Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics
ISSN: 2707-756X
DOI: 10.32996/jeltal
Journal Homepage: www.al-kindipublisher.com/index.php/jeltal

JELTAL
AL-KINDI CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cultivating Soft Skills Through Blended Learning: Moroccan Undergraduates' Experiences

Oumaima Idrissi[1] ✉ and Sana Sakale[2]
[1]Doctoral Student, Language and Society Research Laboratory, Faculty of Languages, Letters, and Arts, Ibn Tofail University, Morocco
[2]Associate Professor, Language and Society Research Laboratory, Faculty of Languages, Letters and Arts, Ibn Tofail University, Morocco
Corresponding Author: Oumaima Idrissi, **E-mail**: oumaima.idrissi@uit.ac.ma

| ABSTRACT
In the context of Morocco's thriving tertiary education sector, cultivating soft skills among students is not just a priority, but a necessity. These skills, which include collaboration, critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, leadership, time management, and interpersonal abilities, are essential for students' holistic development. It is therefore crucial to integrate these skills into the national curriculum. This study, conducted among first-year BA students at Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra, Morocco, presents positive findings from a survey exploring student satisfaction with course design and materials delivered through the Moodle platform. The survey highlighted the effective fostering of soft skills during the Moodle-based learning experience. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) served as the theoretical framework to understand the factors influencing students' acceptance and use of the Moodle platform. Results indicate high satisfaction with the blended learning experience, further underscoring the importance of integrating the soft skills blended module into the national curriculum.

| KEYWORDS

Blended Learning, Soft Skills, Moodle, Tertiary Education, The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 02 August 2024 **PUBLISHED:** 30 August 2024 **DOI:** 10.32996/jeltal.2024.6.3.9

1. Introduction

Building upon the increasing integration of digital technologies into various aspects of life and the subsequent impact on education, the Moroccan higher education landscape is undergoing a transformative shift. The imperative to transition from traditional to digital pedagogy is evident, as it aligns with the evolving needs of the academic environment. While technology is a crucial component, it is essential to recognize the limitations of a purely technical educational approach (Galip Kartal, 2024). The convergence of digital technologies and education has created a fertile ground for innovative pedagogical approaches. One such area is the digitization of the soft skills module through a blended learning mode in tertiary education in Moroccan Universities.

Morocco's recent higher education reforms prioritize integrating soft skills development within the existing LMD system to cultivate a competitive workforce (Miraoui, 2022). These skills, such as communication, critical thinking, and interpersonal abilities, are crucial for academic and professional success (Neally, 2005; Ennis et al., 2005). Traditional methods for developing soft skills, such as critical thinking and communication, have proven inadequate (Cotter & Tally, 2009; Tsui, 1999). To address this gap and meet the escalating demands of the job market, higher education institutions are increasingly turning to digitalization as a pedagogical innovation.

In response to the growing employer demand for soft skills over technical competencies (Karimi & Pina, 2021; Greven & Furnham, 2010; Deepa & Seth, 2013; Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2010), Morocco's tertiary education system is undergoing a transformation. A key focus of this shift is the digitalization of soft skills module. Research consistently highlights the significant role of soft skills in academic programs (Aziz & Zaidoune, 2022). Aligning with this trend, Morocco's recent reforms mandate soft skills training in

the first year of undergraduate studies, positioning graduates as competitive candidates in the contemporary workforce. By leveraging digital technologies, higher education can effectively cultivate the soft skills essential for success in the 21st century.

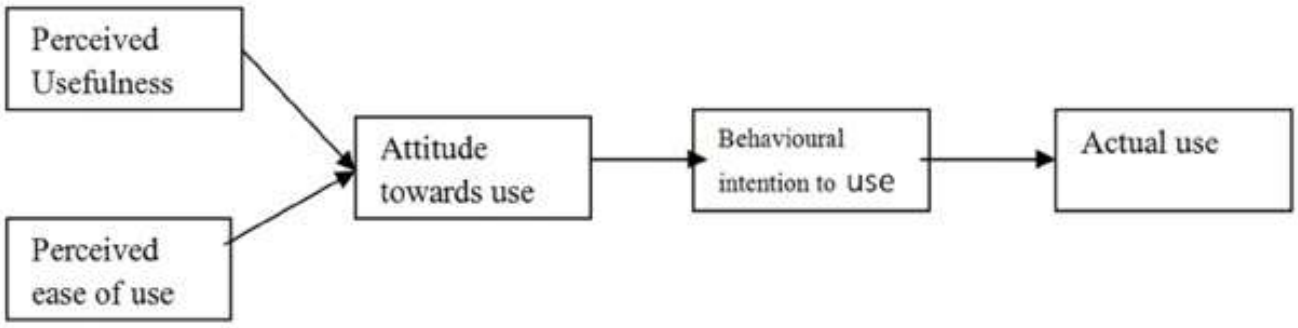
This study examines the integration of a soft skills module into the first-year curriculum of English studies programs. The module aims to foster student interaction and collaboration by employing a blended learning approach that combines synchronous and asynchronous instruction. By introducing soft skills early in university education, this research contributes to the broader goal of Moroccan educational reforms: producing graduates equipped with both technical proficiency and interpersonal skills essential for success in today's dynamic job market.

The current study employed a mixed-method approach to explore students' experiences of Moodle's role in enhancing soft skills within a blended learning context. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analysed to understand the factors influencing technology adoption and use. The study was grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (see Figure 1). TAM posits that perceived usefulness and ease of use are critical determinants of technology acceptance. Furthermore, user motivation to adopt technology is influenced by these factors and attitudes towards use (Davis, 1986). A positive attitude towards the system is crucial for technology adoption. Understanding students' perspectives and satisfaction with the blended module is crucial for informing the design of future blended courses.

Figure 1

The TAM Model

Note. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1993)



2. Literature Review

2.1. The Interplay of Student Experience and Learning Success in Higher Education

A substantial body of literature emphasizes the significant influence of students' experiences with their academic abilities on their academic performance and motivation (Assor & Connell, 1992; Bandura, 1982; Covington & Beery, 1976; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Harter, 1985; Schunk, 1989, 1990; Schunk & Meece, 2012; Skinner et al., 1990). Since 2016, the Chinese Ministry of Education has identified student satisfaction as one of five key indicators for assessing the quality and progress of higher education in China (Luo et al., 2019). Hence, student satisfaction, a crucial element in assessing perceived learning outcomes, reflects an immediate appraisal of the university experience (Elliot & Healy, 2001). Therefore, it is imperative to consider students' experiences when designing student-centered curricula.

Bordoloi et al. (2021) investigated students' perceptions of online learning during the COVID-19 crisis in India. Their findings suggest that students reported positive experiences with blended learning, positioning it as a promising approach for higher education in the 21st century.

Moreover, Ullah et al. (2017) examined tertiary students' attitudes toward online learning, focusing on the interplay between student attitudes and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The study revealed that students had overwhelmingly positive experiences using the digital tools provided.

Additionally, Owston et al. (2013) highlighted the favourable reception of blended courses among high-achieving students, who found them more convenient, engaging, and conducive to better understanding critical concepts compared to fully face-to-face or online formats. However, Khan, Kamal, and colleagues (2021) identified various factors influencing online learning outcomes, including internet quality, digital literacy, socioeconomic status, and home environment. Despite students' positive attitudes towards online learning for maintaining academic progress during the COVID-19 pandemic, challenges like unreliable internet connections, power disruptions, time management issues, and difficulties in concentration were reported.

2.2 Blended Learning and Constructivism

Constructivism emphasizes learner autonomy, encouraging students to develop problem-solving strategies rather than simply adopting prescribed methods (O'Connor, 1998). Unlike traditional instruction, which focuses on transmitting established knowledge, constructivism prioritizes the development of learners' unique perspectives. The role of the instructor shifts from knowledge dispenser to facilitator, guiding students toward constructing their understanding through appropriate tasks and opportunities for dialogue. Such an approach aligns with Moodle's potential to support collaborative learning, knowledge construction, and student-centered activities (Bruner, 1986).

