

Investigating the Significance of Blended Learning in Promoting EFL Students' Writing Skill (A Case Study Third Years Students' of English at College of Education - University of Dongola)

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Abstract:

This study aimed at investigating the significance of blended learning in promoting EFL students' writing skill. The study adopted the descriptive method. Questionnaire was used as primary tool for data collection the sample of study comprises (30) students. It was distributed to third years students of English at college of education university of Dongola. The researcher applied (SPSS) for analyzing verifying the hypothesis. The findings of the study revealed that: Traditional classroom is less effective than blended learning class in the terms of motivation, blended learning is important to improve learners' writing skills, the department of English does not encourage learners to use blended learning to improve their writing skills. The study highly recommends that: English teachers should give more attention to blended learning model in teaching writing skills, blended learning should be established then the teachers should motivate their learners and students should encourage to carry out activities through blended learning models.

Key words: education, face to face teaching and applied linguistic.

المستخلص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة الي التحقق من أهمية التعلم المدمج في تعزيز مهارات الكتابة لدي الطلاب دارسي اللغة الانجليزية لغة اجنبية. أعتمد الدراسة المنهج الوصفي. تم استخدام الاستبانة كأداة أولية لجمع البيانات, وقد ضمت عينة الدراسة (30) طالبا. تم توزيع الاستبانة علي طلاب المستوي الثالث لغة انجليزية بكلية التربية جامعة دنقلا. قام الباحث بتطبيق الحزم الاحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية لتحليل والتحقق من الفرضية. توصلت الدراسة الي ان: الفصول الدراسية التقليدية أقل فاعلية من فصول التعلم المدمج من حيث التحفيز, وان التعلم المدمج مهم لتحسين مهارات الكتابة لدى المتعلمين, ولا يشجع قسم اللغة الانجليزية المتعلمين علي استخدام التعلم المدمج لتحسين مهاراتهم الكتابية. توصي الراسة بشدة بما يلي: يجب علي معلمي اللغة الانجليزية إيلاء المزيد من الاهتمام لنموذج التعلم المدمج في تعليم مهارات الكتابة, يجب علي المعلمين علي تشجيع الطلاب لتنفيذ الانشطة والتدريبات من خلال نماذج التعلم المدمج.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعليم, التدريس وجها لوجه, اللغويات التطبيقية.

Introduction

Blended learning is a form of education program in which student learns at least in part through online with face to face learning in class. It is a natural progress of e-learning. The term "blended learning" is generally applied to the practice of using both online and

traditional learning experiences when teaching students. This research seeks to describe the state of using blended learning in teaching writing skills at University of Dongola. It tries to investigate the student's attitudes towards blended learning.

Chappelle (2005) states that: Technology is changing the job of teacher, through change the prompts in language learning opportunities. According to Sharma and Barrett (2007), "the term blended learning originated in business world in connection with corporate train", then it was employed in higher education. And lastly it is appeared in language teaching and learning.

Statement of the Study Problem

The researcher observe that students have problem in writing. Although, education college students at university of Dongola have good access to modern technologies, they do not use it in learning generally and learning English writing in particular. The researcher believed in the importance of using blended learning program in developing students' writing, where the use of blended learning and various multi-media could help students employ writing skills into daily writing tasks such as emails to a friend, posting or sharing ideas through texts or short paragraphs which may assist students become more effective communicators through writing. it is important to investigate the teachers own ideas about how blended learning supplement their teaching performance.

Study Objective

The objective of this study is:

1- To investigate students' attitudes towards blended Learning.

Study Question

This study attempts to provide answers to the following question:

1-What are the students' attitudes towards blended learning?

Study Hypothesis

This study has the following as its hypothesis:

1-Students have positive attitudes towards blended learning.

Study Significance

During the implementation of this research, it is hoped that the researcher can find out the problems that students may have when use blended learning in writing skills. This study addresses a newly approach in English language teaching, thus it is important to those who are concern with English teachers and students. It is gives insight to the facilities that blended learning offers for student in developing their writing skills. Moreover, the blended learning will establish new tool of pedagogy to the students and teachers as well as expertise and syllabus designers to get maxim use of blended model to improve students writing skills.

Definition of Bended Learning

There are many definitions of blended learning, but the most common is that which recognizes some combination of face to face and virtual environments. According to Garrison and Vaughn(2008) define blended learning "the thoughtful fusion of face to face and online learning experiences". They are emphasizing the need for blended learning with traditional way in teaching writing skills. Poon (2013) added that" the aims of two method is to complement each other" currently use of the term blended learning involves combining internet and digital media with established classroom forms, that require the physical co- presence of teachers and students. Blended learning is one of the teacher's arts to combining between varied resources and activities within learning environments that enables learners to interact and construct ideas.

Characteristics of Blended Learning

According to Al- Fiky (2011), blended learning redesign the education model with these characteristics:

- 1-Moving from lectures to students centered learning
- 2- Maximizing teacher- student, student- student, student- content, student- outside resources interaction
- 3- Integrating evaluation techniques for teachers and students
- 4-Broadening the spaces and opportunities available for learning
- 5-Supporting course management activities (eg: communication assessment submission, marking and feedback
- 6-Supporting the provision of information and resources to the students

Blended Learning Design

Blended learning design differs according to the elements that are blended. The selection, organization and primary presentation of course, content as well as the design and development of learning activities and assessment is a pivotal responsibility for teacher. Bath and Bourke, (2010) describe a five phase design for blended learning as systematic approach, starting with:

- Planning for integrating blended learning in writing course.
- 1blended learning in writing course. Designing and developing
- 2- blended learning element.
- 3-Implementing the blended learning design.
- 4- Reviewing (evaluating) the effectiveness of blended learning design.

5-Planning for the next delivery of course then improving the blended learning experiences for both staff and students.

