record the lecture than to be absent for example, if i had something today the same time of the lecture i can record it for example yesterday night and i could have the ability to do that, I can access the lecture, teach, explain whatever points I need to cover in the lecture and the students can log in on time and get to listen to the recorded lecture. We used to have access to this feature (recording lectures before time) but not anymore although DL is a matter of flexibility but they want students to interact live with the teacher and each other. It was useful in urgent cases.
		T3	No specific time or preference. Actually we access the course when we need to. Before starting my online session I open the course website 10 or 15 minutes. I browse the contents and get prepared for my students and take notes of the things I will explain, I specify the objectives and I get ready for the class. I only access the course website either to post an email or to post a FAQ or forum or to design a quiz or to send a home assignment. Apart from that I only access the course during the online session.
RQ1c	Use of microphone and webcam	T3	It's optional for the teachers to operate the webcam while teaching
		T4	The visual element is missing here because we don't use the webcams because it's very difficult for some students to get access to such heavy lines for internet that's why the visual aspect is missing
RQ1d	Overall impression (teaching quality)	T1	When going through this as a program it requires some sort of uniformity from teachers. That's normal thing. Then we come to the individual differences, every teacher has his own style and his own way
		T3	Everyone has his own of style of teaching. Generally I noticed most of us use the same techniques because we have the same tools. Sometimes we use the same terms whether at the beginning of the class or concluding the session. There are many similarities between us.

RQ1d	Overall impression (teaching quality)	T4	We have our own way of teaching but after every class we sit together and have an informal chat. For example sometimes I get good ideas from [the name of another teacher] and sometimes he likes my idea he says it's more feasible and it's easier to communicate with the students with this method so we keep on changing our strategy. We just managed to divide certain types of tasks which are more convenient for students especially in the working environment where some of them are attending classes from their offices so we have to take care.
RQ1e	Coverage of syllabus	T1	We are supposed to [cover the syllabus]. We are not strictly following it although we have a schedule to keep. From our experience it's better to work on the materials more and make sure that the students understand better rather than run through the course without having them understand (which also applies on campus as well as e-learning). From the beginning we say these are the chapters that we are supposed to cover but sometimes they lengthen the sessions. If let's say I must cover 10 chapters, if the students do 8, that's enough.
		T2	We're always changing the material in the English language institute. This semester is different from the last semester. The last semester the material was different from the semester before and so on, so you can say we are changing the curriculum every semester. This semester we are teaching a new book "North Star" which is not uploaded on EMES yet. As for the curriculum we are forced to stick to it because it is already uploaded on EMES. Each teacher sees what suits her better and helps in her teaching. We see it as a kind of innovation, sometimes you create something you think this is more suitable, it helps you, makes you teach listening, speaking and so on better.
RQ1f	Assignments and assessments	T1	They are supposed to complete 10 compulsory quizzes but often we give more than 10. There is no schedule. When we feel we have covered certain area and when we feel that now we need to send them so we do it. We have 5 assignments also in the course and again they are up to us, we divide our own timing if we feel students need more practice so we send more assignments but compulsory 5. Every session they are responding to our questions and discussions and activities which they have to answer and practice. Through chat box we normally record it for our own information. I copy the chat and at the end I know who are the students participating and who are the ones not but at least they are motivated. Plus there is the final exam. Until now we haven't devised an online exam. They come like traditional students. On campus we conduct the exam in certain centres (around 4 or 5) or in the university so they go according to their own convenience. Normally they come here because they like to see the instructor and because they have done some work they feel proud of that so they want to meet us.
		T2	There are no marks on the discussions in class. There are 60 marks for the final exam, 20 marks on the quizzes, and 15 marks for the assignments, and 5 marks for the forums so they are evaluated according to these points. I give them at least five different homework assignments (at least 5 could be more than 5).
		T3	Assessment is divided into two parts, one is continuous assessment and one is the final or summative one. The formative which is during the course of the study and at the end of the course. We have 40% for continuous assessment which is divided into participation, assignments, quizzes. 60% for the final exam which represents the summative evaluation of the students.
		T4	I. I give them some of the questions through chat box and then I ask them to solve certain question in 2 or 3 minutes then answer me. The response that I get from the students' online right at that moment this was the best way to judge them. We never discourage them if the assignment is wrong we give them equal opportunity again you can repeat it, no problem, we give them a deadline of 4 or 5 days where they can repeat the assignment. We have 5 marks on their interaction in the forum, so all of them have to participate. I'm giving half mark for each comment, so I always encourage them to participate even if with a simple comment. I tell them that they shouldn't fear about writing a sophisticated comment even if they only said "thank you for this nice topic" is considered to be a comment.