Projecting constructivism on Blended learning culminates in combining traditional classroom instruction with online technology, offering a digitized approach to education (Thorne, 2003; Graham, 2006; Picciano, 2006). It employs various instructional methods and technologies, including synchronous and asynchronous tools, to transform traditional teaching (Beckman et al., 2018). Collaborative activities in blended learning foster diverse experiences and knowledge sharing without time or place restrictions (Yoo et al., 2012). Correspondingly, Moodle is a substantial tool that facilitates cooperative learning through its tools (Yang, 2012).

Drawing from Piaget's theory, online discussion forums support knowledge construction through assimilation and accommodation facilitated by social interaction (Piaget, 1985; Nor, Razak, & Aziz, 2010). Collaborative behaviour in forums involves contributing, help-seeking, and monitoring (Nor et al., 2010). Asynchronous discussion forums are crucial for student-centered learning, promoting collaboration and teamwork (Garrison et al., 2000; Davies & Graff, 2005; Garrison, 2007; Watson et al., 2016; Covelli, 2017). However, low participation poses a challenge, necessitating instructor intervention and platform design improvements (Kamboj & Rahman, 2017; Almatrafi & Johri, 2018; Chiu & Hew, 2018). Nevertheless, the asynchronous nature of such tools grounded in video conferencing and virtual classes enhances engagement and interactivity, offering new avenues for learning (Bonk & Graham, 2005). As Bonk and Graham (2005) point out, blended learning systems can be categorized into three main areas, summarized in the table below:

Table 1

Blended Learning Systems by Bonk and Graham (2005)

Enabling	Easy access to learning materials.
Enhancing	Tech-enhanced learning for deeper understanding.
Transforming	Transformative learning moves from the traditional and is foregrounded in interactive, collaborative activities.

Mary Simpson (2008) extends Bonk and Graham's (2005) blended learning framework by emphasizing four key factors: collaboration, interaction, personalization, and media-richness, which are crucial for student engagement and soft skills development. Moodle, a widely used learning management system (LMS), effectively incorporates these elements, particularly enhancing interactive dialogue and active learner participation in second language acquisition (Simpson, 2008). The global adoption of Moodle in tertiary education is evident, with studies showcasing its potential benefits in various contexts. For instance, Memon and Rathore (2018) demonstrated in Pakistani medical universities that blended learning with Moodle improved communication and critical thinking skills through multimedia and additional resources. Similarly, research consistently underscores Moodle's efficacy in facilitating English language learning (Bataineh et al., 2019; Alavi & Keyvanshekouh, 2012; Zhang & Zhu, 2020). Studies by Liu (2013) and Alhothli (2015) revealed positive experiences among ESL students using Moodle for grammar and reading courses, highlighting its potential in English Language Teaching (ELT). However, ongoing research is deemed necessary due to the dynamic nature of blended learning and its evolving implications. Educators are encouraged to stay updated with the latest research to ensure the effectiveness of their teaching methods (Memon & Rathore, 2018; Liu, 2013; Alhothli, 2015).

2.3 Soft Skills instruction through blended learning

Soft skills encompass communication, IT, numeracy, problem-solving, teamwork, and learning-to-learn abilities essential for academic and professional success (Hadiyanto et al., 2017; Bialik et al., 2015). Considerably, Blended learning bridges soft and hard skills development (Schober et al., 2008; Hadiyanto, 2019; Sulisworo et al., 2016). According to multiple studies (Ahlstrom et al., 2014; Bialik et al., 2015; DIKTI, 2020), educators should integrate the cultivation of both hard and soft skills into their teaching and learning practices. Hence, the SCL or student-centered learning.

Student-Centered Learning (SCL) has emerged as a prevalent and effective method for fostering student engagement and producing well-qualified graduates. This pedagogical approach emphasizes developing hard and soft skills, promoting student competitiveness. Research (Hadiyanto et al., 2021; DIKTI, 2016) indicates that SCL enables students to acquire subject matter

knowledge while simultaneously honing their hard and soft skills. Correspondingly, effective Student-Centered Learning (SCL) strategies employed by teachers encompass a diverse range of approaches, including blended, inquiry, cooperative, collaborative, problem-based, laboratory learning, and E-learning. The selection of appropriate learning strategies is guided by their alignment with course content and student interests. According to Khalil and Elkhider (2016), these strategies should actively promote the development of students' soft skills while providing opportunities to explore and acquire technical skills. Overall, SCL environments provide ample opportunities for students to develop essential soft skills such as critical thinking in analysing information, evaluating arguments, making informed decisions, and problem-solving skills illustrated in identifying and resolving issues creatively and effectively within a timed frame. The latter brings time management skills into focus as a crucial skill. Last but not least communication skills are highlighted in expressing ideas clearly, listening attentively, and working collaboratively.

Conclusively, online activities within blended learning environments can significantly enhance students' skills. A student-centered approach, where teachers act as facilitators, is essential for maximizing the benefits of these online experiences. This approach empowers students to engage with a variety of resources, such as reading materials, quizzes, discussion forums, and question-and-answer sections, fostering collaborative processes that promote critical thinking and other valuable skills. Blended learning's ability to nurture a constructivist learning setting illustrates its association with enhancing soft and hard skills. When constructed with constructivist principles, blended learning provides a conducive environment for developing diverse soft skills while facilitating the acquisition of hard skills through diverse learning modalities. Despite the latter, we ought to state the significance of conducting ongoing student-centered research that targets students' experiences and challenges with new blended course material.

3. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, to explore students' perceptions of using Moodle for soft skills development in a blended learning environment. Quantitative data assessed specific aspects of students' experiences with the blended module, while qualitative data gathered in-depth information through open-ended questions focusing on challenges and benefits. These questions explored students' experiences with blended learning, including any difficulties or advantages. The second section examined the perceived impact on academic and professional development, exploring the module's potential to enhance skills relevant to academic success and future careers. Using mixed methods adds a deeper layer to the data analysis, allowing for a comprehensive view of the survey results from numerical and holistic perspectives. This approach provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of the Moodle-based blended learning program in fostering soft skills development among first-year English Studies students. By identifying the program's strengths and weaknesses, this research aims to inform future improvements and contribute to developing effective blended learning environments for soft skills development in higher education.

The study adopts the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as a theoretical framework to comprehend the factors impacting technology adoption and utilization (Davis, 1986). By determining students' preferences and experiences, the findings of this study will inform the ongoing debate about the optimal learning mode—online, hybrid, or traditional. Moreover, the research will contribute to the growth of Morocco's online education sector by providing valuable insights into student satisfaction and the potential for improvement in online course delivery.

3.1 Questions and Objectives

The study seeks to answer the following questions and achieve the following objectives:

- Question 1: What soft skills, such as communication and critical thinking, did students develop most effectively through the Moodle-based learning experience?
- Objective 1: Identify the primary soft skills fostered by the Moodle-based learning experience, including communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving.
- Question 2: How can blended learning environments be optimized to enhance soft skill development among Moroccan undergraduates?
- Objective 2: To provide recommendations for optimizing blended learning environments and Moodle to effectively address the challenges faced by Moroccan undergraduates in developing soft skills.

3.2 Data Collection

- Participants: This study involved first-year undergraduate students enrolled in the English Studies program at the University of ibn Tofail, Kenitra. The Google form received 121 respondents.
- Data Collection Method: An online survey was administered to collect participant data. The survey was distributed at the end of the semester through two channels:
- Class Representative: The survey link was shared through a WhatsApp group managed by the class representative.
- Google Classroom: The instructor also shared the survey link via Google Classroom, a learning management system for course materials and communication.

- Time frame of collection: At the end of the semester, the form was shared with students through the class representative via a WhatsApp group and through the module instructor via Google Classroom used by the Instructor.
- Survey Platform: Google Forms was chosen as the survey platform due to its ease of use, affordability, and accessibility for students. This platform allowed for efficient data collection and facilitated a high participant response rate.