Blended Learning Environment

Blended learning, as mentioned before, blends both e-learning and face-to-face learning. Figure (1) depicts the rapid growth of distributed learning environments and its convergence with face-to-face learning environments. Graham, (2004) asserts that, "intersection of the two archetypes depicts where blended learning systems are emerging". Blended learning environment which is regarded as a type of distance education integrates the advantages of distance education with the effective aspects of traditional education, such as face-to-face interaction. In contrast to classical learning environment which poses restrictions on place and time, e-learning provides an environment where the learners can study regardless of time and place restrictions. The factors such as learners' individual differences, personal characteristics and learning styles have significant impacts on the learning environment. For instance, the learners who have difficulty in establishing communication in the classroom environment find it easier to communicate in the electronic environment. It is obvious that the weaknesses and strengths of online environment and the weaknesses and strength of face-to-face education integrate in blended learning.

ODP Model for Educational Design of Blended Model Learning Program

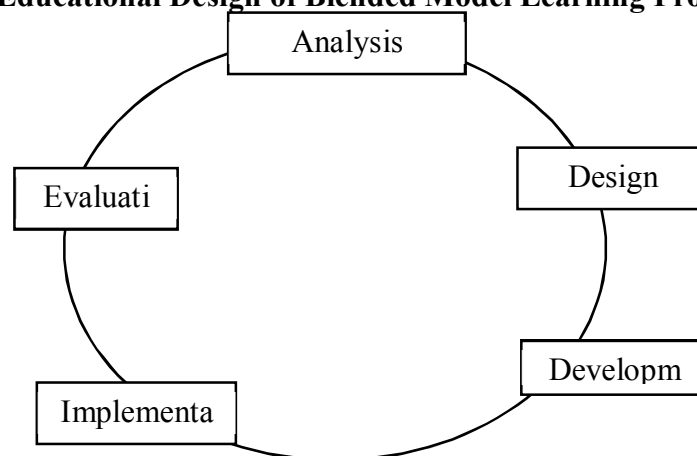


Figure (1) ODP model for blended learning design. Juanita, (2010, P54 ODP model consist five stages:

- The analysis phase: the most important stage in the implementation of blended learning method, it aims to know (who are learner? What they know? What they are learning? What they need? And what knowledge you want teach them?)
- The design phase: the application of strategy of implementation of blended learning through the renewal of the elements of learning which are (educational objectives, the strategy of evaluation and the resources used in educational program)
- Development stage: this stage is based on analysis and design stage the aims is to produce learning material for learning process.
- Implementation phase: the blended learning is implemented according to the steps already identified in the design phase.

Evaluation phase: the objective of this stage is to measure the extent to which the desired goals are achieved and success of the educational program using the assessment tools that have been prepared.

The Students Role in Bended Learning

Usually students need time to adapted and develop in a new learning environment. Supporting students through this transition is crucial. Strake (2007, p 25) asserted that "the pedagogical rational behind blended language learning is desire to all for high learners' independences in teaching and learning of second or foreign language".

Factors that Promote Blending Learning

According to Sharpe (2006, 47), "blended learning models should be developed to respond to local community or organization modes rather than using a generic approach". While Mason and Rennie (2006), argue that "putting the learner's needs first ahead of context of the bias of the teacher in making such choices". Sharpe (2006), assert that "blended learning should be introduced as scholarly and transformative redesign process within the institution that rebuilds the course rather than simply adding on technology". Vaughan (2007), stated that students expectations, especially their ideas that fewer face-to-face mean less work and the need to develop more responsibility for their learning and time management skills must be taken into account.

Conditions for Successful Blended Learning

According to John and Scott (2013), blended learning requires a lot of support building before and during communication implementation to shift blended learning feels like "just district" initiative, it is doomed to failure, so there are many steps that support blended learning shift needs. Such as define academic goals, the difference between blended learning and just adding computers to the way schools have always operated is that there regular and international change in delivery to boost learning and teacher talent.

Advantages of Blended Learning

Blended learning play a great role in teaching in general and teaching English writing skills specifically, thus it has many advantages which included accessibility, course interaction and pedagogical effectiveness. Most Sudanese university work hard to balance between traditional face-to-face and e-learning via increasing the work through blended learning. Carrol (2003), enhances the idea of accessibility saying that " student like the ability to access course materials any time any place and be positive about the convenience and flexibility, this supports them". Most of student (current study studets) those whom work, blended learning course help provide them with flexibility they need to juggle job, school and family.

Challenges Facing Blended Learning

The implementation of blended learning face some difficulty and challenges which might affect the quality of teaching and learning. Hofmann (2011), describe a variety of challenges facing blended learning:

- a- Ensuring participants' ability to use technology successfully.
- b- Ensuring all the elements of blended are coordinating.
- c- Overcoming the idea that blended is not as effective as traditional teaching.
- d- Keeping online offerings interactive rather than gust "talking at" participants
- e- Redefining the role of facilitator
- f- Ensuring participant commitment of
- g- follow-through with elements
- Managing and monitoring participant progress
- h- Matching the best delivery medium to performance objective.

Research Methodology

The researcher used the descriptive method to conduct the research. With regard to data collection, the researcher used a well- structured questionnaire to elicit responses from the students. This action research took place in the context of the researcher's own teaching practice with the participation of his students during the third semester of the academic year 2020.

The Instrument of the Study

The main instrument used in this study is the questionnaire, it assisted in building a base on a complete understanding of the research problem.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used in this study to elicit data from English language students at university of Dongola. The data is limited to investigating third level students' college of education university of Dongola attitudes towards blended learning in enhancing EFL Writing Skills. According to Best and Khan(1993). A questionnaire is an instrument in which respondents provide response to questions and mark terms that indicated their respondents.

The Reliability of the Questionnaire

Reliability refers to whether the instrument can produce the same or very similar results if it is conducted again under the same condition. The

questionnaire was calculated by a computer program Statistic Package for Social sciences Scale(SPSS).

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
-.160-	12

The value is positive, due to a positive average the statement is highly reliable.

The Analysis of the Questionnaire

The SPSS software was used to statistically analysis the quantitative data collected from questionnaire to reveal the findings.