RQ1g	Relationships between students	T2	There is friendship from chatting.
		T3	Students can develop a strong relationship amongst each other. They like to have the support of each other especially of those people who don't have experience in technology they seek support from the students who have a little competent in using technology, they find their colleagues a good source of getting information. They also try to get the phone contacts or contact information to refer to each other once they need so it is similar to classroom relationship.
RQ1h	Relationships between teachers and students	T1	Really strong relationship. Something goes on and that thing is unheard. We do find the students who visit us here physically at the university meet us on the same day and I see the way they show respect.
		T2	Strengthens the relationship with students.
		T3	I feel that there is a strong relationship between the online student and their teacher. They rely on him, they develop a very strong relationship overtime with their teacher, they develop a kind of friendship and trust with the teacher. Once they know that the teacher is supportive and is helping and caring about them is competent in his subject matter is capable of using the system and capable of leading the online learning process. Once they realize that the teacher is competent in that sense they trust him, they respect him and develop a strong relationship with that teacher.
			You 're more helpful and sympathetic with the students because there is no direct interaction so we use more positive reinforcement for the students as compared to ordinary classrooms so with this factor we develop an excellent rapport
RQ1i	Communication between students and teachers	T1	We have to meet certain criteria. We check our emails two or three times during the day and whenever we get opportunity we immediately reply. Per week to each of the students one email must go out to every student this is a requirement otherwise we fail our evaluation which is done automatically by the system. I must meet if I want to be an e-learning instructor. Chat is my least favourite when I get no response from them because I need at least something from them to encourage me as well or else I'm just sitting alone. I ask them don't become a rosa (bride) [trying to encourage them to write] please put your fingers (you don't have henna) write something say something. If the session is not good or not interesting you can say that . I also feel de-motivated when I see the students not chatting, it makes me feel I didn't my job well, or the session was not so good. When that comes it makes me feel a bit down.
		T2	<p>We are online at the same time talking and listening to each other, and also through email and also through forums where I post some topics for the students and they just comment, mostly general topics. I don't like to connect everything to the teaching so I post general topics and they post their opinions about it.</p> <p>In forums all of the students have to interact - it's a requirement.</p> <p>From the beginning I give them a relaxing atmosphere by saying it's OK to make mistakes. I even tell them you don't see each other so no need to worry about your grammar, accuracy, fluency, etc. Even if you want to speak, feel free don't be shy, I want you to make mistakes. Sometimes they write English in Arabic characters and I stop that and ask them to please not write English in Arabic letters, this is totally prohibited so they apologize and stop.</p>

RQ1i	Communication between students and teachers	T3	<p>We have different means of communications with our students. We Use text chat, video conferencing, students can see or communicate with us verbally during the online session. Also we have asynchronous communication with students through email, forums these r tools that r embedded in the e-learning environment which we are using. We use both synchronous in real live time and asynchronous where they don't have to be with me at the same time. Asynchronous don't have to be there at the same with me where I can send them emails or forums or even interact through the FAQs. Whenever it is needed I send an email or I post a question or forum to interact my students. I usually send an email at the beginning of the week to tell them what is coming and about the instruction of the new teaching week I send emails whenever needed.</p> <p>The synchronous communication with students during the online sessions this is the most important part because it adds the humanistic touch to the teaching learning process online, but if we have one system like EMES it doesn't allow for synchronous communication with students except for the chatting facility but it doesn't allow video conferencing for example , so the most interesting part here is the Centra system which allows me as a teacher to get in touch directly and communicate with my students. They have the chance to meet, they have a change to see and listen to me and express themselves and practice the language online.</p> <p>The synchronous session is the most important part because here we can get the student to work and speak and I think teachers can tell from the students responses whether the student is the same person who attended from the beginning or not.</p>
		T4	<p>The requirement of the course is that we must have at least one e-mail for each student per week apart from this requirement we have 5 emails per week. We have a lot of questions in forums where students ask questions with things they are not satisfied about. When I feel there is ambiguity or confusion in things students don't understand I post a question in a form for a discussion so I can further explain things. They can check them out in their spare times. Sometimes we have live chats outside class we rely more on forums on emails and forums</p> <p>During the session we have the chat box on and there is the white board as well, but basically I was relying on interactive sort of teaching where I ask questions and they answer of course sometimes the system from the students side is quite slow so it creates problems so even then I encourage them to speak so that we can have oral interaction as well. But normally the written interaction is continuously going on and we copied and pasted all the chats going on to look at how much of communication we had with the students, how many responses we got and how to improve it in the future, so there was a lot of interaction.</p> <p>[My favourite is] live chat since you get the response immediately that's why I like live chat. For example, sometimes I give them certain questions which are easy to answer in a single sentence or so. So, what I prefer is that I get the response immediately and through the text chat box I immediately recognize that some of the students are lagging behind because some of the students don't respond then ask them to respond then of course they tell me they didn't get the point.</p>
RQ1j	Assessment	T4	<p>So we could arrange at least 5 or 6 days for the-learning students to come here to the university and have some sort of direct learning guidance and give them interactive sort of things which are not possible online. for example for can have a writing work shop for one week or so, or along with that we can have an oral presentation skills teaching as well, so I think that whatever aspects of this course are lagging behind we must arrange a week or so of visiting to the university/. Distance learning students are doing this, they come here every semester for two weeks so even the e-learning students can do the same so whatever is lagging behind we can just comer it up in that week or two. We can make it compulsory for 10 or 15 marks to encourage them to come to have a traditional classroom for at least a week which whatever they have learned we can have direct feedback from the responses.</p>