3.3 Survey Content

The survey instrument consisted of several sections designed to assess various aspects of the blended learning module Soft Skills:

- Level of familiarity: This section explored students' familiarity with the Moodle Platform.
- Perceived Impact on Academic and Professional Development: This section examined participants' perceptions of the module's potential to enhance their academic and professional skills.
- Perceptions of the Blended Learning Approach: This section explored students' opinions and experiences with the blended learning design. Questions focused on:
- Perceived effectiveness of the approach in developing soft skills (e.g., communication, collaboration, active listening, time management, critical thinking).
- Preferences for synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.
- Challenges and Benefits: This section used open-ended questions to allow students to elaborate on any challenges or benefits they encountered with the blended learning approach.
- Overall Satisfaction: This section assessed students' overall satisfaction with the blended
- learning experience.

3.4 Sampling

A convenience sampling approach was employed, targeting all first-year English students enrolled in the course utilizing the blended learning module. The mentioned method allocated ease and inclusion in data collection to get general and maximum responses from students.

3.5 Data analysis

For the present study, we assigned multiple questions and ratings, with five entries requiring respondents to enter a scale score with a ten-point Likert scale, three questions with 5 rating scales (Very Dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Neutral, Satisfied, Very Satisfied), three multiple-choice questions, and two open-ended questions. The survey collected quantitative and qualitative data about Ibn Tofail First Year English Department students' perceptions and feedback on Moodle Platforms and soft Skills development in the Blended Learning Mode. This analysis will provide a summary of student responses regarding their:

- Familiarity with the Moodle Platform (Very Familiar to Not Familiar at all).
- Satisfaction with instructor input and visual multimedia content in the blended module.
- Frequencies of Satisfaction levels with the blended module.
- Frequencies of Preference for synchronous, asynchronous mode, or both.
- Frequencies of Perceived impact on academic and professional life (Yes, Maybe and No).
- Types of soft skills developed (checkboxes) - Frequencies will be calculated to identify the most commonly perceived areas of soft skills development.

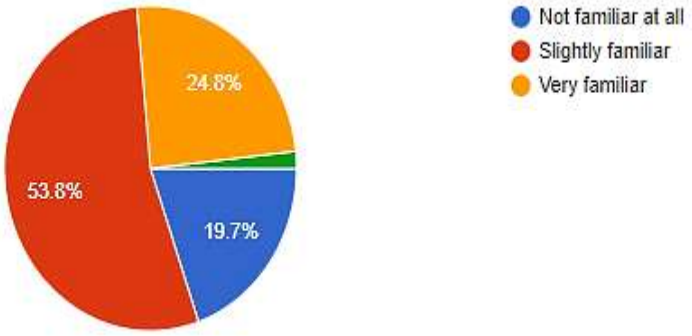
The qualitative data has been analyzed through Taguette, a free and open-source qualitative research tool. Open-ended questions gauged the challenges participants faced while engaging in asynchronous learning activities on Moodle and the specific features or aspects of the Moodle platform they found most helpful in supporting their learning experience in university. These questions will be analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involves identifying recurring themes and patterns within student responses regarding their opinions on the potential of the module components to improve their academic and professional life. The latter data will be visually represented using multiple data visualization methods.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Quantitative data

Figure 1

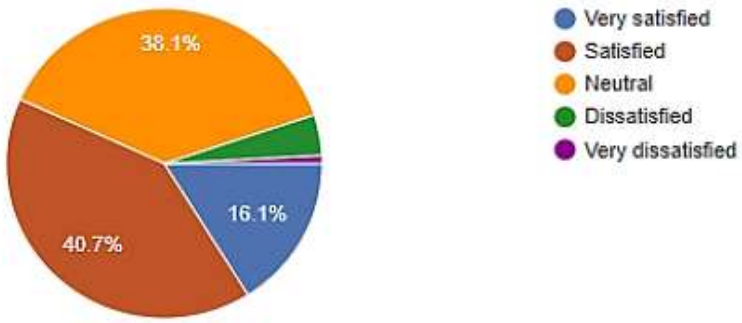
Frequencies of Familiarity with Moodle



The first survey question was to identify the levels of familiarity students have with the Moodle platform. A significant portion of respondents (53%) identified themselves as "Slightly familiar" with Moodle, indicating that most participants possess a basic understanding of the platform (see Figure 1 below). Meanwhile, around 25% of the respondents said they were "very familiar," reflecting a higher level of expertise and ease in using Moodle. Students who are "very familiar" are more likely to perceive Moodle as easy to navigate and use. Only 19% of respondents in the population indicated they were "Not familiar at all" with the platform. The high level of students' familiarity with Moodle Platforms suggests that while many students have some basic understanding and experience with the platform, their usage may be limited or superficial. This level of familiarity likely stems from the rapid shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, where many institutions implemented or expanded their use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Moodle to facilitate remote education. These students have likely engaged with Moodle enough to navigate its basic functions but may not yet be proficient in using all its features.

Figure 2

Frequencies of Overall Satisfaction with the Blended Course Design

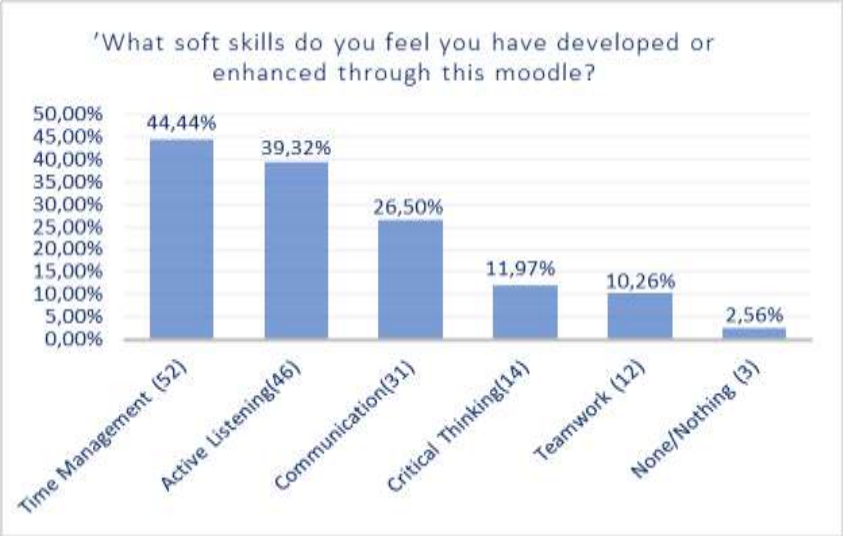


Respondents rated the Soft Skills overall lesson design in response to the question, "How satisfied are you with the overall lesson design?" as shown in (Figure 2). From the illustrative figure, we can see the distribution of satisfaction levels with the overall lesson design, as indicated by these percentages, is significant. Respondents rated the overall lesson design positively, with approximately 41% expressing satisfaction and 16% indicating very high satisfaction (Figure 2). This suggests a favorable perception of the course structure, which aligns with the TAM construct of perceived usefulness. A well-structured lesson design can significantly influence students' beliefs about the value of the course and their ability to achieve learning objectives. Consequently, this positive perception of lesson design may contribute to increased motivation and engagement, key factors in technology adoption.

