

**INVESTIGATING PALESTINIAN EFL  
STUDENTS' SATISFACTION AND CONTINUOUS  
INTENTION TOWARDS BLENDED LEARNING  
AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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PANDEMIC**

by

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

|       |                                        |
|-------|----------------------------------------|
| PU    | Perceived Usefulness                   |
| PEOU  | Perceived Ease of Use                  |
| SN    | Subjective Norm                        |
| BLS   | Blended Learning Satisfaction          |
| CI    | Continuance Intention                  |
| TPB   | Theory of Planned Behavior             |
| TAM   | Technology Acceptance Model            |
| ECM   | Expectation Confirmation Model         |
| BL    | Blended Learning                       |
| AAUP  | Arab American University Palestine     |
| UNRWA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency |
| EFL   | English as a Foreign Language          |

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**MENYIASAT KEPUASAN DAN NIAT BERTERUSAN PELAJAR EFL  
PALESTIN TERHADAP PEMBELAJARAN TERADUN SELEPAS  
PANDEMIK COVID-19**

**ABSTRAK**

Pandemik COVID-19 telah memerlukan peralihan kepada metodologi pembelajaran campuran, terutamanya di kawasan seperti Palestin, di mana halangan sosial dan politik memburukkan lagi kesukaran pendidikan. Kajian ini menyiasat persepsi, kepuasan, dan niat berterusan pelajar jurusan Bahasa Inggeris Palestin mengenai pembelajaran campuran, dengan menekankan kesannya terhadap kelancaran bercakap. Penyelidikan ini berdasarkan tiga kerangka teori: Model Penerimaan Teknologi (TAM), Model Pengesahan Jangkaan (ECM), dan Teori Tingkah Laku Terancang. (TPB). Pendekatan campuran telah digunakan, menggabungkan tinjauan daripada 209 pelajar dan temubual dengan 18 pelajar dan 8 pengajar di tiga universiti Palestin. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa kepuasan pelajar sangat dipengaruhi oleh utiliti yang dirasakan dan kemudahan penggunaan platform pembelajaran campuran. Pengesahan jangkaan awal berkait rapat dengan kepuasan, yang seterusnya memupuk niat berterusan untuk menggunakan pembelajaran bercampur. Kefasihan bercakap telah menjadi kebimbangan yang signifikan, kerana kedua-dua pelajar dan pengajar menekankan kesukaran yang timbul daripada interaksi terhad dalam persekitaran pembelajaran campuran. Namun begitu, kebolehsuaian dan ketersediaan sumber yang ditawarkan oleh pembelajaran campuran dianggap sebagai kelebihan yang signifikan. Kajian ini juga menjelaskan pengaruh pemoderatan konflik bersenjata, yang merumitkan hubungan antara pembolehubah TPB dan niat pelajar. Penemuan ini menekankan keperluan untuk menangani kedua-dua kekurangan

infrastruktur dan halangan sosio-politik bagi meningkatkan pembelajaran campuran di kawasan yang terjejas oleh konflik. Kajian ini memberikan pandangan penting untuk pembuat keputusan dan pendidik yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan fleksibiliti pendidikan, kesinambungan, dan hasil, terutamanya dalam pembangunan kelancaran bercakap.

# **INVESTIGATING PALESTINIAN EFL STUDENTS' SATISFACTION AND CONTINUOUS INTENTION TOWARDS BLENDED LEARNING AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

## **ABSTRACT**

The COVID-19 pandemic has required transitioning to blended learning methodologies, especially in areas like Palestine, where social and political obstacles exacerbate educational difficulties. This study investigates the perceptions, satisfaction, and ongoing intentions of Palestinian English major students regarding blended learning, emphasizing its effect on speaking fluency. The research is based on three theoretical frameworks: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM), and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). A mixed-methods approach was utilized, integrating surveys from 209 students and interviews with 18 students and 8 instructors across three Palestinian universities. The results demonstrated that student satisfaction is markedly affected by blended learning platforms' perceived utility and user-friendliness. The affirmation of initial expectations is closely linked to satisfaction, which subsequently fosters ongoing intent to utilize blended learning. Speaking fluency has become a significant concern, as both students and instructors emphasize the difficulties arising from restricted interaction in blended settings. Nonetheless, the adaptability and availability of resources offered by blended learning were regarded as significant advantages. The study also elucidates the moderating influence of armed conflict, complicating the relationships between TPB variables and student intentions. These findings highlight the necessity of tackling both infrastructural deficiencies and socio-political obstacles to enhance blended learning in conflict-affected areas. This study provides essential