Table (1): presented the gender of participated students

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	5	25%	25%	25%
Feale	15	75%	75%	75%
Total	30	100%	100%	100%

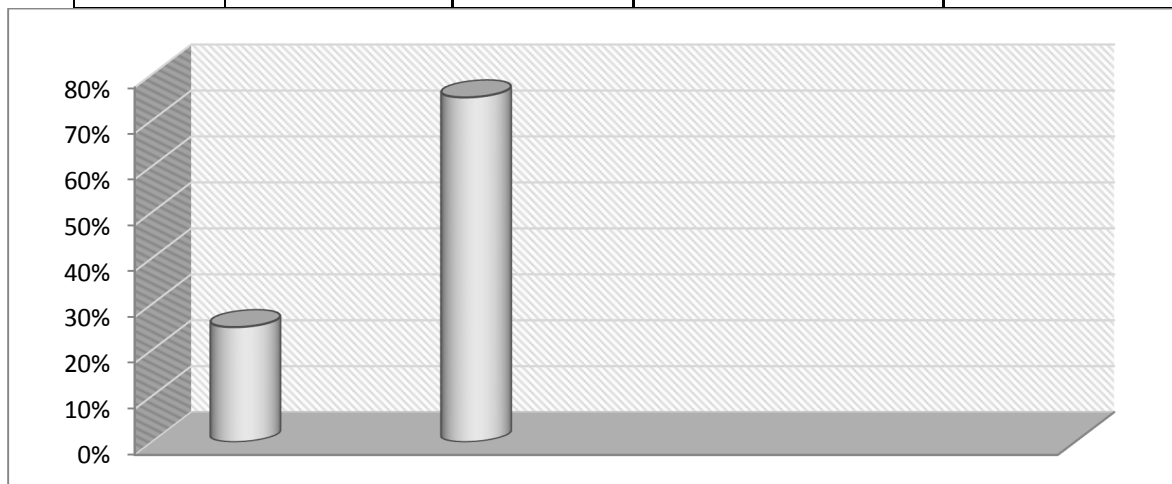


Figure (1): presented the gender of participated students

Table and figure (1) presented that (25%) of participants were male and (75%) were female, this shows that most of participants were female.

Table (2): Blended learning improves students writing skills.

options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Strongly Agree	10	33.3%	33.3%	93.3%
Agree	18	60%	60%	
Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Total	30	100%	100%	100%

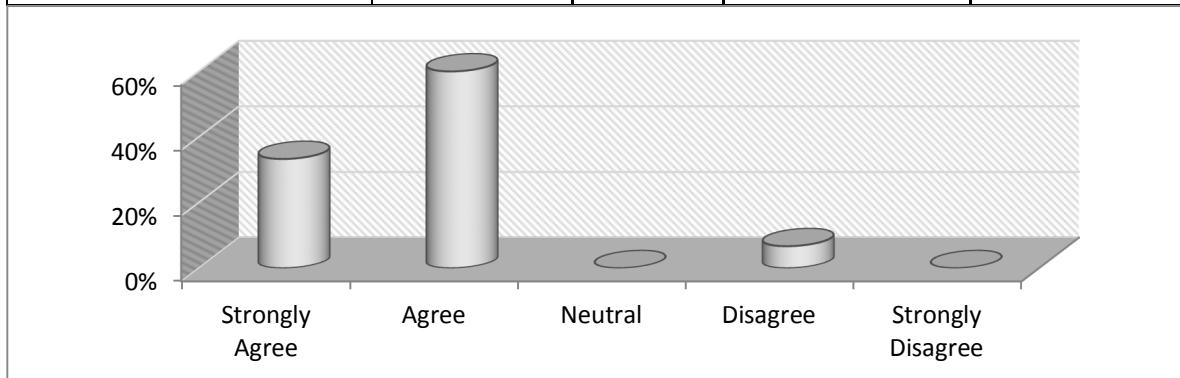


Figure (2): Blended learning improves students writing skills.
Above table and figure represent the distribution of the respondents' view about blended learning improves students writing skills. The result revealed that (93.3%) of English language students agreed with the statement, whereas (6.7%) disagreed. This indicates that the statement was accepted.

Table (3): Students has a positive attitudes towards blended learning.

options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	18	60%	60%	90%
Agree	9	30%	30%	
Neutral	3	10%	10%	10%
Total	30	100%	100%	100%

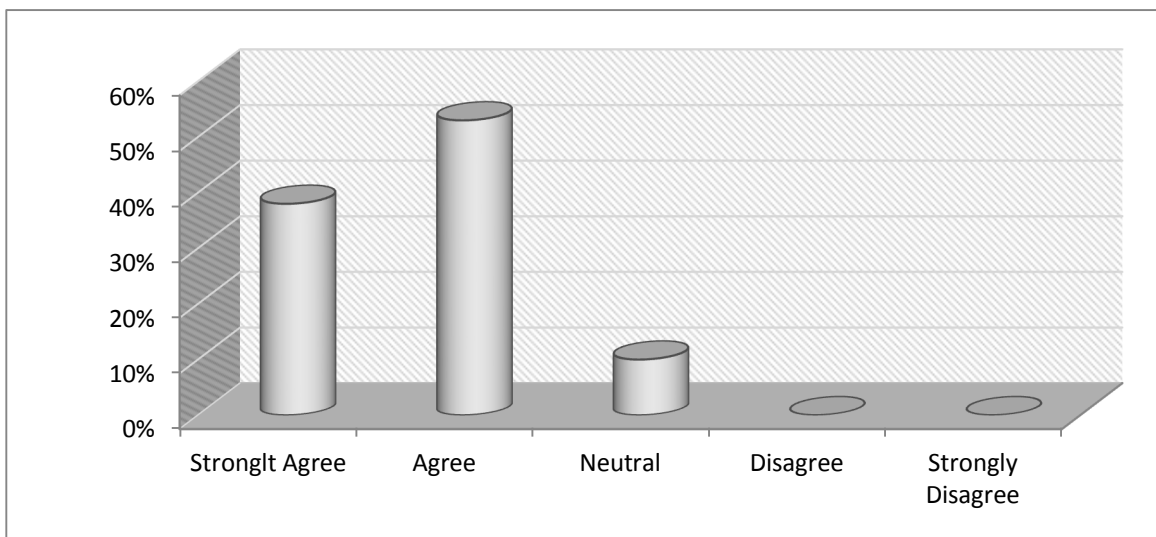


Figure (3): Students has a positive attitudes towards blended learning.
From the table and figure above (90%) of English Language students agreed with statement students has a positive attitudes towards blended learning, while only (10%) of students were neutral. This is proved that statement was accepted.