In response to the question, ''What soft skills do you feel you have developed or enhanced through this Moodle?'', the following soft skills emerged based on the frequency of occurrence see Figure 3:

Figure 3

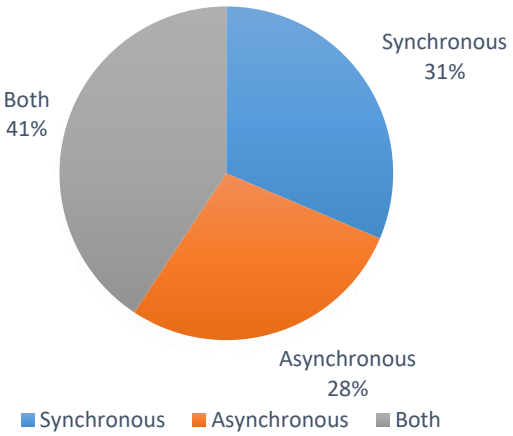
Students' self-assessment report about Soft Skills developed via the Blended Module



The diagram reveals that time management is the most significantly enhanced soft skill among Moodle users, with nearly half of respondents reporting improvement (Halpern, 2001). This aligns with the TAM construct of perceived usefulness, as Moodle's structured environment, including features such as deadlines and organizational tools, facilitates the development of time management skills (Liu, 2013; Alhothli, 2015; Bataineh et al., 2019; Alavi & Keyvanshekouh, 2012; Zhang & Zhu, 2020). Conversely, the less pronounced development of critical thinking and teamwork skills suggests that while Moodle provides a platform, it may not inherently foster these skills to the same extent (Halpern, 2001). Strategies such as specific assignments, instructional methods, and increased participation in online forums are necessary (Du et al., 2022). Ultimately, while Moodle is a valuable tool, effective instructional design and facilitation are crucial for maximizing its potential to develop a comprehensive range of soft skills.

Figure 4

Frequencies of Preference for synchronous or asynchronous mode



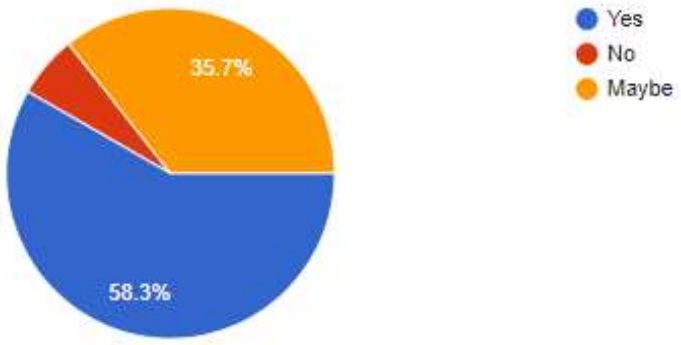
As can be observed from the figure, blended learning preference highlights that 41% of respondents prefer a blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning, which indicates that they perceive usefulness in both modes. This suggests that learners value the flexibility and self-paced nature of asynchronous learning (ease of use) and the interactive and immediate feedback benefits of synchronous learning (usefulness).

Additionally, the synchronous learning preference slice showcases a 31% preference for synchronous learning. The latter highlights the perceived usefulness of real-time interactions, discussions, and immediate feedback for learning. These elements directly contribute to the perceived usefulness of the technology (synchronous learning) in facilitating learning.

Further research is needed to understand the factors driving these preferences in Blended Learning approaches. Overall, findings suggest that a blended learning approach can enhance the perceived usefulness of technology-mediated learning by combining the best aspects of both synchronous and asynchronous modes. This alignment with the TAM model supports the idea that by offering a variety of learning experiences, institutions can increase students' acceptance and engagement with technology.

Figure 5

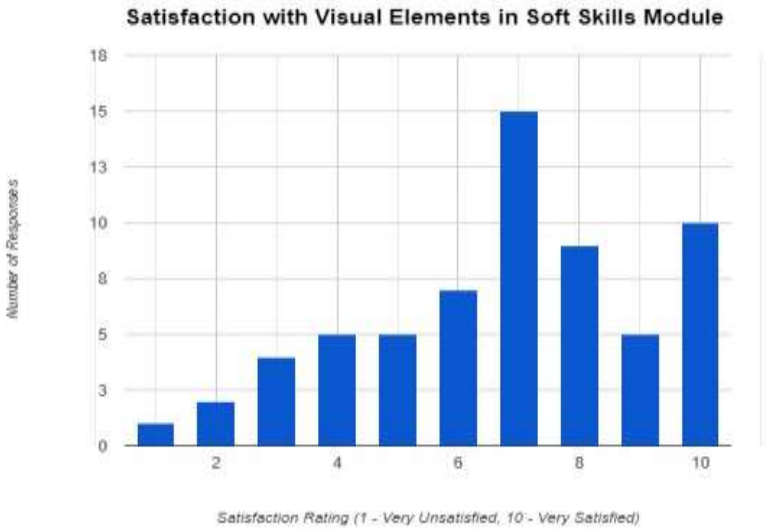
Frequencies of Perceived impact on academic and professional life



The majority of participants (58.33%) expressed strong confidence that the skills acquired in the module would benefit both their academic and professional lives, aligning with the TAM construct of perceived usefulness. However, a significant portion (35.7%) expressed uncertainty, potentially indicating a gap in understanding the module's value or its alignment with perceived ease of use. A smaller percentage (10.00%) outright rejected the idea of benefits, suggesting a more complex interplay of factors beyond the TAM model.

Figure 6

Satisfaction with Visual and Multimedia content in the blended module



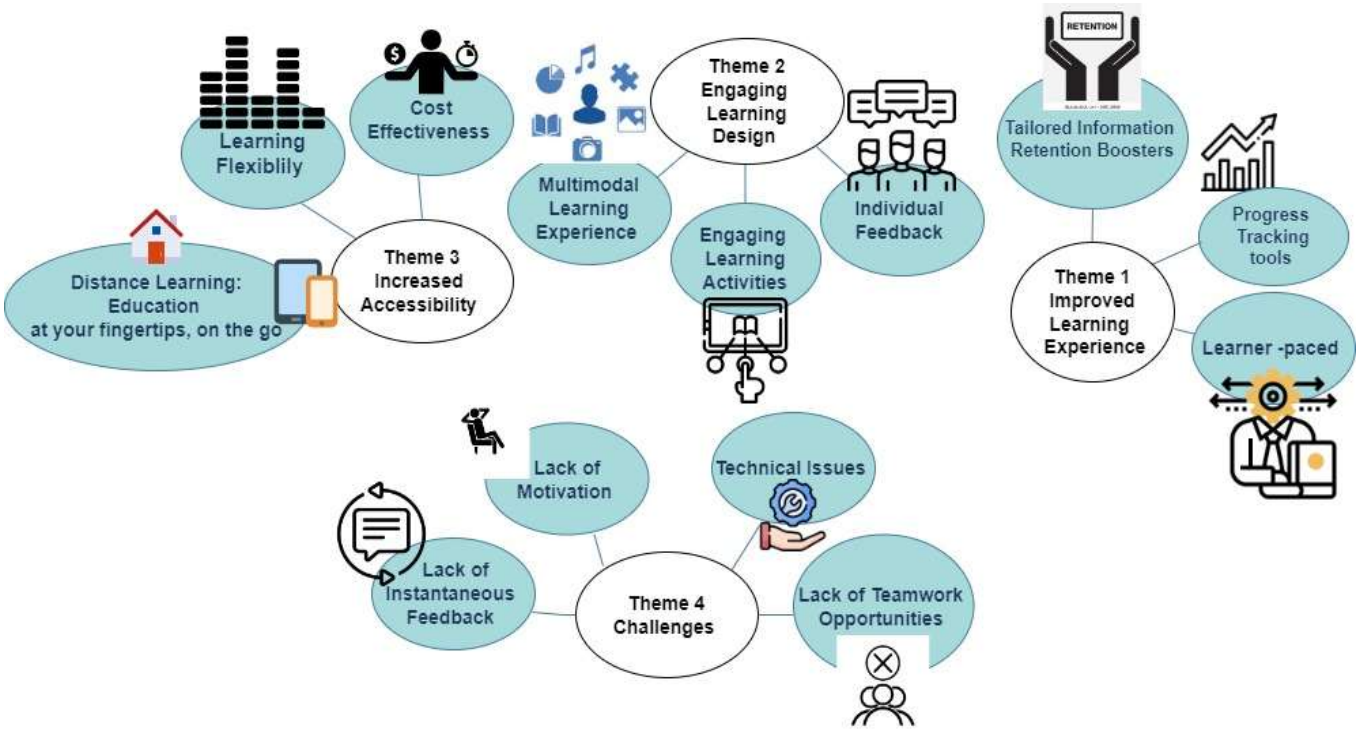
Most participants (58.33%) expressed confidence in the module's ability to enhance their academic and professional prospects, aligning with the Technology Acceptance Model's (TAM) concept of perceived usefulness. However, a significant portion (35.7%) expressed uncertainty, potentially indicating a gap in understanding the module's value or its alignment with perceived ease of use. In comparison, a smaller percentage (10.00%) rejected the idea of benefits altogether, suggesting other factors influencing technology acceptance beyond the TAM framework. Further research is needed to understand the reasons for the latter.