insights for decision-makers and educators aiming to improve educational flexibility, continuity, and outcomes, especially in developing speaking fluency.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic in March 2020, affecting over 177 countries and forcing widespread school closures. Nearly 1.5 billion students were impacted globally as educational institutions transitioned to distance learning to ensure continuity (UNESCO, 2020; Affouneh & Salha, 2020). In Palestine, the pandemic introduced new challenges, including the need to balance strict lockdowns with efforts to sustain education. By July 2020, after initial restrictions eased, rising COVID-19 cases reinforced the urgency of adopting alternative learning solutions like e-learning and blended learning (Hammoudeh et al., 2020; Daniel, 2020).

Blended learning, which combines traditional classroom instruction with digital tools, gained prominence during this period as a flexible and scalable solution for educational continuity (Moskal et al., 2013). It integrates the advantages of face-to-face learning with online resources, making education more accessible and adaptable. However, in regions like Palestine, where socio-political instability, resource limitations, and infrastructural deficits are prevalent, the transition to blended learning revealed significant disparities (Affouneh et al., 2020). Frequent disruptions caused by military conflict, travel restrictions, and limited access to digital resources further complicated the adoption of these technologies (Shraim & Crompton, 2020).

While distance learning is not new, the pandemic accelerated its adoption globally. Technological advancements, such as artificial intelligence and open-source platforms, provided innovative solutions for maintaining education (Moskal et al., 2013; Masalimova et al., 2022). However, in conflict-affected regions like Palestine,

students and educators face significant barriers, including unreliable internet connectivity, lack of access to devices, and socio-economic inequalities (Hamamra et al., 2021). These challenges highlighted the need for targeted interventions to address inequities in digital education.

Blended learning has demonstrated its potential to enhance educational outcomes, including accessibility, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness (Moskal et al., 2013; Langegård et al., 2021). However, its sustainability in Palestine depends on overcoming unique barriers posed by ongoing conflict and inadequate technological infrastructure. This study investigates the adoption of blended learning in Palestine, focusing on the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Specifically, it explores student satisfaction and their intention to continue using blended learning in a post-pandemic context, aiming to bridge critical knowledge gaps at the intersection of education, technology, and conflict.

## **1.2. Background of the Study**

### **1.2.1. E-learning in Palestine**

E-learning in Palestine is in its infancy (Obaid et al., 2020). However, specific initiatives are underway to remedy the situation (Obaid et al., 2020). To date, some universities have participated in the Palestine Education Initiative (PEI) for e-learning and through the collaborative framework, the private sector is also involved (Al Sabah, 2020). Nonetheless, higher education, particularly traditional universities, faces numerous obstacles, including the lack of finance, capacity limits, the profession's effect, the challenging economic conditions and the lecturer-to-student ratio (Ministry of Education & Higher Education, 2022; Gerner & Schrodtt, 1999; Nicolai, 2007).

Moreover, several challenges have arisen concerning the implementation of e-learning in conventional universities in Palestine. These challenges include inadequate infrastructure and technological resources, obstacles in securing reliable internet access, and deficiencies in the readiness of both educators and learners to utilize online platforms effectively. Lectures frequently experience technical disruptions, and students often face challenges accessing and navigating e-learning platforms due to insufficient training and support (Shraim & Khlaif, 2010; Nicolai, 2007). The financial strain of obtaining devices and internet access disproportionately impacts students from underprivileged backgrounds, intensifying educational outcome disparities (Traxler, Barcena, Dunlop, & Gray, 2019). In light of these ongoing challenges, blended education has emerged as a feasible solution that integrates the advantages of conventional in-person instruction with the flexibility and accessibility of online learning. This strategy has been prioritized for conventional Palestinian universities to guarantee the sustainability and quality of education amidst these challenges (Affouneh et al., 2021).

The higher education system is regarded as traditional as it adheres to the traditional teaching/learning approaches of the school system, including lecture-based instruction and a teacher-centred approach (Koni et al., 2012). This is the most significant impediment to high-quality education to create competitive graduates. The fundamental challenges confronting higher education in Palestine are two-fold: the adequacy and quality of higher education, as well as the efficiency of resource management in meeting the demand.