Table (4): Students are willing to use computer in practice writing skills.

options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	11	36.7%	36.6%	90%
Agree	16	53.3%	53.3%	
Disagree	3	10%	10%	10%
Total	30	100%	100%	100%

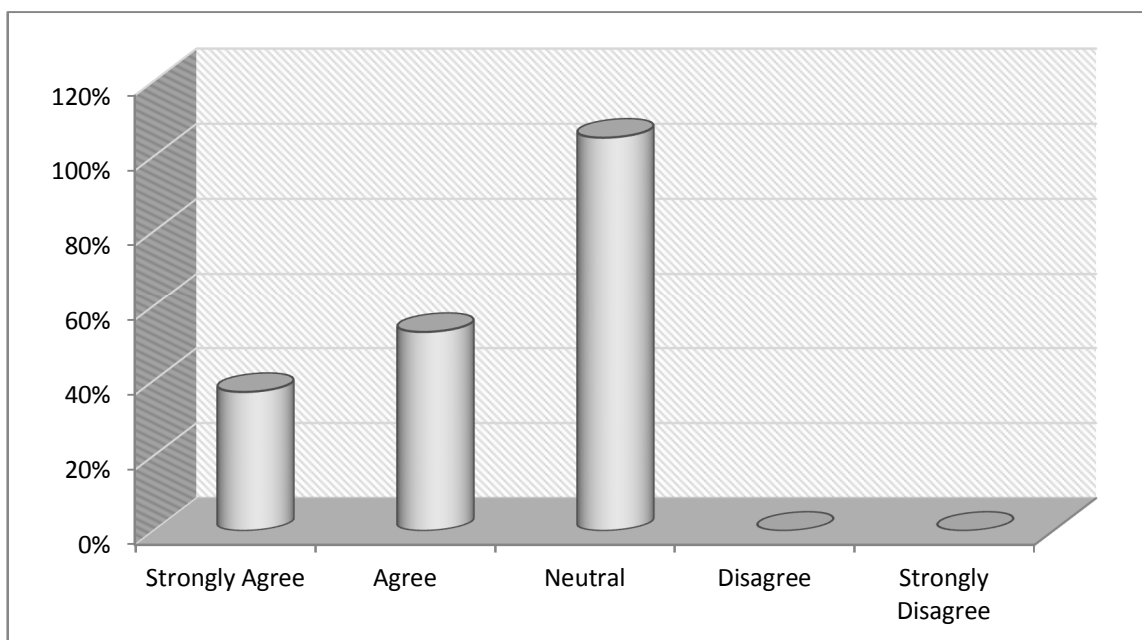


Figure (4): Students are willing to use computer in practice writing skills. Table and figure (4) represent the distribution of the respondents' view about the statement "Students are willing to use computer in practice writing skills". The result revealed that (90%) of English Language students agreed while only (10%) disagreed. This proved that students were willing to use computer.

Table (5): Blended learning helps students to interact with a lot of writing activities in the classroom.

options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	11	36.7%	36.6%	86.6%
Agree	15	50%	50%	
Neutral	2	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Total	30	100%	100%	100%

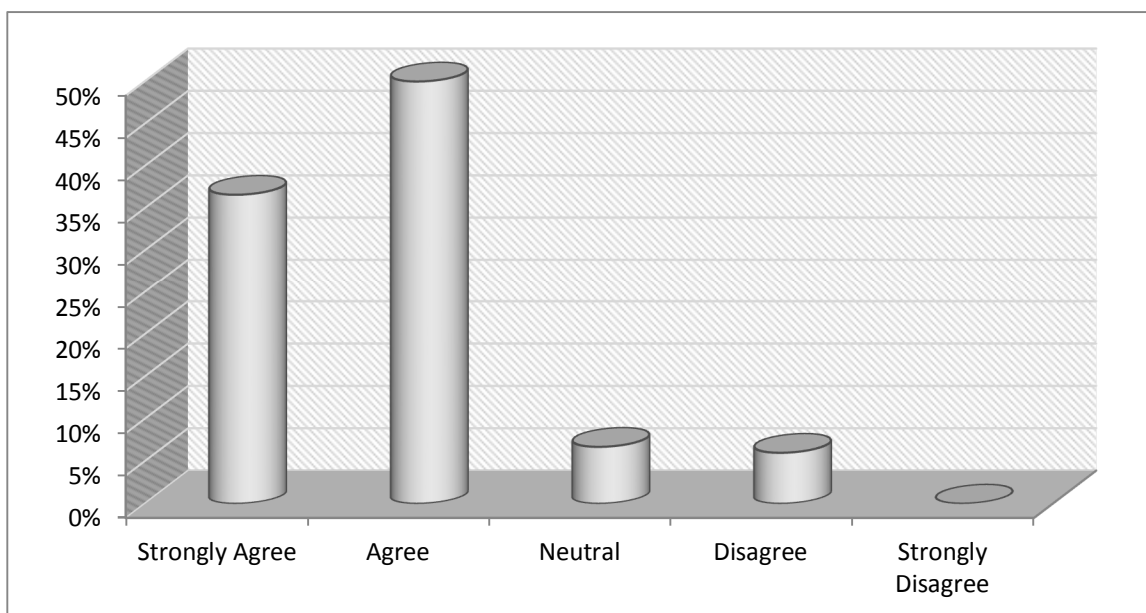


Figure (5): Blended learning helps students to interact with a lot of writing activities in the classroom.

Table and figure (5) presented the respondent about if blended learning helps students to interact with a lot of writing activities in the classroom. The respondent show that (86.6%) of English Language students agreed while (6.7%) disagreed and only (6.7%) were neutrals. This is demonstrates that blended learning help student in writing.