RQ2a	Access to learning and qualification	T1	<p>This online program is for those students who are working and don't get opportunities to come to the university plus they are away from the university so they can't come in the evening. They feel this is an opportunity to get a degree like on campus students. The e-learning students are more responsible in the sense that they are more mature and they know that when they joined this programme they know that there is something in the programme for them, they need promotion or more qualification they also know now the value of money because they are paying for it.</p> <p>E-learning can be taken by students with certain circumstances e.g. girls living far from the university, that's an advantage for them. Another advantage is that anyone can access the program even if he/she wasn't able to attend classes on a regular basis. They get to listen to the recorded lectures and do assignments and also the interactive tools we use like the email on EMES</p>
		T2	<p>Last semester I used to have a student who was married with her husband who is a student in England and she wants to continue her studies so she joined the distance learning program and she benefited a lot from it.</p> <p>The students who have a job don't attend the lectures, especially if the lectures were in the morning, they just listen to the recorded lectures, they submit the assignments they participate in the forums, but they don't attend the lectures live.</p>
		T3	<p>I know people have so many responsibilities and to devote themselves for studies only is very difficult nowadays. So I believe that if a person can make a balance between his study and his career that would be the best option. Actually if the person is involved in regular studies or regular education he can't make that balance, and since e-learning provides that kind of opportunity for people to work and study at the same time from that sense I believe it's a great approach</p> <p>The students who are studying online are very motivated because they know at the end of the university study they will have a higher status. They are already working that's why they are more interested and they are more mature than regular students.</p>
RQ2b	Preferences for online learning and teaching	T1	We can't say this is better or that is better because both programs has its own advantage
		T2	<p>If you compared the traditional teaching with the external program and the distance program I would rank the e-learning as number one followed by the traditional learning and last the external program.</p> <p>Instead of waking up and getting dressed and going to the university to work, you can work at home, for example I use my laptop from bed sometimes when teaching online I just open the laptop and connect and start working with my students.</p>
		T3	<p>As a language instructor compared to F2F I prefer the online one. Why? Because I feel more involved in the teacher process and closer to the students, In addition to doing something that goes with the norms and requirements of our time.</p> <p>The advantage of the online course is the recording of the online sessions. Students who don't have the chance to attend the online class have the facility to play the recording of that session in their own convenience and they don't miss any classes.</p> <p>I find a greater chance in covering the material online than the F2F situation. I don't know why? Maybe because we have full control on the online course rather than the text book I have full control of the material, the pace of covering the material is faster than the F2F situation.</p>
		T4	Both have their plus and minus points. Because this was my 1 st experience I felt for the first week I was handicapped because in the scenario in the kingdom we use body language a lot because we are none Arabic speaking teachers and some students are in level one so we use gestures, drawing, and sometimes we have to act in front of them we are used to that type of teaching. Suddenly, I felt handicapped because there is no body language at all so I have to use the visuals or some videos that I got uploaded for them or the white board so the physical element of acting and gestures was totally missing.

RQ2c	Acquisition and development of skills	T1	<p>Speaking [is developed the least]. The program is not allowing rapid answers by students who generally answer one by one. They have problems and they realize the bad connection they have which doesn't allow good communication. So, they try and try and keep on talking but at the end they realize that it is not possible. I have to make sure that they take turns otherwise it may not possible to be listened to both at the same time.</p> <p>Chat [is helpful in enhancing writing] because it goes live and forums which we send them and have to discuss. When they are with you, you make them talk, discuss, write but if they have something to do on their own they write two or three sentences and they leave the forum when discussing something. I think the powerful source/method/way is chatting. Also we give them writing tasks. . In my email today I saw that almost everybody has sent one paragraph which they shows that they have responded or reacted towards a picture.</p>
		T2	<p>Homework assignments, quizzes, and forums enhance their internet browsing skills. They surf the internet, they search for related topics, and they also post their own topics on forums so it's not only me who is posting topics. Of course chatting enhances their writing skill. I started using a new and excellent technique to enhance the listening skills. I shared some listening from specific educational websites with them and did exercises in listening or grammar.</p>
		T3	<p>There is a kind of balance in developing the language skills. At the beginning I thought students were developing writing skills more than the other skills, but later on I realized that it depends on the teacher's methodology in giving or carrying out and managing the online course. If the teacher for example concentrates on the communicative approach then the student can develop a balance and develop all the language skills similarly in the same time as situation the F2F classroom, but if the teacher doesn't speak or encourage the students to speak or interact verbally then the students will resort to the text chat and t writing skill has got a much more opportunity to be developed than the other skills. Also the listening skill is very important because most of the communication is done using the headphones, so the listening skill is getting a greater chance to be developed.</p>
		T4	<p>I think their listening has improved a lot and the reading skills. The reason is that although it is an interactive course, however, we don't have that much interactive exercises for writing, and then of course because of the presence of the chat box a lot of students were reluctant to speak. And again since they don't have that sophisticated computer system sometimes their sound is not working or their mic is not properly plugged in, sometimes they have net problems their net is too weak to convey the sound to us properly so because of those certain technical and not technical reasons they get less chance to speak and plus all other exercises are interactive in nature but interactive by clicking the thing listening to the instructions and then click the right answer so the writing opportunities are much less as we expect them to be so this is the reason that they don't have effective writing. . For example quizzes they are also mostly objective in nature and they are objective type questions multiples choices and other again they don't have the chance to write there so what I think is that we must give more time to improve their writing.</p> <p>As for discussion groups according to a record students who have good English or don't need that sort of discussion they actively participate but the students who only want to concentrate more on course because there is no placement test so we have a lot of students who are in foundation level so we want to give them more chance but in forums most of them don't respond or if they did they just give a comment by saying a single sentence to show their participation but as far as the chat box is concerned what I feel is that it's the most effective way as far as interactive was concerned. Plus to set another activity for example sometimes they write in a word document and then they have the option to transfer to transfer some certain data to the student and then expecting it from them so I felt certain things were quite helpful however I felt the forums were not that helpful because they just comment and because this is not going on live so sometimes they get the help of their friends or even just copy the same material that their friends are writing so I found the chat box was the most effective.</p>