Instability, such as the Israeli embargo and restrictions on people's commuting between towns, cities and regions, is another issue faced by Palestine's higher education sector (Affouneh et al., 2021). Such challenges place more significant

pressure on higher education in general and pressure on students and lecturers. Palestinian universities are making efforts to further enhance the quality of their teaching and the skills of their graduates. They are also adapting to rapid technological advancement while navigating challenging circumstances. One facet of this struggle is the initiative to establish e-learning in these universities.

### **1.2.2. Palestinian Education Policies in EFL**

The Palestinian Authority assumed control of Palestine's educational system in the wake of the Oslo Peace Accords in 1994, creating the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. It acts as an organization in charge of regulating public schools (as well as regulatory oversight of private schools), which account for 67.08 percent of all Palestinian students. On the other hand, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) is in charge of 24.07 percent of the overall population of general education students, while the private sector is in charge of 8.85 percent (Bakeer, 2019). Additionally, the Palestinian educational system is centralized. For example, all schools in the country use the same textbooks for all grade levels and subjects and have the same in-service teacher training programs and unified regulations (for public schools) regarding teacher evaluation forms, teacher recruitment and upgrading procedures and matriculation examinations. Despite implementing a "centralized" national curriculum, UNRWA schools have their own administrative procedures. It is pertinent to keep in mind that schools in the West Bank are under the jurisdiction of the UNRWA education office in Jerusalem (Amara, 2003).

The Palestinian Ministry of Education (2012) establishes that there are two levels of education: elementary and secondary. In elementary school, students are

required to pass the first to tenth grades. Furthermore, students are required to pass Grades 11 and 12 in secondary school. In Palestine, the majority of primary and secondary schools are gender-segregated, adhering to cultural and social norms. These schools typically operate from September to June, five days a week, starting on Sundays and ending on Thursdays. Students generally study six to seven subjects daily, with each class lasting around 40 minutes, and a 30-minute break is provided after the third class (Palestinian Ministry of Education, 2012).

Regarding the development of a Palestinian language education policy, particularly a policy for foreign language teaching, after 1948 and even during the country's occupation, the Jordanian curriculum predominated in the West Bank, while the Egyptian curriculum prevailed in Gaza. However, there are recent attempts to institute a separate language policy for the Palestinian education system (Hussein et al., 2022). Since the Palestinian Authority came to power in the mid-1990s, one of the most significant changes in education policy has been the decision to begin teaching English as a primary subject in Grade 1 (age 6) instead of Grade 5 (age 11), as was previously the case. This shift in policy seems to have originated from the Palestinian educational authorities' recognition of the importance of knowing English in a community where education is emphasized for the nation's future (Dajani & McLaughlin, 2009).

The Ministry of Education has included English as a subject in the curriculum to be taught by the primary schools in Palestine (Yamchi, 2006). It is a mandatory subject at state schools and is taught from Grade 1. First, second, third and fourth graders attend English classes thrice weekly. Fifth, sixth and seventh graders attend English classes four times per week. Upper grades attend five English classes per week. As stated in the Ministry of Education's regulations, all English teachers are

required to hold a B.A. in English Language instruction from a curriculum that covers numerous classes like TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), English literature and linguistics.

Additionally, the Ministry provides yearly workshops and training sessions for EFL teachers to help them develop their professional skills and make better use of textbooks. The improvement of English language acquisition is facilitated by a variety of factors, teacher education being just one of them. The Palestinian Ministry of Education has attempted to improve the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curricula since 2000, when the national curriculum was introduced in all Palestinian schools, by acknowledging the importance of language materials (Hammad, 2014). As a result, the Egyptian Ministry of Education's Hello textbook series was taught in public elementary classrooms in Gaza prior to the year 2000.