Table (6): Using blended learning in writing class have made students more productive.

options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	10	33.3%	33.3%	93.3%
Agree	18	60%	60%	
Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Total	30	100%	100%	100%

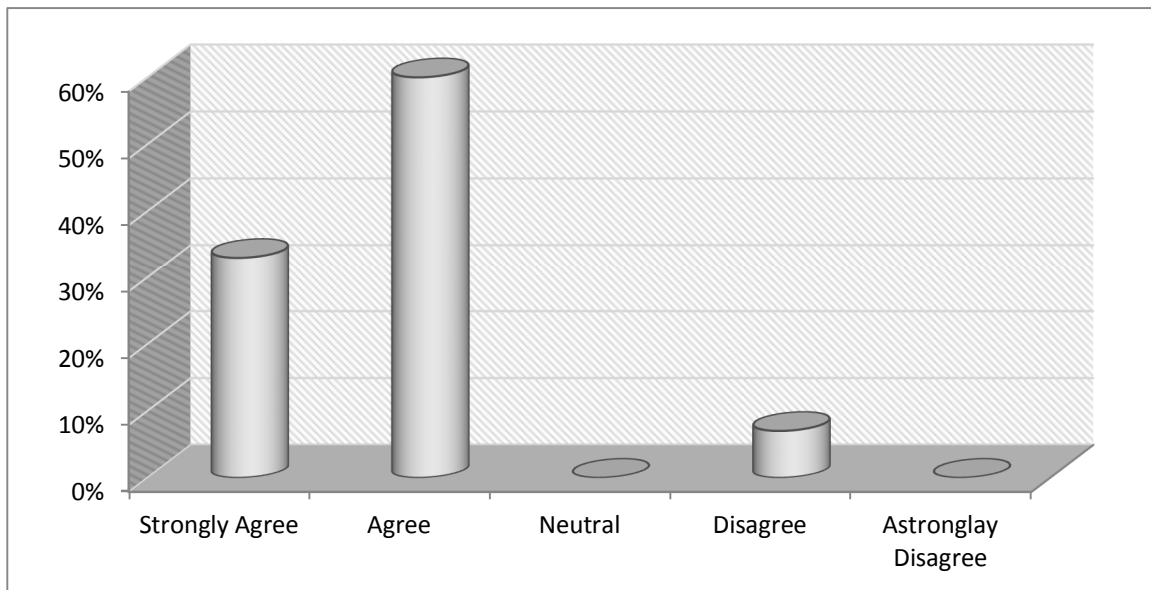


Figure (6): Using blended learning in writing class have made students more productive. Above table and figure represents the distribution of the respondents' view about Using blended learning in writing class made students more productive. The result revealed that (93.3%) of participant agreed whereas (6.7%) disagreed. This show us the impact of blended learning in writing.

Table (7):students did not feel nervous in their computer-writing class.

options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly Agree	9	30%	30%	76.7%
Agree	14	46.7%	46.7%	
Neutral	3	10%	10%	10%
Disagree	4	13.3%	13.3%	13.3%
Total	30	100%	100%	100%

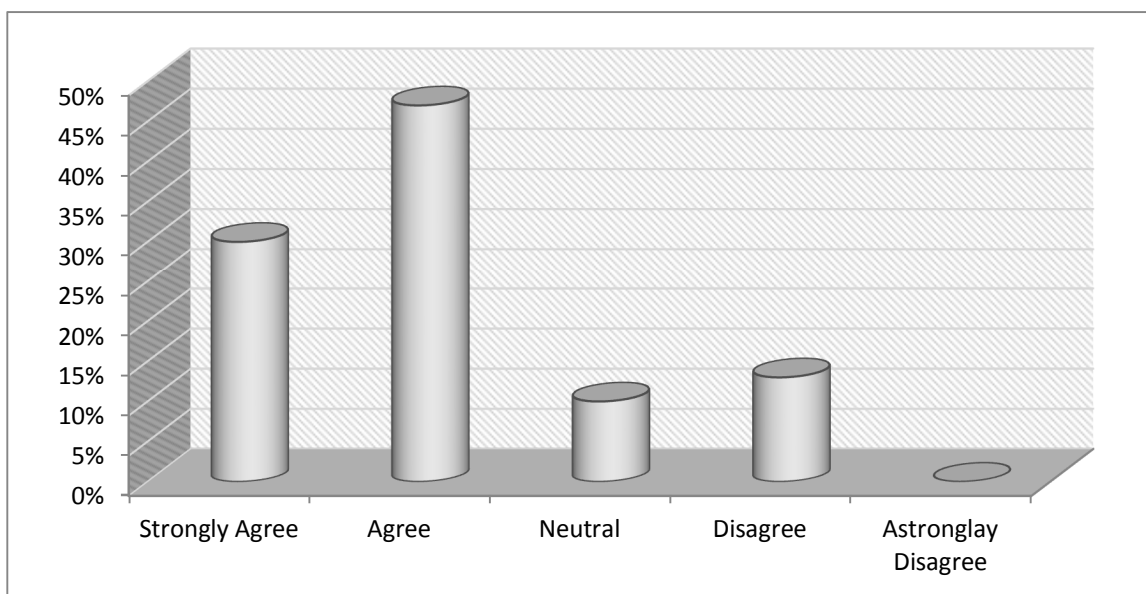


Figure (7): Students did not feel nervous in their computer-writing class. From table and figure statement number six which point out that students did not feel nervous in their computer-writing class (76.7%) of students agreed with statement, whereas (13.3%) disagreed and only (10%) were neutrals. This proved that students have a confidences computer class.

Table(8): Using blended learning model provide students with feedback about their mistakes.

options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	18	60%	60%	100%
Agree	12	40%	40%	
Total	30	100%	100%	100%