RQ3a	Technical problems in the online classroom	T1	If there is a technical problem the technical people are available for help. The technical support provided is good. If there is any serious issue we call them and they respond and then we are not held responsible. The technical problems are there is no mic or there is too much sound. When they see things are not going well or we are unable to communicate properly they just try to avoid it and they tell me in the chat box I have a problem with my mic, So chat is a way to communicate when there is no other way. They should have some centres, certain lines and facilities provided to this programme where the communication is improved, because this low connectivity and networking gives problems to students living outside in a town or village. They disappear and come back and say sorry but what can I do? I have nothing to do about it. But how would you know that they really got disconnected? For example if they got disconnected and never got back would you excuse them or what? I personally believe that they haven't done it intentionally, because we have given them freedom they are mature and we take some time at the beginning and tell them you are mature people you are in jobs or married with children. For instance, some say my mic is not working because my son did this to it so the thing is we talk to them frankly and they step out (don't disconnect). We understand all this because they are humans
		T2	Internet connections, like disconnections and slow responses. This semester the server at the university had problems maybe because of the pressure on the server. In the University there is the LAN or intranet which connects us all to the server internally, so sometimes with the pressure on the server we can't even open the university's official website. The university has to solve this problem and find a solution if they want to continue with the DL programme. Yesterday I was trying to access the lecture on time and Centra kept on kicking me out whenever I tried to log in and gave me a message "run time error". There is a problem we cannot connect to the server and I find myself logged out.
		T3	Technical problems happen like sometimes we get internet disconnection or slow connections.
RQ3b	Communication problems	T1	Forums and emails they are time consuming sometimes they are reluctant because the net is not properly working they have certain excuses for that, but in live text chat they don't have such excuse they are all online and I can force them to answer the question or have a discussion or let me know what is the problem here what aspects of the text or lesson they haven't understood, so the problem here is that live text chat is the best. They can't write long sentences because of the shortage of time because they have to write the shortest possible answer. One negative aspect I'm getting the answer from 10 students answering at the same time, so it is very difficult to judge that especially among the students who joined us later or the ones waiting 6 or 7 seconds for the answer just repeat the same answer.
		T4	Sometimes they are getting pictures but the sound is not there and sometimes they are getting the sound broken into inaudible conversation. So what happens here is that we find visuals are more important for students and again the interactive activities that are within the courses where they are given the chance to write the text is given then they can write their own opinion of course and this opinion is being sent to us through the chat box as well so here we feel these two sort of things are more effective in the learning process
RQ3c	Time problems	T2	It allows me to cover the syllabus on time. We even have time to do revision and listening practice
		T4	We feel that the time is less as compared to what we have to cover what happened there was. for example, if I need to concentrate more on the students in the foundation level or I don't want to call them lower ability so we need more time to concentrate on them and give them extra activities and give them inclined lesson plan for the text that is too difficult for them just like an incline plane take them from the beginning and slowly gradually they move up towards the text that is there for them to study but unfortunately, we felt that the time is too short so we have to sometimes use other devices like giving them homework or assignments, or use the forums in which due to the lack of time.