The Jordanian Ministry of Education, on the other hand, established the "Petra" textbook series, which was taught in West Bank public elementary schools. However, English was not a required subject in Palestinian public elementary schools at the time (Latif & Hammad, 2012). Since teaching English to students has been made compulsory in all primary school grades, the English materials used in public schools were modified by the Palestinian Ministry of Education in 2000. In collaboration with the international publishing house Macmillan Publishing Limited, a group of Palestinian EFL specialists designed a new series of textbooks titled "English for Palestine." As a result, in 2000-2001, first graders in Palestinian public elementary schools studied the first textbook for Palestine in English designed by the Palestinian Ministry of Education (2000). The teachers had difficulties due to the abundance of unfamiliar vocabulary and the insufficient time allocated for the presentation of the new materials (Hammad, 2014). In 2011, the Ministry of Education made an additional

adjustment to compensate for the deficiency of previous resources. Nevertheless, most teachers were dissatisfied with various parts of the newly introduced textbooks despite the revisions, notably concerning the significant number of keywords in each unit. This necessitated more investigation to evaluate the recently implemented materials.

### **1.2.3. Educational Challenges in the Region: The Case of Palestine**

Education has been essential to Palestinian resilience, acting as a crucial pathway for social mobility against persistent political and economic adversities. Since its inception in 1967, the Palestinian education system has faced several challenges, including restrictions on school building, curriculum development, and teacher recruitment imposed by Israeli authorities. Despite these restrictions, the system has consistently determined and committed to fostering constructive change (Hasan, 2024; Shakhshir, 2011).

Palestine's social, political, and economic conditions have changed considerably over the past century (1917–2017), significantly impacting its educational practices (Michaels, 2017; Nasir Tucktuck, Baker, & Love, 2017). Education has been fundamental in providing beneficial life transformations, enhancing skills and knowledge, and facilitating individuals to be accountable citizens in a civilized community (Ramahi, 2017).

The Palestinian education system was historically administered by many entities, including the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, Egypt, and Israel, until 1993. During the British Mandate (1917–1947), public schools were administered by the British government, while religious organizations oversaw private schools. Public education for Palestinian and Jewish students operated under autonomous systems,

leading to conflicts and unequal resource allocation. The system also faced significant challenges, such as insufficient financial resources and limitations on curriculum development.

In 1967, the Egyptian curriculum was used in schools in the Gaza Strip, while the Jordanian curriculum was utilised in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The Israeli government managed public schools, while the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) provided elementary education for Palestinian refugees from Grades 1 to 9. Nonetheless, private educational institutions at all levels were managed by a variety of domestic and foreign religious organisations.

The Oslo Agreement of 1993 granted the Palestinians autonomy for the implementation of their educational system, marking a key turning point. Despite persistent challenges in achieving its strategic objectives, improving educational quality, and expanding teaching opportunities, the Palestinian education system has exhibited resilience and commitment to fostering positive change.

### **1.3. Statement of the Problem**

Education is widely acknowledged as a core human right that fosters liberty, equity, and peace. However, ensuring continuous access to education during crises poses considerable difficulties, particularly in conflict-affected regions like Palestine (UNESCO, 2024; INEE, 2019). The COVID-19 epidemic intensified these issues, necessitating a global shift to alternate educational techniques, such as blended learning, which combines in-person instruction with technology and internet-based resources. Although blended learning has demonstrated the potential to sustain educational continuity during crises, its execution in conflict-affected regions is

hindered by problems such as inadequate infrastructure, socio-political instability, and resource limitations (Affouneh, Salha, & Khlaif, 2020).

Blended learning provides substantial advantages for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, especially in enhancing communication skills vital for language proficiency. The efficacy and sustainability of blended learning hinge on two critical factors: student satisfaction and their ongoing intention to embrace blended learning. Satisfaction denotes students' assessments of the usability and effectiveness of blended learning platforms, whereas continued intention signifies their readiness to engage with this educational mode beyond the pandemic. These constructs are critical for evaluating blended learning's success and are deeply rooted in theoretical frameworks such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM), and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). These models highlight the interaction of perceived ease of use (PEU), perceived usefulness, confirmation, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (PBC) in influencing technology adoption and continued utilization (Davis, 1989; Oliver, 1980; Ajzen, 1991).

The violent and armed circumstances in Palestine exacerbate the difficulties of executing blended learning. Mobility limitations, infrastructure deficiencies, and socio-political unrest impede educational activities and shape students' views on blended learning platforms. These aspects influence critical variables such as satisfaction as well as perceived ease of use, eventually determining students' decisions to continue using blended learning platforms (Affouneh et al., 2020).