4.2 Qualitative data

The data collected from our survey provided insights into students' ratings and satisfaction levels with Blended Learning and Moodle Platforms and offered practical implications. Specifically, we asked respondents about the specific features or aspects of the Moodle platform that they found most helpful in supporting their university learning experience and elicited their perceptions and feedback on their individual experiences with Ibn Tofail's Moodle Platform. This was done in response to the question, "Which specific features or aspects of the Moodle platform do you find most helpful in supporting your learning experience in university?". Additionally, we collected responses about the challenges that students faced while engaging in asynchronous learning activities on Moodle. This was done in response to the open-ended survey item "Please share any challenges you faced while engaging in asynchronous learning activities on Moodle." We used Taguetti, a qualitative research software, to analyze the data, conduct a thematic analysis, organize the codes under axial codes. These axial codes were interpreted as main themes with significant code density in the data. The theme map outlines the main themes that emerged from the data.

Figure 7

Thematic map



Note. The diagram illustrates the thematic analysis results.

4.3 Prominent themes and sub-themes

4.3.1 Improved Learning Experience

The study participants highlighted various benefits of utilizing the Moodle platform for their university education, including tailored information delivery, tools for improving retention, progress tracking, and the opportunity for self-directed learning (Gogan et al., 2015). Specific platform features, such as interactive quizzes and exercises that aid retention, along with progress monitoring capabilities that offer valuable insights for improvement, were also noted. Learners value the platform's flexibility in pacing, enabling them to learn at their own rhythm rather than conforming to rigid schedules (Liu, 2013; Alhothli, 2015; Bataineh et al., 2019; Alavi & Keyvanshekouh, 2012; Zhang & Zhu, 2020). These elements contribute to a more engaging and efficient learning experience, freeing learners from the constraints of fixed schedules imposed by instructors or traditional classroom settings. This underscores that the Ibn Tofail Moodle platform offers an array of tools and features conducive to learner-paced instruction.

4.3.2 Engaging Course Design

Among the other themes that emerged from the survey, qualitative responses were related to Course Design. Respondents highlighted that the activities focusing on soft skills within Moodle were engaging and visually appealing. This observation suggests that the design of these activities effectively captured the attention and interest of learners, making the learning experience more enjoyable.

4.3.3 Increased accessibility

Moodle's accessibility is enhanced by its online nature, enabling learners to access course content from anywhere with an internet connection, removing geographical barriers. Learners appreciate this flexibility, as expressed by respondents who value the platform's accessibility features:

- ''I study whenever I want / Ease of access''
- ''Learning at a distance/ Removing some obstacles and difficulties in accessing lessons. ''
- ''Helping the student learn outside of the university.''

The statements underscore the convenience and accessibility of online education through platforms like Moodle. Learners value the flexibility to study at their own pace and access materials conveniently, especially beneficial for those with busy schedules. The mention of learning at a distance indicates overcoming geographical barriers, enabling education from anywhere. Additionally, the reference to "lower material costs" suggests financial advantages, potentially making education more accessible to disadvantaged individuals.

4.3.4 Challenges reported by (blended) learners

In response to the open-ended survey item" Please share any challenges you faced while engaging in asynchronous learning activities on Moodle," respondents reported some challenges they encountered in their blended learning journey. Technical issues, like internet connectivity problems and website breakdowns, disrupted access to course materials and completing assignments. Many learners struggled with motivation due to the lack of structured and immediate instructor feedback, which is possible in face-to-face classrooms. One of the respondents complained about this issue in the following statement:

''One challenge I faced during asynchronous learning activities on Moodle was the lack of real-time interaction with instructors and peers. While discussion forums and messaging features were available, the delay in responses sometimes hindered the flow of learning and collaboration. Additionally, managing time effectively to keep up with course materials and deadlines without regular class meetings required extra discipline and organization''

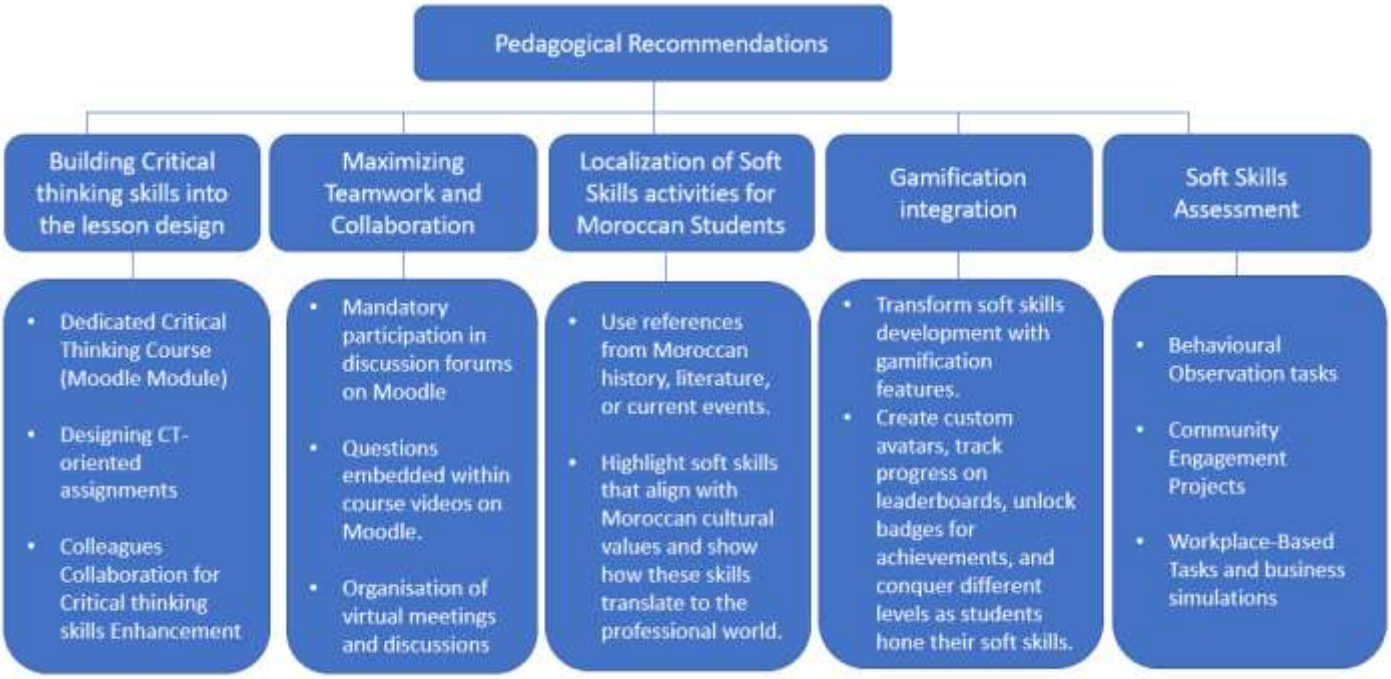
Respondents' specific challenges with navigating the application, internet connectivity issues, and crashes suggest that new users struggle to familiarize themselves with Moodle's platform, hindering their optimal usage. Improved onboarding processes and a more intuitive interface design could alleviate this learning curve. Additionally, enhancing internet servers is crucial for consistent access and performance, especially for users with unreliable connections. Some learners also reported a decreased level of motivation while engaging in learning via a Moodle platform. Some respondents also reported specific technical issues with the Moodle platform. We quote them saying:

- 'In the beginning, I had that problem with how to use the application, it wasn't that soft while using it, though''
- ''The first and the big problem that I faced is how to sign in to the platform, how to connect my email ''
- ''Weak internet'' - ''connection at the start''

5 Pedagogical Recommendations

In light of this study's findings and previous literature on blended learning and soft skills development, we suggest the following recommendations to make the blended module more interactive and engaging.