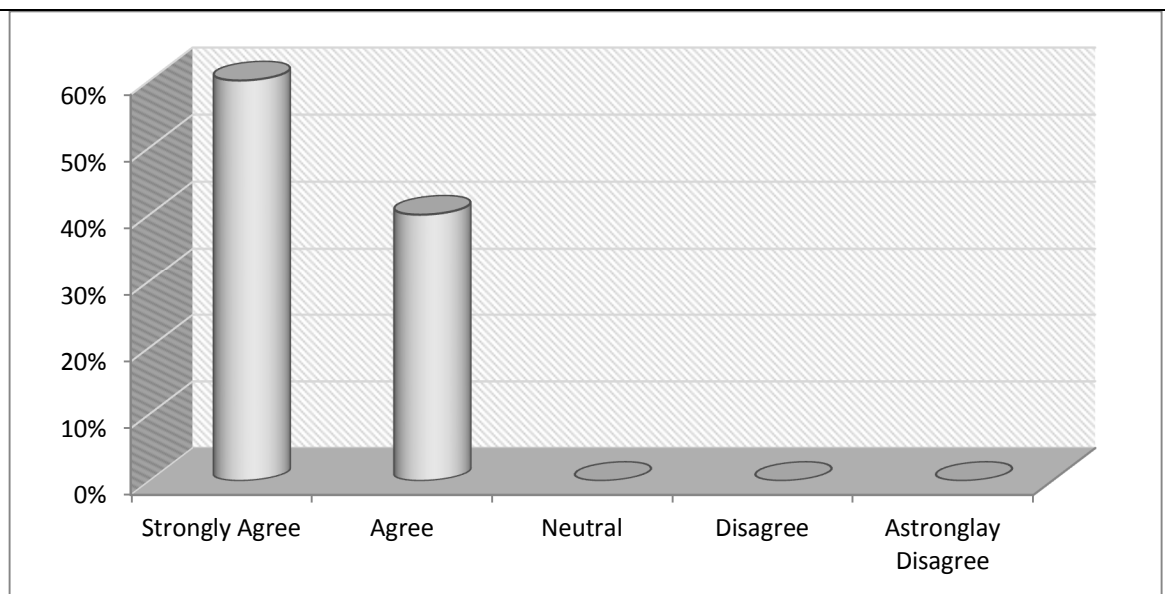


Figure (8): Using blended learning model provide students with feedback about their mistakes.

From table and figure above which analyzing item number seven which is an inquiry whether using the blended techniques provide students with feedback about their mistakes. The result revealed that (100%) of participants agreed with item. This indicate that blended learning provide with feedback about their mistakes.

Table (9): Blended learning enhances student motivation in learning writing skills.

options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	12	40%	40%	80%
Agree	12	40%	40%	
Disagree	3	10%	10%	20%
Strongly Disagree	3	10%	10%	
Total	30	100%	100%	100%

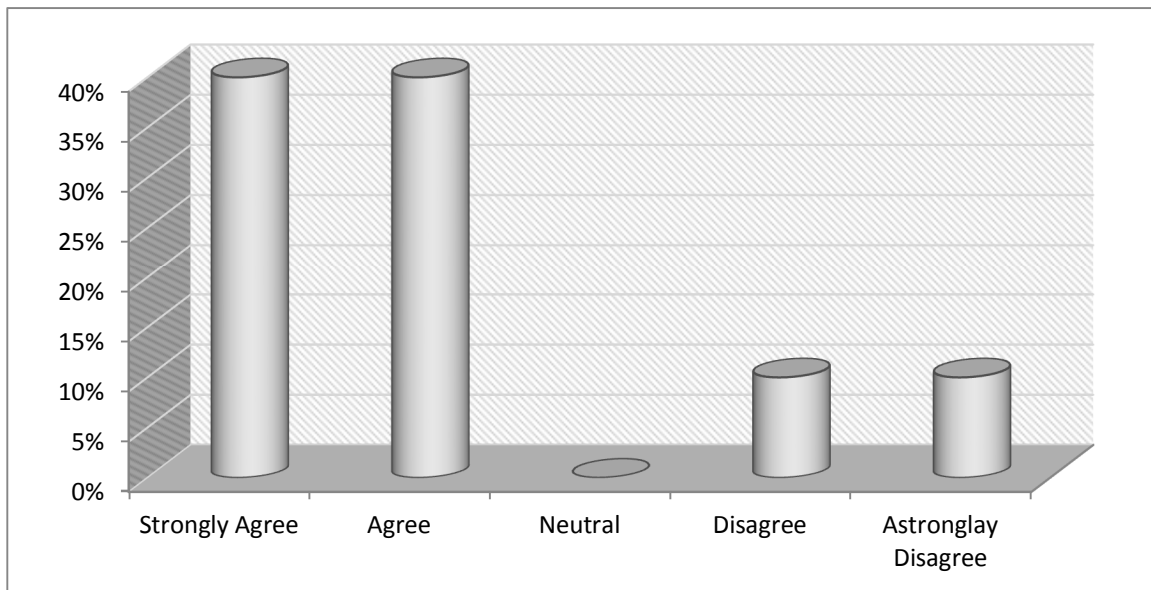


Figure (9): Blended learning enhances student motivation in learning writing skills. The eight statement, blended learning enhances student motivation in learning writing skills, from table and figure (9) students respondent revealed that (80%) of students agreed with the item, while (20%) disagreed with statement. This proved the importance of blended learning in motivating students.

Table (10): Using blended learning in writing skills reduce students spelling mistakes.

options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	15	60%	60%	93.3%
Agree	13	43.3%	43.3%	
Strongly Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Total	30	100%	100%	100%