This study examines speaking fluency as a qualitative measure to assess the effectiveness of blended learning for English majors. Speaking fluency, a fundamental component of communicative competence, is vital for successful language utilization

and is closely linked to fulfilment and perceived usefulness (Brandl, 2008; Richards, 2008). In regions affected by armed conflicts, the potential for traditional language practice may be scarce, but blended learning platforms offer an option for improving speaking fluency. However, its impact on students' opinions requires extensive investigation, highlighting a gap this study aims to address.

This research seeks to rectify gaps in current research by investigating the implementation of blended learning in conflict-affected regions, including Palestine. Contemporary research has predominantly concentrated on blended learning in stable environments, sometimes overlooking the unique problems posed by socio-political instability. Affouneh et al. (2020) highlighted the transition to e-learning during the pandemic in Palestine, focussing on infrastructure obstacles rather than student-centered results. Similarly, studies of displaced students in Jordan (Halkic & Arnold, 2019) and Syrian refugees (Hassan et al., 2021) underscore the potential of digital technologies. However, they do not elucidate the progression of student satisfaction and behavioural intents in these settings. This study utilizes insights from these contexts to examine the factors affecting the adoption and effectiveness of blended learning among English majors in Palestine.

This study aims to offer practical solutions for improving blended learning in conflict-affected regions by adhering to identified theoretical frameworks and incorporating students' lived experiences. The findings will contribute to the overarching discourse on educational resilience, providing essential insights for policymakers and educators seeking to promote the accessibility, quality, and equality of education in intricate and demanding environments.

#### **1.4. Research Objectives**

The study has set objectives based on the following research questions:

1. To investigate the impact of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) on Palestinian English major students' satisfaction with blended learning after the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. To assess the impact of the Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM) on the satisfaction levels and ongoing intentions of Palestinian English major students in blended learning after the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. To explore how the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) affects Palestinian English major students' ongoing intention to use blended learning during the armed conflict after the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. (a) To investigate the perceptions of Palestinian English major students in Palestine regarding blended learning and its impact on their speaking fluency after the COVID-19 pandemic.  
(b) To explore English instructors' perceptions of blended learning and its impact on students' speaking fluency after the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **1.5. Research Questions**

This study intends to seek answers to questions as follows:

1. What is the impact of the technology acceptance model on Palestinian English major students' satisfaction with blended learning after COVID-19?
2. What is the impact of the Expectation Confirmation Model on Palestinian English major students' satisfaction and ongoing intentions with blended learning after COVID-19?

3. What is the impact of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, within the context of armed conflict, on the continued intention of Palestinian English major students to engage in blended learning?
4. (a) What are the perceptions of Palestinian English major students on blended learning and its impact on their speaking fluency after the COVID-19 pandemic?  
(b) What are the perceptions of English instructors on blended learning and its impact on students' speaking fluency after the COVID-19 pandemic?

#### **1.6. Significance of the Research**

This study offers essential insights into the application of blended learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education within Palestine's distinct socio-political and cultural context. It provides substantial theoretical and practical insights, especially in conflict-affected areas, where interruptions to education, resource scarcity, and socio-political instability present considerable obstacles to educational continuity (Affouneh, Salha, & Khlaif, 2020; Shraim & Crompton, 2020). By investigating student satisfaction, intentions to persist, and oral fluency, this study seeks to bridge the gaps in current research, ultimately contributing to the development of strong educational policies and practices.

In conflict-affected areas such as Palestine, it is found that blended learning has emerged as a crucial strategy for sustaining education. This study examines the effects of blended learning on student satisfaction and their intention to persist in its utilization, as well as its influence on speaking fluency. The study emphasizes the significance of blended learning in mitigating educational barriers arising from conflict and resource constraints (Noor et al., 2020; Hamamra et al., 2021).

The research found concrete findings that are anticipated to improve EFL education. Examining variables such as student satisfaction, intent to persist in blended learning, and speaking fluency provides practical insights into the impact of blended learning on students' language acquisition and engagement (Davis, 1989; Richards, 2008). These findings can directly improve pedagogical methods and improve English instruction quality in Palestinian higher education institutions. The study provides educators with strategies for effectively incorporating blended learning into their teaching practices, balancing in-person and online methods to address infrastructural and socio-political challenges (Dweikat & Zyoud, 2021). This research provides curriculum designers with insights to create culturally relevant and linguistically suitable frameworks for blended learning specifically designed for students in conflict-affected settings (Halkic & Arnold, 2019). The study offers evidence-based recommendations for policymakers to develop scalable and sustainable blended learning systems, guaranteeing equitable access to education in areas affected by socio-political instability (Hassan et al., 2021).