Figure 8
Pedagogical recommendations



Given the changing educational environment and insights from this survey, especially regarding blended learning and Soft Skills development in higher education, educators are seeking novel methods to boost student engagement, motivation, and skill acquisition. This requires a deep understanding of impactful teaching strategies, utilizing technology, and cultivating a conducive learning atmosphere. Consequently, we propose a set of recommendations to tackle the varied requirements and obstacles in fostering critical thinking, social interaction, and soft skills growth in educational contexts:

5.1 Implementing a Dedicated Critical Thinking Course:
To cultivate critical thinking skills effectively, it is recommended to establish a stand-alone critical thinking course. This approach allows students to delve deeply into higher-order cognitive processes and skills, free from the constraints of subject-specific content. To support this initiative, training workshops and critical thinking-specific support kits for professors can provide valuable resources and guidance. Additionally, fostering collaboration among professors through peer observation and feedback sessions facilitates the exchange of best practices and enhances teaching methodologies in promoting critical thinking.

5.2 Enhancing Moodle for Social Learning and Peer Interaction:
Moodle, as a popular learning management system, holds significant potential for fostering social learning and peer interaction. To maximize engagement in blended learning environments, it is crucial to enhance Moodle's capabilities in facilitating teamwork and collaboration. This can be achieved by integrating features that promote mandatory participation in online discussion forums, such as leveraging Moodle's video conferencing functionalities, which further enriches the learning experience by promoting creative collaboration and breaking down geographical barriers.

5.3 Embracing the 'Localization of Soft Skills' Approach:
Soft skills development should be embedded within culturally relevant contexts to resonate with learners' experiences and values. Educators can contextualize soft skills training within authentic situations that align with Moroccan cultural values by adopting a Localization of Soft Skills approach. This approach not only enhances the relevance and applicability of soft skills but also fosters a deeper understanding of their implications in personal, academic, and professional settings. As per Según Qi y Derakhshan (2024), language teaching materials should offer exposure to multiple cultures to foster intercultural competence. In the sense that instructional materials should provide a broader cultural perspective, encompassing learners' home cultures and the target language culture.

5.4 Incorporating Gamification Features in Moodle:

It is recommended that gamification features be integrated into Moodle to address decreased motivation and enhance learner engagement. Gamification elements such as badges, rewards, and leaderboards appeal to students' intrinsic motivation and incentivize active participation. Research suggests that gamified e-learning experiences lead to better learning outcomes and increased satisfaction among students, highlighting the effectiveness of this approach in promoting engagement and motivation.

5.5 Emphasizing Authentic, Performance-Based Assessments:

Assessment is pivotal in evaluating students' mastery of soft skills, going beyond mere knowledge acquisition to measure their application in real-world contexts. It is essential to prioritize authentic, performance-based assessments aligned with specific learning objectives and competency frameworks for soft skills development. By incorporating formative assessment practices throughout the learning process and providing ongoing feedback, educators can better prepare students for success in academic, professional, and personal settings where soft skills application is paramount.

6. Limitations

The study is constrained by several limitations, namely a diminutive sample size, dependence on self-reported data without accompanying objective assessment metrics, a paucity of diverse participant perspectives due to the absence of instructor viewpoints, and a restricted focus on first-year English Studies students at a singular university, thereby constraining the generalizability of the results. To mitigate these constraints, future research endeavours should contemplate augmenting the sample size, integrating objective assessment instruments, broadening the participant cohort to encompass various disciplines and academic institutions, and employing qualitative methodologies such as open-ended inquiries and focus group discussions to gain more profound insights.

7. Conclusion

Aligned with recent reforms in Moroccan higher education mandating the integration of soft skills development within university curricula, Moroccan institutions can better equip graduates for success in the contemporary globalized and collaborative work landscape by emphasizing technical and soft skills enhancement. This research examined the efficacy of a blended learning strategy encompassing soft skills cultivation within an English studies program for first-year students at Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra, Morocco. Taking a learner-centric approach, we delved into students' experiences post-engagement with Moodle for soft skills advancement in a blended learning setting. Survey outcomes reflected varying satisfaction levels with the Moodle Platform, course design, and in-class activities targeting soft skills acquisition. Qualitative feedback indicated that the soft skills-focused activities within Moodle were engaging and visually appealing. Through the lens of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), it can be inferred that students' perceived usefulness and ease of use of the Moodle platform influenced their satisfaction with the blended learning experience. However, the differential development of soft skills suggests that factors beyond technology adoption, such as the design of learning activities and instructional strategies, significantly impact soft skill acquisition. To tackle the emerged issues, recommendations were put forth, including an independent approach to enhancing critical thinking abilities, refined course design through localized content and performance-based evaluations, accommodation of diverse learning styles and paces, incorporation of mandatory forum components, integration of gamification elements, and facilitation of collaboration among Soft Skills educators.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

References

[1] Alavi, S., & Keyvanshekouh, A. (2012). Using the Moodle Reader as an extensive reading tool and its effect on Iranian EFL students' incidental vocabulary learning. *English Language Teaching, 5*(6). https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n6p135

[2] Alhothli, N. I. (2015). Investigating the impact of using Moodle as an e-learning tool for students in an English Language Institute [*Thesis, University of Montana]. Paper 4524.*

[3] Almatrafi, O., & Johri, A. (2018). Systematic review of discussion forums in massive open online courses (MOOCs). *IEEE Transactions on Learning Technologies, 12*(3), 413-428. https://doi.org/10.1109/tlt.2018.2859304

[4] Andrews, J., & Higson, H. (2008). Graduate employability, 'Soft skills' versus 'Hard' business knowledge: A European study. *Higher Education in Europe, 33*(4), 411–422. https://doi.org/10.1080/03797720802522627

[5] Anthony, B., Kamaludin, A., Romli, A., Raffei, A. F., Phon, D. N., Abdullah, A., & Ming, G. L. (2022). Blended learning adoption and implementation in higher education: A theoretical and systematic review. *Technology, Knowledge and Learning, 27*(2), 531–578. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-020-09477-z

[6] Assor, A., & Connell, J. P. (1992). The validity of students' self-reports as measures of performance affecting self-appraisals. In D. H. Schunk [1] & J. L. Meece (Eds.), *Students' perceptions in the classroom* (pp. 25-47). Lawrence Erlbaum

[7] Aziz, S., Harrizi, M., Loutfi, A., & Zaidoune, S. (2023). Moroccan undergraduates' views on developing soft skills in EFL classes: A case study [Unpublished manuscript]. Hassan II University of Casablanca.

[8] Bader Al Bataineh, K., Abdullah A Banikalef, A., & H. Albashtawi, A. (2019). The effect of blended learning on EFL students' grammar performance and attitudes: An investigation of Moodle. *Arab World English Journal, 10(*1), 324-334. https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no1.27

[9] Bahnasse, A., Harrizi, M., Loutfi, A., & Zaidoune, S. (2023). Assessing the professional preparedness of English studies graduates in Morocco: An alumni perspective on the applied linguistics track. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics, 8(*2), 111. https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v8i2.1037

[10] Bandura, A. (1982). The psychology of chance encounters and life paths. *American Psychologist, 37*(7), 747–755. https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.37.7.747

[11] Beckman, S., Scott, S. J., & Wymore, L. (2018). Collaborative innovation: Exploring the intersections among theater, art, and business in the classroom. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity, 4*(4), 52. https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc4040052

[12] Bialik, M., Bogan, M., Fadel, C., & Horvathova, M. (2015). Character Education for the 21st Century: What Should Students Learn?