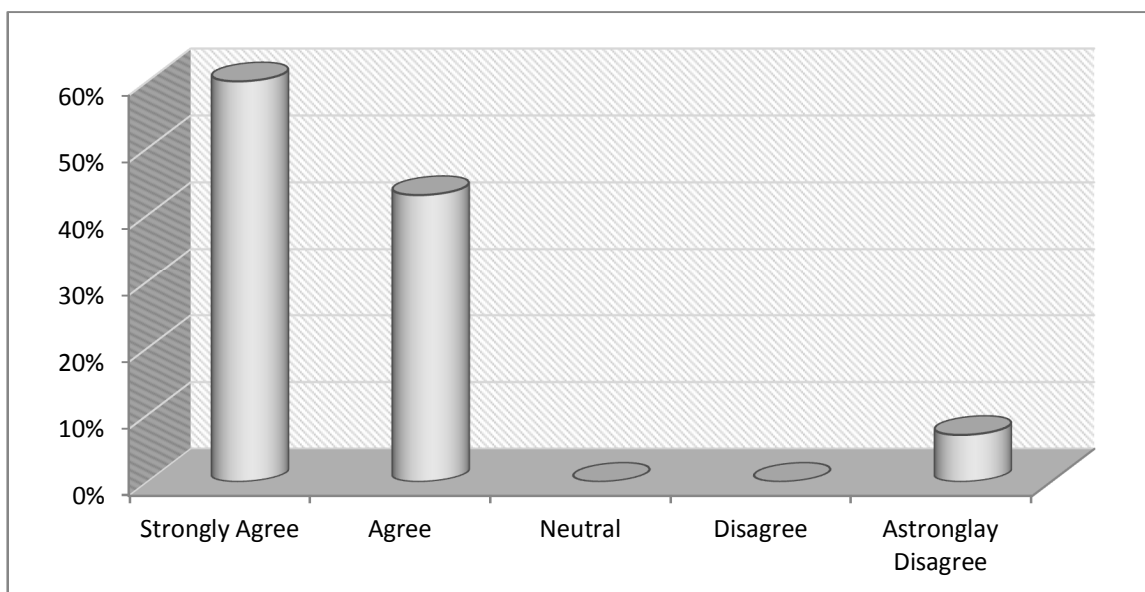


Figure (10): Using blended learning in writing skills reduce students spelling mistakes. From table and figure above which state using blended learning in writing skills reduce students spelling mistakes. (60%) strongly agree with the item, (43.3%) agree with it and only (6.7%) strongly disagree with the item. This indicate the significance of blended learning in reduce spelling mistakes.

Table(11): Blended learning models help students by decreasing grammatical mistake.

options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	12	40%	40%	83.3%
Agree	13	43.3%	43.3%	
Neutral	3	10%	10%	10%
Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Total	30	100%	100%	100%

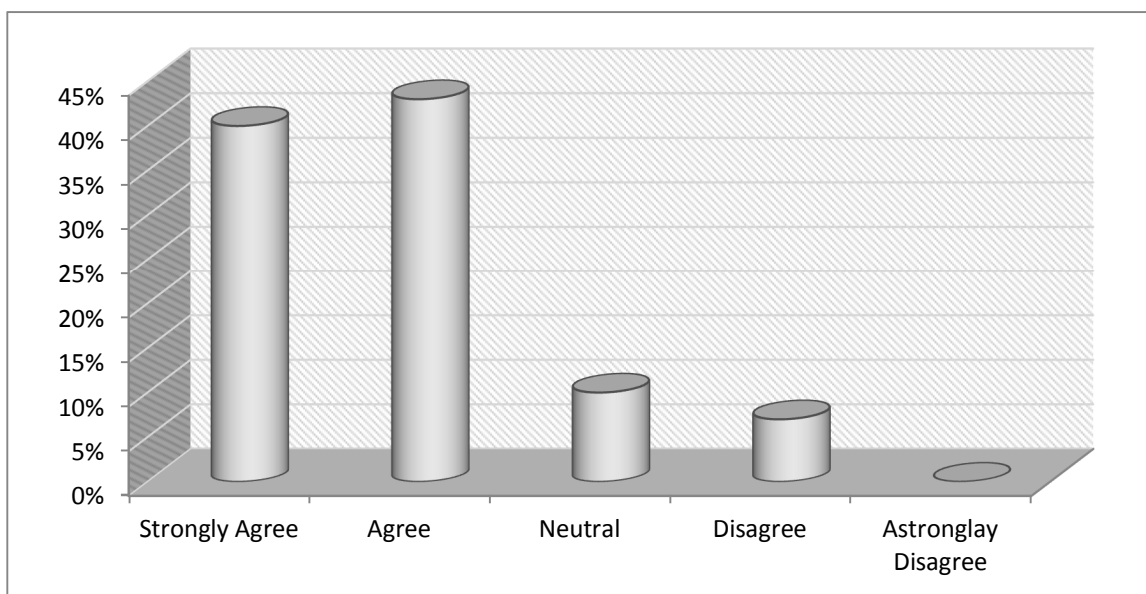


Figure (11): Blended learning models help students by decreasing grammatical mistake. Blended learning techniques help students by decrease grammatical mistake. It has been founded that from table and figure (11), (40%) strongly agree with the item, (43.3%) agree with it, (10%) neutral and only (6.7%) disagree with item. This is demonstrates blended learning decreasing students' grammar.

Table (12) blended learning motivate the students to study by them self.

options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	11	36.7%	36.7%	93.3%
Agree	17	56.6%	56.6%	
Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Total	30	100%	100%	100%

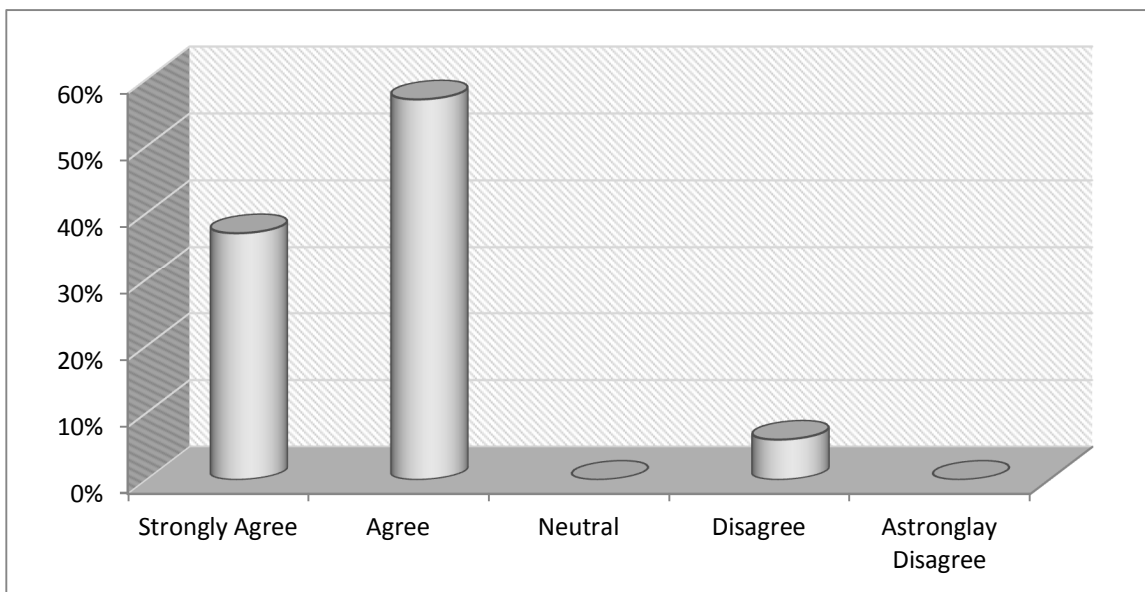


Figure (12) blended learning motivate the students to study by them self. From table and figure (12) above, blended learning motivate the students to study by them self. We can see that (36.7%) strongly agree with the item, (56.6%) agree with it and only (6.7%) disagree with the item. This proved blended learning promate self learning.