The theoretical contributions of this study are substantial. It utilizes and expands upon established learning theories—the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM), and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)—within the framework of blended learning in conflict-affected areas (Davis, 1989; Ajzen, 1991; Oliver, 1980). These theories provide a solid foundation for understanding how factors, including perceived utility, ease of use, contentment, and desire to continue to influence the adoption and sustainability of blended learning approaches. This study improves theoretical understanding of how blended learning may be adapted to severe circumstances by contextualising these ideas within the conflict-affected educational environment of Palestine. The integration of speaking

fluency as a qualitative focus offers new insights into the impact of blended learning on practical language application in EFL settings, enhancing existing studies (Brandl, 2008; Richards, 2008).

The socio-political instability in Palestine poses distinct challenges to education, including recurrent disruptions, limited resources, and psychological effects on students and educators. This study has significance since it investigates how blended learning could help reduce these problems, providing a strong approach to sustain education. It examines how blended learning platforms might rectify shortcomings in language training, especially for English majors requiring continuous opportunities to improve crucial skills like speaking fluency. This study highlights that addressing concerns such as limited internet access, inadequate digital infrastructure, and unequal resource distribution can mitigate blended learning problems to promote educational resilience in conflict-affected settings and aid EFL instruction (Affouneh et al., 2020; Noor et al., 2020).

This study emphasises the potential of blended learning to enhance EFL instruction in Palestine. This study links satisfaction, intention to persist, and speaking fluency within a conflict-affected circumstance, therefore addressing theoretical and practical shortcomings in the literature. The outcomes will significantly improve EFL instruction and promote educational resilience under difficult circumstances, offering a foundation for integrating novel learning methods in internationally affected regions.

### **1.7. Scope of the Research**

This study investigates the implementation and effectiveness of blended learning among Palestinian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students,

emphasising their level of satisfaction and future plans to use this teaching method after COVID-19. Two universities were intentionally chosen to exemplify diverse educational paradigms: a private university, an open university that emphasises distant learning, and a state institution. The research was conducted at an Arab American University, Al-Quds Open University, and Palestine Technical University-Khadoori, which sought diverse viewpoints. The selection will provide a comprehensive perspective of the Palestinian higher education scene.

A mixed-methods strategy was utilised, integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to deliver a thorough study. The quantitative phase included 209 participants, guaranteeing representation across academic levels, from first-year undergraduates to postgraduate students. Approximately 30.5% were third—and fourth-year students, 5.7% were postgraduate students, the remaining 40% included first and second-year students, and 23.8% followed non-traditional academic pathways. The qualitative phase included focused group interviews with 18 students and 8 instructors, enriching the findings with nuanced insights into blended learning's impact on speaking fluency and its overall effectiveness.

The study was grounded in three theoretical models—Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM), and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)—providing a structured framework to analyze the factors influencing students' satisfaction and continued intentions to use blended learning. The inclusion of qualitative and observational data strengthened the study's claims. Specifically, data such as interaction levels in blended learning environments, participation metrics, and qualitative feedback from participants were analyzed to validate the findings, ensuring a robust and credible representation of the blended learning process.

The research also prioritized exploring blended learning's impact on speaking fluency, a critical skill in EFL education. This focus highlights how blended learning supports one of the most challenging aspects of language acquisition, particularly in resource-constrained and conflict-affected regions like Palestine. The study provided an extensive examination of the interactions between students and educators in blended educational settings by incorporating instructors' viewpoints.

This study adds significantly to the literature by addressing the mechanisms of blended learning in difficult situations. It highlights the capacity of blended learning to alleviate educational interruptions resulting from COVID-19 while tackling socio-political and infrastructural obstacles in Palestine. The results provide significant insights for educators, policymakers, and academics seeking to improve the accessibility and efficacy of blended learning in similar settings.

#### **1.8. Limitation of the Present Study**

This study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of blended learning among English major students in Palestinian universities after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study includes various educational environments, such as a private university (Arab American University of Palestine), an open university (Al-Quds Open University), and a public institution (Palestine Technical University - Kadoori). This multi-institutional approach improves the study's comprehensiveness; however, it does not adequately represent all educational settings in Palestine, especially vocational training centers or specialized institutions, which may face unique challenges and opportunities.