[13] Bojiah, J. (2022). Effectiveness of Moodle in teaching and learning. *Journal of Hunan University Natural Sciences, 49*(12), 320-328. https://doi.org/10.55463/issn.1674-2974.49.12.33

[14] Bonk, C. J., & Graham, C. R. (Eds.). (2005). *Handbook of blended learning: Global perspectives, local designs*. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer Publishing.

[15] Bordoloi, R., Das, P., & Das, K. (2021). Perception towards online/blended learning at the time of COVID-19 pandemic: Academic analytics in the Indian context. *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal*, *16*(1), 41-60. https://doi.org/10.1108/aaouj-09-2020-0079

[16] Bouziane, A. (2020). Linguistic diversity in the Moroccan education system: (Un)equal opportunities. In S. El Azhar (Ed.), *Plural Morocco: Multiculturalism and Identity* (pp. 40-54). Faculty of Letters and Humanities Ben M'Sik.

[17] Bridges, K. R., Harnish, R. J., & Sillman, D. (2012). Teaching undergraduate positive psychology: An active learning approach using student blogs. *Psychology Learning & Teaching, 11*(2), 228-237. https://doi.org/10.2304/plat.2012.11.2.228

[18] Bruner, J. (1986). Actual minds, possible worlds. https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674029019

[19] Chaibate, H., Hadek, A., Ajana, S., Bakkali, S., & Faraj, K. (2020). A comparative study of the engineering soft skills required by the Moroccan job market. *International Journal of Higher Education, 9*(1), 142. https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n1p142

[20] Chamorro-Premuzic, T., Arteche, A., Bremner, A. J., Greven, C., & Furnham, A. (2010). Soft skills in higher education: Importance and improvement ratings as a function of individual differences and academic performance. *Educational Psychology, 30*(2), 221-241. https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410903560278

[21] Chiu, T. K., & Hew, T. K. (2018). Factors influencing peer learning and performance in MOOC asynchronous online discussion forum. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 34*(4). https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.3240

[22] Cordie, L., Witte, M. M., & Witte, J. E. (n.d.). Using blended learning and emerging technologies to transform the adult learning experience. *Teacher Training and Professional Development,* 2198-2223. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-5631-2.ch105

[23] Cotter, E. M., & Tally, C. S. (2009). Do critical thinking exercises improve critical thinking skills? *Educational Research Quarterly. 32*(2), 3–14.

[24] Covington, M. V., & Berry, R. (1976). *Self-worth and school learning*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

[25] Daud, N. M., & Husin, Z. (2004). Developing critical thinking skills in computer-aided extended reading classes. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 35*(4), 477–487. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0007-1013.2004.00405.x

[26] Davis, F. D. (1993). User acceptance of information technology: System characteristics, perceptions, and behavioral impacts. *International Journal of Man-Machine Studies, 38*(3), 475–487. https://doi.org/10.1006/imms.1993.1022

[27] Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). Conceptualizations of intrinsic motivation and self-determination. *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior, 11*-40. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-2271-7_2

[28] DIKTI. (2016). Panduan Penyusunan Kurikulum Pendidikan. Jakarta, Indonesia: DIKTI.

[29] DIKTI. (2020). Guide Book of Independent Learning – Independence of Campus [Indonesian]. http://dikti.kemdikbud.go.id/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Buku-PanduanMerdeka-Belajar-Kampus-Merdeka-2020

[30] Du, Z., Wang, F., Wang, S., & Xiao, X. (2022). Enhancing learner participation in online discussion forums in massive open online courses: The role of mandatory participation. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.819640

[31] Ennis, R. H., & Millman, J. (2005a). Cornell Critical Thinking Test, Level X (5th ed.). Seaside, CA: The Critical Thinking Company.

[32] Fernando, W. (2020). Moodle quizzes and their usability for formative assessment of academic writing. Assessing Writing, p. 46, 100485. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2020.100485

[33] Galip Kartal. (2024). Language teacher development in digital contexts. Kayi-Aydar, H., & Reinhardt, J. (Eds.). (2022). John Benjamins, 197 pages, ISBN: 978-90-272-1057-9. *Porta Linguarum Revista Interuniversitaria de Didáctica de Las Lenguas Extranjeras*, *42*, 341–344. https://doi.org/10.30827/portalin.vi42.27379

[34] Garrison, D. (1993). A cognitive constructivist view of distance education: An analysis of teaching-learning assumptions. *Distance Education, 14*(2), 199–211. https://doi.org/10.1080/0158791930140204

[35] Garrison, D., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. The Internet and Higher Education, 2(2-3), 87–105. https://doi.org/10.1016/s1096-7516(00)00016-6

[36] Gogan, M. L., Sirbu, R., & Draghici, A. (2015). Aspects concerning the use of the Moodle platform – Case study. *Procedia Technology, 19*, 1142-1148. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.protcy.2015.02.163

[37] Grisi, C. (2014, November). Soft Skills: A close link between enterprises and ethics [Speech presented at Soft Skills and Their Role in Employability – New Perspectives in Teaching, Assessment and Certification, Bertinoro, FC, Italy].

[38] Gross, B. H. (1974). Book reviews: Malcolm S. Knowles. The adult learner: A neglected species. *Houston: Gulf Publishing Company, 1973. 198 pp. Adult Education, 25*(1), 71-73. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171367402500106

[39] Hadiyanto, H. (2019). Enhancing students' core competencies by applying blended cooperative E-learning (BCeL) in the teaching and learning process. *Proceedings of the 3rd Asian Education Symposium (AES, 2018).* https://doi.org/10.2991/aes-18.2019.40

[40] Hadiyanto, H., Failasofah, F., Armiwati, A., Abrar, M., & Thabran, Y. (2021). Students practice 21st-century skills between conventional learning and blended learning. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice, 18*(3). https://doi.org/10.53761/1.18.3.7

[41] Hagmann, J., Almekinders, C., Bukenya, C., Guevara-Hernández, F., Hailemichael, A., Isubikalu, P., ... Zhang, L., & Breitschuh, U. (2003). Developing 'soft skills' in higher education. *PLA notes 48*, 21-25.

[42] Halpern, D. F. (2001). Assessing the effectiveness of critical thinking instruction. *The Journal of General Education, 50*(4), 270-286. https://doi.org/10.1353/jge.2001.0024

[43] Harter, S. (1985). Competence as a dimension of self-evaluation: Toward a comprehensive model of self-worth. In R. Leahy (Ed.), *The development of the self* (pp. 55-122). Academic Press.

[44] Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2009). An educational psychology success story: Social interdependence theory and cooperative learning. *Educational Researcher, 38*(5), 365–379. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x09339057

[45] Kamboj, S., & Rahman, Z. (2017). Understanding customer participation in online brand communities. Qualitative Market Research: *An International Journal, 20*(3), 306-334. https://doi.org/10.1108/qmr-08-2016-0069

[46] Kamii, C. (1985). The equilibration of cognitive structures: The central problem of intellectual Development. Jean Piaget, Terrance Brown, Kishore Julian Thampy. *American Journal of Education, 94*(4), 574–577. https://doi.org/10.1086/443876

[47] Karimi, H., & Pina, A. (2021). Strategically addressing the soft skills gap among STEM undergraduates. *Journal of Research in STEM Education, 7(*1), 21-46. https://doi.org/10.51355/jstem.2021.99

[48] Khalil, M. K., & Elkhider, I. A. (2016). Applying learning theories and instructional design models for effective instruction. *Advances in Physiology Education, 40*(2), 147-156. https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00138.2015

[49] Kim, E., Park, H., & Jang, J. (2019). Development of a class model for improving creative collaboration based on the online learning system (Moodle) in Korea. *Journal of Open Innovation*: *Technology, Market, and Complexity, 5(3)*, 67. https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc5030067

[50] Lueck, K. (2018). Socioeconomic success of Asian immigrants in the United States. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44*(3), 425-438. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2017.1320940

[51] Memon AR, Ali Awan MM. (2018). Higher education needs more improvement: The case of Pakistan. J Pak *Med Assoc.* 2017; *67*:821.