RQ3c	Time problems	T4	They don't participate that much so what I think is that the time must be increased for third classes because they have to study for example 15 chapters means 5 chapters because they have writing reading listening and speaking the grammar and i think we need more time. Not satisfied with the time given which is 10 hours a week it should be 14 to 15 hours then we would manage the thing in a better way.
RQ3d	Variable levels of competence of the students	T3	The university should also have an exam to test their computer skills. Imagine a girl doing the DL program and she doesn't know the hardware and software maintenance, so they should have some training not only on Centra and EMES but also on maintenance like audio settings. You can see a girl who keeps on saying there is no sound from the mic, and when asking the rest of the students if they hear me they all say yes, so I tell this girl you have a problem with your settings. So she's wasting my time and the other students' time, and she's logged into Centra and in the end you discover she didn't connect the headphones. So I stress on that students who join the program should be computer literates as a minimum requirement as in not anyone can join this program. At least they have certificates on windows, office and windows maintenance. The maintenance is very important in using the computer. I have technical skills I might find a girl who I tell her open your internet options, delete your internet files to make her computer performance better and this is not my job, I'm wasting my time as a lecturer and I have other students with me it's really time consuming. I tell her check your audio settings, check your mic etc. And if a girl asks for the microphone and I give her the microphone to talk, she tries to talk, then there is a delay in response because of the internet connection and when they try to speak you find they wasted time and the lecture is over.
		T4	<p>I noticed that students who were a bit stronger as far as their language skills are concerned they showed concern for students who were beginners the reason is that the pace of the learning is slowed down by the learners who are beginners so those students immediately jump in and just try to help the student who are quite weak in English. So it's shown me a strange type of behaviour that sometimes they tried to take over the teacher's position because they knew the student might not be able to understand certain things they immediately without any intention unconsciously jump in and try to explain things in Arabic which we gradually had to control because it was increasing so I observed if I keep these things going on it would be a direct grammar translation method applied by some of the students who are trying to help their classmates. Here what I felt was that the teacher's authority and it was very important in these sorts of situations and we should have extra material for all the level of students of course we are not scrutinized</p> <p>In KAU there is no proper levelling of the students and there must be a placement test before entering the course so that the students and the teachers both are well aware of what level the students are and how to manage them and improve their level so what happens is that 5 or 6 students are excellent i placed then in level 5 and 6 then we have 8 to 10 students who can't even alphabetize English letters so we feel a lot of difficulties in handling those students because on one hand we have to keep the schedule given to us and we have students who already know a lot of things and we have to be more creative with them and then we are lacking behind because some of the students can read properly words like cat and dog so what I think is that there must be some kind of certain criteria either an entrance test or if you want to place them in certain groups a placement test I would suggest we must start with that it would be more facilitating for the teach and students themselves and it would be better for the university as well to keep a certain level. It should be for the learners who are really willing to learn it shouldn't be open for everyone like the ones who are weak in English and can't even alphabetize, they should go for interactive access or one on one courses because it's very difficult for them or even rather impossible for them.</p>
RQ3e	Problems faced by working students	T3	The only problems they face are the other obligations they have along with their students such as family and work commitments and sometime they can't make a balance between their commitments and study commitments.

		T4	<p>This is a major problem because the working students told us about their schedule and it was of course starting from 4 o'clock it wasn't English since they have to study other things from 4-11 o'clock that is of course a lot of burden on them plus the assignments we assigned them and the quizzes and again the forums to discuss and the emails to answer they always complain although they work hard but they don't have enough time for all those activities. Especially I think that such courses should be devised in such a way that in between for example they are taking 3 courses at a time instead of 4 or 5 so that in between they have spaces at least to revise what we have previously done so sometimes you know the students can't even speak properly because they have some of the office work sitting on a chair in front of the computer doing their work and taking classes at the same time. Others who work outdoors activities and doing their jobs those people it's very difficult for them to give us a proper homework or response or interaction through forums and emails so they always complained about that.</p> <p>I want more freedom for the student so the teacher has to be a facilitator here as we do in our traditional classrooms because the students are from different parts of the kingdom plus they are in different sort of jobs they don't have much time to be engaged with the teacher. We have two hours a day to teach them so it's better if the courses are more student oriented than teacher oriented.</p>
RQ3f	Assignment and assessments problems	T2	The students don't have marks for attending the lectures since distance learning is flexible and was made for this purpose. The full time students' performance is better because they listen to the lecture live and if they don't understand something during the lecture they just ask about it immediately
		T3	I think the grading of students quizzes, I mean the system being used in grading the students quizzes needs to be a little bit adjusted because it's not so accurate. For example, some students they provide the correct answers but the automatic feedback they get are totally different from the answers that they should be getting. So it's not so accurate. I as a teacher have tried it sometimes and found that students gave the correct answers but they got negative feedback from the system so it means there is some kind of bug or there is something wrong with the grading of students quizzes and has to be looked at carefully because that is very frustrating and disappointing for teachers and students.
		T4	<p>I don't personally rely much on the assignments where in this system anybody can do the assignment for the student so the thing I mostly rely on is achievement tests.</p> <p>The multiple choice exam I don't much agree with it as well. There must be some sort of writing subjective exam as well as they must have speaking skills its part of the language and without speaking skills you can't say that you learned a particular language, so there must be some type of oral test or oral presentation just like the normal students of course if they can spare time for coming here or to the respective areas for the examination they can manage at least to go to some of the centres in Dammam or Riyadh there they can have oral examination this factor is very important for me in the placement test and certain skills are totally neglected and I think we must do something about that.</p> <p>Emails and quizzes and assignments require honesty from the student's side. It is very important that he's honest enough and thinks this is a learning process going on and he has to learn. I normally judge them by whatever assignment I'm giving them for example a 2 minute assignment let's just skim through the text and answer these questions so there I felt that the some of the students were fast enough to respond other were a bit slow and there was a 3rd category where they just wrote what others wrote. From that I started to change my strategy and then instead of just going for every student asking things so I target some level one or beginners or at foundation level but competing with other students who are good in English. So forcing them to interact with me and then giving them positive reinforcement again and again and to encourage them I felt that a lot of students through this strategy were able to at least communicate. Otherwise they were just staying there doing nothing as silent observers so by forcing them they were quite active.</p>