The distinctive socio-political conditions in Palestine, encompassing the persistent conflict and the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, impose further constraints on the generalizability of the findings. These contextual factors may not adequately represent the circumstances of other conflict-affected or stable regions, thereby constraining the breadth of comparative analysis.

Notwithstanding the methodology's rigour, reliance on self-reported data from students and instructors involves possible biases stemming from individual views and experiences. To mitigate this restriction, the study utilised multiple data gathering methods, including surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions, to validate findings from numerous viewpoints. Participants were assured anonymity to encourage honest and unbiased replies. Furthermore, conclusions were corroborated using secondary data, such institutional reports or aggregated performance measures, to improve dependability.

Future research ought to prioritise the reduction of possible biases by the incorporation of objective criteria, such as academic performance records, standardised test scores, or independent evaluations of student participation. Expanding the scope to include vocational training centers, specialized institutions, and other conflict-affected contexts would also provide a broader understanding of blended learning's efficacy and applicability.

## **1.9. Definitions of Key Terms**

### **1.9.1. Armed Conflict**

According to the Appeals Chamber, an armed conflict occurs when there is the use of armed force between states or prolonged armed violence between government

authority and organized armed organizations or between such groups within a state (Warbrick & Rowe, 1996). Armed conflict in Palestine refers to political and military conflicts. Aggression, military manoeuvres, mobility and resource constraints, and their social, financial, and educational effects are included. After the COVID-19 pandemic, Palestinian English majors' intention to use blended learning was affected by armed conflict.

### **1.9.2. Attitude**

Psychological attitudes determine whether someone likes or dislikes something (Sreen et al., 2018; Balaman and Baş, 2021). Ajzen (1991) states that behavioral intents begin with a thought. Kraus (1995) claims that attitude is a fundamental psychological concept that predicts many behaviors. Attitude describes English majors' assessments, feelings, and reactions to blended learning and their intention to stick with it.

### **1.9.3. Blended Learning**

Blended learning is a cutting-edge educational approach that merges conventional in-person teaching techniques with digital instructional resources and online engagement possibilities (Bonk & Graham, 2005). In this study, virtual and in-person classroom sessions are considered the two separate modalities of instruction that makeup blended learning. Blended learning in EFL uses digital tools and online platforms to enhance language learning by combining media, interactive activities, and diverse input types.

#### **1.9.4. Confirmation**

Confirmation, as defined by Bhattacharjee (2001), refers to the act of evaluating or assessing goods, services, or technological things and comparing them to one's initial expectations. Confirmation in this study refers to the stage where English major students assess their experience following a purchase or adoption. The feeling of contentment and validation in choosing to adopt or continue using a particular product or technology occurs when the observed performance or result aligns with the initial expectations. Positive affirmation enhances total customer satisfaction and can influence future actions and decisions.

#### **1.9.5. Continued Intention to Adopt Blended Learning**

Students' intention to adopt a blended learning approach is their preference (Al-Busaidi, 2013), while "Continued Intention to Adopt Blended Learning" emphasizes individuals' or organizations' commitment to incorporating blended learning into their teaching methods. Continuance Intention (CI) is the user's tendency to use approved products or services (Cho, 2016). This study defines continued intention as English majors' intention to persist in utilizing blended learning after COVID-19.

#### **1.9.6. Learning Satisfaction**

An atmosphere of contentment serves as an indicator of an information system's efficacy, enhancing learners' satisfaction throughout its utilization (González-Gómez et al., 2012). Student satisfaction, as outlined by the Sloan Consortium and corroborated by Sweeney and Ingram (2001), emphasises the attainment of a gratifying

educational experience and the associated positive emotions. This study characterises learning satisfaction as the extent of contentment experienced by English major students about blended learning post-COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **1.9.7. Perceived Behavioral Control**

Ajzen (2005) states that control beliefs—personal opinions about the presence or absence of factors that motivate or hinder a particular activity—influence one's perception of control over one's conduct. Ajzen (1991) defines perceived behavioral control as the subjective perception of entrepreneurship's ease or difficulty. In blended learning, perceived behavioral control (PBC) is an individual's subjective assessment of their ability to implement and benefit from blended learning.