[52] Miraoui, A. (2022, May 9). عرض السيد وزير التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي والابتكار أمام لجنة التعليم والثقافة والاتصال مجلس النواب

[53] Missingham, D., Shah, S., Sabir, F., & Willison, J. (2018). Student engineers optimize problem-solving and research skills. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice, 15*(4), 127–144. https://doi.org/10.53761/1.15.4.8

[54] Neely, A. (2005). The evolution of performance measurement research. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management, 25*(12), 1264–1277. https://doi.org/10.1108/01443570510633648

[55] Neumeier, P. (2005). A closer look at blended learning — parameters for designing a blended learning environment for language teaching and learning. *ReCALL, 17*(2), 163-178. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0958344005000224

[56] Ngang, T. K., & Chan, T. C. (2015). The importance of ethics, moral and professional skills of novice teachers. Procedia - *Social and Behavioral Sciences, 205*, 8-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.09.004

[57] Nijhuis, J., Segers, M., & Gijselaers, W. (2008). The extent of variability in learning strategies and students' perceptions of the learning environment. *Learning and Instruction*, *18*, 121–134. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2007.01.009

[58] Nor, N.F., Razak, N.A., & Aziz, J.B. (2010). E-learning: analysis of online discussion forums in promoting knowledge construction through collaborative learning. *WSEAS TRANSACTIONS on COMMUNICATIONS archive, 9*, 53-62.

[59] O'Connor, M. C. (1998). Chapter 2: Can we trace the "Efficacy of social constructivism"? *Review of Research in Education, 23*(1), 25–71. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732x023001025

[60] Owston, R., York, D., & Murtha, S. (2013). Student perceptions and achievement in a university blended learning strategic initiative. *The Internet and Higher Education, pp. 18*, 38-46. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2012.12.003

[61] Pandey, M., & Pandey, P. (2014). Better English for better employment opportunities. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approaches and Studies, 1*(4), 96-103.

[62] Patil, A. B. (2021). Empowering strategies for learners to improve English communication and soft skills. *Elementary Education Online*, *20*(1), 2538–2545.

[63] Peterson, S. E., & Miller, J. A. (2004). Comparing the quality of students' experiences during cooperative learning and large-group instruction. *The Journal of Educational Research, 97*(3), 123-134. https://doi.org/10.3200/joer.97.3.123-134

[64] Petress, K. (2004). Critical thinking: An extended definition. *Education, 124*(3), 461-467.

[65] Piaget, J. (1985). The equilibration of cognitive structures: The central problem of intellectual development. (New translation of L'équilibration des structures cognitives). Chicago: *University of Chicago Press.*

[66] Picciano, A. G. (2019). Blending with purpose: The multimodal model. *Online Learning, 13*(1). https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v13i1.1673

[67] Poondej, C., & Lerdpornkulrat, T. (2020). Gamification in e-learning. *Interactive Technology and Smart Education, 17*(1), 56-66. https://doi.org/10.1108/itse-06-2019-0030

[68] Qi, S., & Derakhshan, A. (2024). Percepciones de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera sobre los elementos culturales representados en los libros de texto chinos d'ILE. *Porta Linguarum Revista Interuniversitaria De Didáctica De Las Lenguas Extranjeras*, (42), 261–281. https://doi.org/10.30827/portalin.vi42.28407

[69] Robles, M. M. (2012). Executive perceptions of the top 10 soft skills needed in today's workplace. *Business Communication Quarterly, 75*(4), 453–465. https://doi.org/10.1177/1080569912460400

[70] Roshid, M. M., & Chowdhury, R. (2013). English language proficiency and employment: A case study of Bangladeshi graduates in the Australian employment market. *Mevlana International Journal of Education, 3(*1), 68–81. https://doi.org/10.13054/mije.13.06.3.1

[71] Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 68–78. https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.55.1.68

[72] Schulz, B. (2008). The importance of soft skills: Education beyond academic knowledge. *Journal of Language and Communication*, 2(1), 146–154.

[73] Schunk D. H. (1989). Self-efficacy and cognitive achievement: implications for students with learning problems. Journal of learning disabilities, 22(1), 14–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/002221948902200103
[74] Shang, H. (2022). Exploring online peer feedback and automated corrective feedback on EFL writing performance. *Interactive Learning Environments, 30*(1), 4–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2019.1629601
[75] Simpson, M., & Anderson, B. (n.d.). Redesigning initial teacher education. *Effective Blended Learning Practices*. https://doi.org/10.4018/9781605662961.ch004
[76] Skinner, E. A., Wellborn, J. G., & Connell, J. P. (1990). What it takes to do well in school and whether I've got it: A process model of perceived control and children's engagement and achievement in school. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 82*(1), 22–32. https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-0663.82.1.22
[77] Studentsâ€™ soft skills, hard skills, and competitiveness (SHC): A suggested model for Indonesian higher education curriculum |. | International Journal of learning, teaching, and educational research. (n.d.). International *Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*. https://www.ijlter.org/index.php/ijlter/article/view/3276
[78] Sulisworo, D., Agustin, S. P., & Sudarmiyati, E. (2016). Cooperative-blended learning using Moodle as an open-source learning platform. *International Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning, 8*(2), 187. https://doi.org/10.1504/ijtel.2016.078089
[79] Tan, C. Y., Abdullah, A. G. K., & Ali, A. J. (2021). Soft skill integration for inspiring critical employability skills in private higher education. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, 92,* 23–39.
[80] The most spoken languages worldwide in 2023. (2023, June 16). Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/
[81] Thorne, S. L. (2003). Artifacts and cultures-of-use intercultural communication. *Language Learning& Technology, 7* (2), 38–67
[82] Tian, W., Louw, S., & Khan, M. K. (2021). COVID-19 as a critical incident: Reflection on language assessment literacy and the need for radical changes. *System, 103*, 102682. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102682
[83] Tulung, J. M., Lapian, A., Rogahang, H., Wuwung, O., Siang, J. L., & Luma, S. (2020). The influence of organizational culture and job satisfaction on teacher organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in junior high schools in Paal Dua District, Manado. *Systematic Reviews in Pharmacy, 11*(12), 2034-204
[84] Ullah, O., Khan, W., & Khan, A. (2017). Students' attitude towards online learning at the tertiary level. *PUTAJ–Humanities and Social Sciences, 25*(1-2), 63-82.
[85] Watson, S. L., Watson, W. R., Richardson, J., & Loizzo, J. (2016). Instructor's use of social presence, teaching presence, and attitudinal dissonance: A case study of an attitudinal change MOOC. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 17*(3). https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v17i3.2379
[86] Wilson-Ahlstrom, A., Yohalem, N., DuBois, D., Ji, P., Hillaker, B.D., & Weikart, D.P. (2014). From Soft Skills to Hard Data: Measuring Youth Program Outcomes (2nd ed.).
[87] World Economic Forum. (2020). The future of jobs report 2020. Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2020.pdf
[88] World Medical Association. (2013). World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects. *Jama, 310*(20), 2191–2194.
[89] Yang, Y. C., & Wu, W. I. (2012). Digital storytelling for enhancing student academic achievement, critical thinking, and learning motivation: A year-long experimental study. *Computers & Education, 59*(2), 339-352. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2011.12.012
[90] Yoo, Y., Boland, R. J., Lyytinen, K., & Majchrzak, A. (2012). Organizing for innovation in the digitized world. *Organization Science, 23*(5), 1398-1408. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1120.0771
[91] Zhang, W., & Zhu, C. (2020). Blended learning is a good practice in ESL courses compared to F2F and online learning. *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning, 12*(1), 64–81. https://doi.org/10.4018/ijmbl.2020010105