RQ3f	Assignment and assessments problems	T4	By the end of the semester I observed that the students who were reluctant whom we have given more importance and gave them more chance to just move into the scenario and then given them a positive reinforcement most of them now have lost the hesitation to participate or just ask questions they were encouraged. Finally it was sometimes difficult for me to answer all the questions and to select which student must now participate because everybody was participating.
RQ3g	Resource accessibility problems	T1	<p>We are uploading ourselves the traditional books that we are teaching on campus so that we keep uniformity in the curriculum. We do try to change some of those activities but still they are not that appropriate for the programme. We still feel that needs improvement and probably they are working on that with different publishers. We use random activities or resources from sites related to specific areas</p> <p>As for the facilities are concerned they are not good, for example, we don't have a specific place to conduct a lesson. For example, let's say I'm wandering in my office, sometimes in another lab, sometimes from home. Sometimes it's better to use my own computer because I have better opportunities and resources to utilize rather than the ones in the lab because they don't offer any type of support except for the online support but you cannot use what you have saved. In my office I have a lot of activities and I can give my students extra activities, such as I can show some data, video etc it's there but when I go to the lab that would be a problem because I don't have access to those resources</p>
		T4	There must be some sort of support by the university to the students, for example they must have some sort of sophisticated systems one system is 'Mobily' where the net speed is excellent and where you don't need a telephone connection and all you need is you a mobile so they must encourage the students or at least provide them with those facilities which would make it easy for us to teach and easy for them to learn. Some students don't have the money financially to get the right equipments. And because everything is dependent on the electronic equipments, so if the main source of communication between us is having some problems how can it work? I know that 'Mobily' introduced a device lately for around 500 Riyals where you just attach it to your computer of course you don't need any telephone connection or anything and with a speed of more than 7.2Mbps which is excellent speed even for a webcam
RQ3h	Teacher training problems	T1	<p>Yes, we had [training] here at KAU. They gave us training at the begging. 3 years back they gave us 1 week or more of training, and then 2 years back before starting this program they also gave us training. [But I think the training is mostly on EMES and Centra?] Yes engineers from that company came and gave us training. And i think we will be having more training because they are working on e-university so that would require more training and sophistication of the programme.</p> <p>Other instructors who joined us later on we normally let them sit with us for a few sessions to see what we do and then tell them this is how the programme is run and now this is your own way and style how to teach them the material. Then they have full freedom after that to do whatever they feel is better for the students</p>
		T3	We only received training in using the systems but not in online teaching. They concentrated on how to use the systems how to use Centra and EMES but it didn't include any kind of online teaching training. The university should give more online teacher training.

RQ1c	Use of microphone and webcam	S1	There is no cam and there is no need for it between female students, as for the mic it is rarely used when asking general questions about grades or timetable or final exam timings. I hope to have an hour for speaking and participation through mic
		S2	There is no cam at all in class; however the mic is rarely or almost rarely used when the teacher asks us to answer by mic (male and female teachers)
		S4	Sometimes, from one side what limits our usage of the mic is the bad connection from both sides, another disadvantage of using a mic is that it could be time consuming because sometimes it requires a high speed connection in order to have a clear sound
		S5	We use the microphone but we don't use the web cam
		S8	We use the microphone but we don't use the web cam. This semester we didn't use the mic at all only in the beginning of the semester when we were introducing ourselves and getting to know each other
RQ1d	Overall impression (quality of teaching)	S1	More than excellent
		S2	The way of teaching is different from one teacher to another and also different according to subjects and how much you like the course
		S3	I find it good
		S4	Excellent
		S5	I find it very good
		S6	Excellent from some of the teachers
		S7	Good
RQ1g	Relationships between students	S1	Very good whether with students or teachers, I mostly interact with my classmates through groups and messenger chat, there are even visits and meetings between me and the close ones from those classmates
		S3	Good electronic relationship doesn't go further than online
		S7	Just like face to face students because we are always with each other even more than face to face students in some cases
		S8	We see each other a lot and there are a lot of emails between us. We even have each other's phone numbers. We have become very close to each other but we only see each other when we come to the university.
RQ1h	Relationships between teachers and students	S1	The doctor was very nice and she corrected our mistakes with happiness and she concentrates on explaining the difficult points to us more than once.
		S2	Very friendly and warm with respect, the teachers are so respectful and cooperative
		S4	Excellent whereas all are cooperative and help each other when facing technical problems and finding alternative solutions to avoid having those technical problems again