#### **1.9.8. Perceived Ease of Use**

Perceived Ease of Use denotes the extent to which an individual perceives that utilizing a particular system necessitates minimal effort (Davis, 1989). Venkatesh and Davis (2000) extended this concept, emphasizing that intuitive design and user-friendliness are crucial for adoption. In this study, PEU measures how English major students assess the usability of blended learning platforms. A significant degree of PEU indicates that students perceive the technology and learning format as accessible and manageable, thereby affecting their intention to persist with blended learning (Venkatesh, 2008).

### **1.9.9. Perceived Usefulness**

The notion of perceived utility is denoted by the extent to which individuals believe embracing a particular system will benefit them (Davis, 1989). In this research, the phrase refers to the degree to which English major students perceive blended education to be beneficial to their learning.

### **1.9.10. Subjective Norm**

Subjective norms can be defined as the perception that a significant person or group will sanction and support a particular behavior (Davis, 1989). Subjective norms are individual views of societal pressure to engage in a behavior or refrain from it (Ajzen, 2005). This study assessed the pressure that English major students received from specific people and how it impacted their continued intention to use blended learning after COVID-19.

## **1.10. Overview of the Thesis**

This dissertation is structured into five chapters. Chapter 1, Introduction, delineates the study's background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, significance, scope, and limitations. Chapter 2, Literature Review, examines current research on blended learning, emphasizing theoretical frameworks, including the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM), and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), alongside the obstacles of blended learning in conflict-affected areas. Chapter 3, Research Methodology, delineates the study's research design, methodology, demographic characteristics of participants, and analytical techniques. Chapter 4, Results and Discussion, delineates the study's

findings, juxtaposing them with extant literature and theoretical frameworks. Chapter 5, Conclusions and suggestions, encapsulates the key results, analyses implications, and proposes suggestions for further research and policy formulation.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

The immense issues resulting from the COVID-19 epidemic have profoundly transformed the face of education worldwide. As a result, there has been a quick push toward alternate teaching approaches, such as blended learning. This chapter includes a comprehensive literature analysis focusing on the development, implementation, and effectiveness of blended learning, particularly in regions afflicted by war, such as Palestine. This review examines previous research and theoretical frameworks that elucidate the multifaceted nature of blended learning in complex situations. The chapter also examines theoretical frameworks pertinent to blended learning, including the Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). These models establish a basis for comprehending the determinants affecting the acceptance and efficacy of blended learning in conflict and crises.

#### **2.2. Theoretical Foundation**

##### **2.2.1. Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM)**

The Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM), introduced by Bhattacharjee in 2001, provides a crucial framework for understanding the current usage of Information Technology (IT), specifically concerning consumers' choices for recurring purchases. The Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM) primarily examines the elements that influence expectations after acceptance and consumption, as demonstrated by studies

conducted by Foroughi et al. (2019) and Rahi et al. (2018). The ECM primarily examines the elements that impact the stability and persistence of an information system, as previous research has suggested that the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of an IS are decided by its ongoing usage rather than its initial acceptance or utilization (Foroughi et al., 2019). The Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM) has been utilized to evaluate individuals' sustained intention to use various technological contexts, such as blended e-learning (Y-M. Cheng, 2014a), digital libraries (Y. M. Cheng, 2014b), cloud services (Huang, 2016), mobile instant messaging (Oghuma et al., 2016), Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) (Alraimi et al., 2015; J. Zhou, 2017), mobile gaming wearable technology (Nascimento et al., 2018), travel apps (Choi et al., 2019), mobile communication applications (Wang et al., 2019), mobile banking services (Susanto et al., 2016; Foroughi et al., 2019; Rabaa'i and AlMaati, 2021), and desktop services (Huang, 2019). The success of this approach relies on the interaction of various crucial factors that impact a user's determination to continue utilizing IT services.

The Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM) emphasizes user satisfaction with IT, which is influenced by meeting or exceeding initial expectations. Increased satisfaction results in sustained usage, as evidenced by marketing research. Verifying expectations is essential since consumers acknowledge the advantages of IT, enhancing overall happiness. Following adoption, users develop expectations on the ongoing usability of the IT, therefore affirming their original assessments and impacting their interaction with the technology (Rahi & Abd. Ghani, 2019). In marketing research, satisfaction is fundamental in customer behavior, particularly in encouraging the continued use of products or services (Bhattacharjee, 2001). This notion, initially grounded in consumer behaviour theories like the Expectation-