Table (13): Students were encouraged to use blended learning in writing activities.

options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	5	16.7%	16.7%	36.7%
Agree	6	20%	20%	
Neutral	1	5%	5%	3.3%
Disagree	12	40%	40%	60%
Strongly Disagree	6	20%	20%	
Total	30	100%	100%	100%

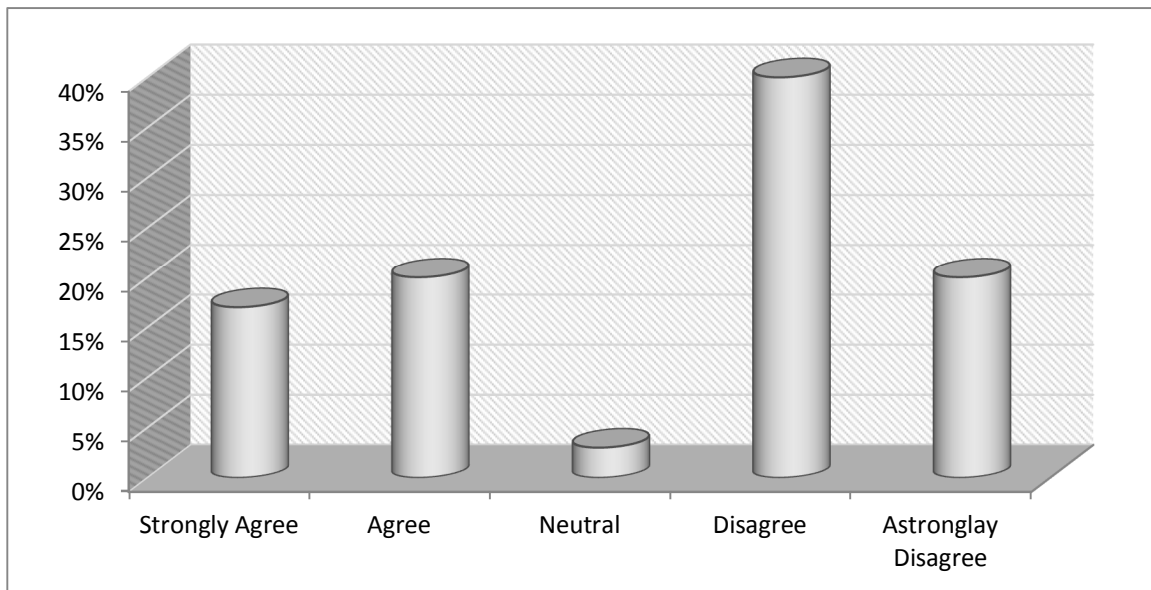


Table (13): Students were encouraged to use blended learning in writing activities. From table and figure (13) above, which state that students were encouraged to use blended learning in writing activities. (16.7%) strongly agree with the item, (20%) agree with it, (3.3%) neutral, (40%) disagree and (20%) strongly disagree. This proved students were not encouraged to use blended learning.

Table (14): Descriptive Statistics analysis of students questionnaire.

No	Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	Gender	20	1.00	2.00	1.7500	.44426
2.	Blended learning improves students writing skills.	20	1.00	4.00	1.8500	.67082
3.	Students has a positive attitudes towards blended learning.	20	1.00	3.00	1.4500	.60481
4.	Students are willing to use computer in practice writing skills.	20	1.00	4.00	1.7000	.73270
5.	Blended learning helps students to interact with a lot of writing activities in the classroom.	20	1.00	4.00	1.8000	.76777
6.	Using blended learning in writing class have made students more productive.	20	1.00	4.00	1.8000	.69585
7.	Students did not feel nervous in their computer-writing class.	20	1.00	4.00	2.1000	1.02084
8.	Using the blended techniques provide students with feedback about their mistakes.	20	1.00	2.00	1.6000	.50262
9.	Blended learning enhances student motivation in learning writing skills.	20	1.00	22.00	4.0000	6.25763

10.	Using blended learning in writing skills reduce students spelling mistakes.	20	1.00	5.00	1.6500	.93330
11.	Blended learning techniques help students by decrease grammatical mistake.	20	1.00	4.00	1.8500	.93330
12.	Blended learning motivate the students to study by them self.	20	1.00	4.00	1.7000	.73270
13.	Students were encouraged to use blended learning in writing.	20	1.00	5.00	3.1000	1.33377
14.	activities.					

Table (14) presented: minimum, maximum, mean and Std. deviation, of participants respondent to the questioner.

Results and Discussion

The hypothesis: Students have a positive attitude towards blended learning. was proved by students respondent to the questionnaire. The first statement blended learning improves students writing skills in terms of motivation the majority of the sample which is about 93.3% strongly agreed that about blended class is more effective than the traditional which is less attractive and less motivated, and 6.7% from the sample size responded to the variable disagree. In the second statement students have a positive attitudes towards blended learning the highest responses about 90% for the option agree, whereas 10% of students disagreed. The statement number (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11) most of students have appositve respondent towards statement. This proved that the students have positive attitude towards blended learning. The twelfth statement " students were encouraged to use blended learning in writing activities" presented that the highest respondent of student with 60% disagree. This indicates that students were not encourage to use blende learning to improve their writing skills. So the hypothesis had been confirmed.

5.1 Findings

In the light of the results of the questionnaire and discussion, the following findings were revealed.

- The traditional classroom is less effective than blended learning class in the terms of motivation.
- Blended learning is important to improve learners' writing skills.
- Using blended learning in writing skills reduce students spelling and grammatical mistakes.
- Working with blended learning motivate the students to study by them self.
- Teachers were not encouraged students to use blended learning in practice writing skill.

5.2 Recommendations

- Teachers at college of education university of Dongola should give more attention to blended learning.
- Blended learning should be established then the teachers can motivate their learners by using such innovative techniques.
- Students should be encouraged to carryout activities through the use of blended writing.

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