RQ1h	Relationships between teachers and students	S5	Good
		S6	Good
		S7	There is the chance for us to speak with the teacher at anytime and ask questions more than regular face to face students
		S8	The are very cooperative and helpful and always in contact with us as much as they can
RQ1j	Assessment	S4	Being given a lot of assignments and tasks to do in the forums section has given me the chance to translate all the tasks and then answer then and this helped me in improving my English language.
RQ2a	Access to learning and qualification	S4	It gave me the opportunity to pursue my studies and it is a big jump towards technology and civilization in Saudi Arabia
RQ2b	Preferences for online learning and teaching	S1	Yes
		S2	Yes, I prefer it more than in class learning
		S5	Yes
		S8	It's definitely an alternative to the normal class
RQ2c	Acquisition and development of skills	S1	DL lessens the threat and panic, so even if we did mistakes were not scared because were mainly dealing with a screen and a keyboard, another thing is that I noticed my spelling skills have become better because most of my participation is through chatting and also the assignments on EMES. The doctor started revising all the grammar we studied and compared between them, and she also started to promote multiple skills to us such as listening skills at foreign sites, not only that but she also gave us a lot of those useful foreign sites to improve our English language in general
		S2	It breaks the barriers and makes students lessens the shyness inside of us and improves our listening and writing skills.
		S4	We don't get enough time for speaking which basically doesn't improve and strengthen our learning of the language
RQ3a	Technical problems in the online classroom	S3	Usually there is a technical problem either the sound is not clear or it keeps on cutting off. Needs some enhancements for example: improving the quality of the connection to avoid disconnections from the lectures.
		S1	I didn't face any difficulties on the contrary it was so useful because we are dealing from distance.
		S8	The technical problems and the disconnections are the main problems we face
RQ3b	Communication problems	S4	What limits our usage of the mic is the bad connection from both sides, another disadvantage of using a mic is that it could be time consuming because sometimes it requires a high speed connection in order to have a clear sound. It [understanding of English] varies from one student to another according to their ability
		S3	Sometimes when there is something important we are supposed to know the teachers don't send us emails which eventually causes the students who haven't attended the lecture problems because they don't know about those important things
Code	Sub-theme		Verbatim quotation

RQ3c	Time problems	S2	1 hour and 50 minutes for a lectures more than enough
		S5	More than enough time
		S6	I find the time of the lecture is very long and doesn't suit me. Fast explanation of the lecture is a disadvantage because we lose track
RQ3f	Assignments and assessments	S1	Studying for the final exam didn't take a lot of time from because I was keen to attend the lectures and interact with the teacher and classmates.
		S5	Teachers should give more homework assignments to the students to practice what they've learned.
		S6	I want to be able to take the exams in centres in Yanbu instead of having to travel to one of the main centres to take the exam
		S8	The university has 3 different centres than the one in Jeddah but you have to pay an extra 1000 riyals to take it there
RQ3h	Resource accessibility	S1	<p>I hope they would have a back up for all the lectures uploaded, they have faced 2 problems after the disaster that happened in Jeddah from the floods, it required from them to format the server twice and there were no backup of the recorded lectures (before the floods)</p> <p>Could add titles to the recorded lectures such as the name of the lecture or the unit number instead of dates to save us time during the exams</p> <p>I would be happy if there was a white board added to Centra for explaining lectures</p> <p>Want them to enhance the chatting in Centra and add the necessary emoticons for interaction during participation.</p> <p>There should be a saved chat option for us to go back to the chat we had during the lecture.</p> <p>Another feature missing is the sharing facility during the lectures to allow us to do presentations.</p> <p>I hope they could increase the capacity of the files we can upload and also allow us to attach video files to our assignments which is better for helping us in doing assignments</p>
		S3	Accessing the course through EMES always gives us problems (the screen freezes or kicks us out). Find a solution for the lectures that can't be played or not even recorded
		S8	The students face problems with their connections when the server is down or where there is a disaster just like the one that happened in Jeddah where we stayed for 2 weeks without studying after that we got a message on our mobiles saying that the site is working and we can log in. I don't like the recorded lectures in Centra. They are mixed together and we don't know which lecture it is or its title. This makes it difficult for us to know which lecture it is. Each course should be separated from the other and the lecture should have a subject.

Appendix V

Check list for observation of online classes

Teacher: Total number of students: Duration: Attendance:

Date: Time: Group: Absence:

SKILL BEING TAUGHT:	
WRITING	Comments:
READING	
LISTENING	
SPEAKING	
SKILLS BEING USED THE MOST:	
WRITING	Comments:
READING	
LISTENING	
SPEAKING	
APPLICATION BEING USED:	
DISCUSSION GROUPS	Comments:
ONLINE CHAT	
EMAILS	
WORD OR PDF FILES	
PPT PRESENTATIONS	
PARTICIPATION:	
HOW MANY STUDENTS ASK Q'S	Comments:
HOW MANY STUDENTS ANSWER Q'S	
HOW MANY STUDENTS ARE PASSIVE	
HOW MANY STUDENTS USE THE MIC 7	
HOW MANY STUDENTS USE WEBCAMS 0	

GENERAL:		
TEACHER CHECKS IF STUDENTS ARE ALERT:		Comments:
GREETINGS:		
WARM OR PERSONAL LANGUAGE	HUMOUR	
HOW MUCH TIME TEACHER TALKS		
HOW THE TEACHER ASKS Q'S		
HOW THE STUDENTS RESPOND		
TEACHER WORKS AS A FACILITATOR NOT AN AUTHORITY IN CLASS		
GOOD EXPERIENCE WITH TECHNICAL PROBLEMS		
TECHNICAL PROBLEMS:		
NUMBER OF DISCONNECTIONS		
SLOW RESPONSE		
UNCLEAR SOUND FROM MIC (INAUDIBLE)		
MIXED UP VIDEO PICTURES		
DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS:		
WRITING IS USED THE MOST ONLINE		
LISTENING IS USED THE MOST ONLINE		
SPEAKING IS USED THE MOST ONLINE		
READING IS USED THE MOST ONLINE		
TEACHER UPLOADS EXTRA MATERIAL		
USE OF WHITE BOARD		
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS:		
STUDENT RELATION WITH TEACHER		
STUDENT RELATION AMONGST STUDENTS		
STUDENTS HELP EACH OTHER		
TEACHER HELPS AND GUIDES STUDENTS		

Appendix VI

Coding of observations

1. Use of the course book
2. Use of external links
3. Use of Word or PDF files
4. Use of microphone to explain
5. Use of online chat to explain
6. Clarifying responses to students' questions
7. Use of controlled practice using exercises and quizzes
8. Asking questions to all students via microphone
9. Asking questions to all students via online chat
10. Asking directed questions to an individual student via microphone
11. Asking questions to an individual student via online chat
12. Encouraging peer support
13. Discouraging peer support
14. Checking presence of students

The following codes were used to classify different types of affective teaching strategy:

1. Greetings
2. Prompting and encouraging (emotional support)
3. Humour
4. Using online symbols

The following codes were used to classify typical types of student behaviour:

1. Talking to teacher via online chat
2. Talking to teacher via microphone
3. Talking to each other via online chat
4. Talking to each other via microphone
5. Helping each other
6. Doing an exercise or quiz
7. Going off task
8. Use of Arabic

The following codes were used to classify technical problems:

1. Students logged off or became disconnected
2. The sound system was poor, including the microphones frequently did not work properly and there was background interference
3. Interactive responses were often slow or absent
4. Technical difficulties were experienced with the system, related to the inefficiency of the computer network, including failures logging in and uploading teaching materials

A typical example of how the field notes were coded is given below:

22m: The T gave the mic to a S (directed question) who also answered incorrectly. The T asked him to type the answer in the text chat (directed question) and then the T thanked him (emotional support). The T explained the difference in spelling between "there" and "their" (explaining). The mic moves to another S to fill in the blank which is _____name is Susan. The S answered His so the T asked him to read the sentence carefully (directed question) before answering so that he can know if he should put His or Her. The T asks who

would like to continue (directed question) and he asks for more participation from silent people (prompting). The T says that he never heard the voices of some of the Ss and he doesn't know whether he will ever hear their voices or if they prefer to remain silent till the end of the semester (prompting)

24m: The T reminds the Ss on the mark distribution (assessment), and tells them it's up to them if they want the participation marks or not. He gives the mic to a S and he answers correctly. The T asks for more hands and participation from everybody (prompting)

26m: The T calls names of Ss to see if they are there or not (checking presence). He calls a S's name but he doesn't reply (technical problem 3?). Another S doesn't reply and the T says I'm trying to help you but you're not helping me. He then gives the mic to a S to answer from 6 to 9 and you can hear a baby crying in the background. After he answers the T thanks him (emotional support).

28m: Another S takes the mic and does 9 and 10. His sound is not very clear (technical problem 2) but acceptable and the T thanks him (emotional support). The T moves to demonstrative adjectives (objectives). One S disconnected (technical problem 1). The T explains the table of the demonstrative adjectives (explaining). One S is disconnected (technical problem).

30m: The T asks about the difference between "this" and "that" (directed question), 3 Ss raise their hands. The T gives the mic to one of them. One S is disconnected (technical problem 1). The S with the mic doesn't know the answer so the T moves the mic to another S (directed question). One S logged in. 4 Ss have their hands raised. The next S explains the difference between this and that and the T thanks him (emotional support).

32m: The T gives them examples on this and that and explains further on the usage of this and that. He also explains "those" and explains the rule (explaining).

34m: The T moves to an activity on demonstrative adjectives, but he tells them we'll do the activity after we take a 10 minute break (gap) for prayer. During the break some Ss have a chat together (going off task).