



# Iranian French Language Learners' Perceptions Regarding HyFlex Language Learning

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## Abstract

*Hybrid Flexible (HyFlex) courses combine various learning modes for allowing students to choose their class attendance from face-to-face and online sessions according to their needs and availability, without learning deficits or consequences. This type of learning, which enables students with varying learning situations and profiles to benefit from course content in equitable ways, enhances learners' engagement and satisfaction[1]. This study focuses on Iranian French language students' perceptions regarding HyFlex language courses in a private university in Iran, in which this mode of learning was implemented for the first time. 80 students participated in the study by filling out a questionnaire regarding their perceptions about HyFlex courses after two semesters of attending HyFlex classes, and participating in semi-structured interviews, which examined their experiences in HyFlex courses. Results indicate overall positive perceptions among 83% of students regarding HyFlex courses' four core principles: flexibility, reusability, accessibility, and learners' choice[2]. Furthermore, according to students, HyFlex courses' most important advantages yielding to satisfaction among students who have personal or work-related limitations include equal course accessibility in learner-centered courses, focus on learners' unpredictable conditions and in-person attendance constraints due to illness or geographic distance, enhanced autonomy in learning, improved self-regulation and time management, and increased digital literacy. Concerning challenges faced by students, both traditional and non-traditional students indicated IT-related problems as well as unequal interactions with peers in online classes. Findings suggest a promising future for HyFlex language courses in Iranian higher education for traditional and non-traditional students, while identifying the areas that need to be improved for a more successful implementation of this course model in language classes with the goal of enhancing students' engagement in learning and course satisfaction.*

**Keywords:** *HyFlex Language Teaching, Student Satisfaction, French Language, Iran*

## 1. Introduction

The educational landscape has been witnessing, in the past few decades, the emergence of various technology-based teaching and learning models, which attempt to make instruction accessible and equitable to students with different needs and objectives. Moreover, the increasing number of non-traditional students who try to pursue their academic endeavors in conjunction with their professional obligations and family-related responsibilities has intensified the need for alternative educational pathways that enable all groups of students, regardless of their life situation, to benefit from quality education [3]. In many academic situations, especially in higher education, the simultaneous existence of traditional and non-traditional students and universities' ambition to maintain educational justice and academic satisfaction for all students have led to the application of various educational models that focus on flexibility in learning and student-centered instruction, hoping to provide equal learning opportunities for all students regardless of their situational constraints.

One of the most recent and yet practical learning models that foster student-centered learning while allowing learners the necessary flexibility in their class attendance mode, is Hybrid-Flexible education, also known as HyFlex education [2], which allows students to choose their class attendance mode from in-person classes, synchronous online classes, or asynchronous offline classes, all of which are based on the same course objectives, course material, course activities, and course assessment. This article examines French language undergraduate students' perceptions regarding HyFlex learning in an international university in Iran. The aim is to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of this type of education within the Iranian higher education system from the students' point of view, and to investigate their level of satisfaction regarding participating in HyFlex courses



based on the four main principles of HyFlex classes [4], which are Learner's Choice, Reusability, Accessibility and Equivalency.

### **1.1. HyFlex learning**

A Hybrid-Flexible or HyFlex course is a student-centered course model that integrates face-to-face instruction, online synchronous instruction and offline asynchronous content delivery modes. Instructors, in this model, teach the course in a regular classroom and the session will be livestreamed and recorded; each student may independently choose to attend the class in person, through online learning management systems or video conferencing, or by watching a recording of the class. The most important characteristic of HyFlex courses is that the attendance mode, the participation mode in class as well as the completion of classroom-based activities, projects and homework are completely left to students each session, in a way that a student can attend face to face class one day, and online the other, based on his/her preferences and/or situational constraints [5]. The instructor provides course content and designs activities according to the course syllabus; this must be done in such a way as to give accessibility and Equivalency to all students, so that they can benefit from the course and complete the course requirements in comparable ways whether attending online, face-to-face, offline, or in a certain combination of the three [4]. According to Beatty [2], HyFlex courses are based on four core principles: Learner's Choice, Equivalency, Reusability, and Accessibility:

- **Learner Choice:** The instructor provides and fosters alternative attendance modes that allow learners to choose the mode of class participation that corresponds to their needs and situations, allowing learners to decide on their daily participation mode.
- **Equivalency:** The three modes of content delivery, although not equal, provide equivalent learning opportunities, equivalent learning activities and equivalent learning outcomes for all students regardless of their attendance mode.
- **Reusability:** Learning content and course materials, including classroom or online activities in each mode are saved and can be reused in other modes.
- **Accessibility:** Students are equipped with the technological tools, resources and skills that allow them to equally access all participation modes.

The combination of these four principles enables students to benefit from course content in equivalent ways without being deprived from class because of life constraints, thereby becoming more satisfied with their educational career and experiences while fulfilling their non-academic responsibilities [6].

The technology-mediated dynamic and flexible learning environment and interactions are among the most important components of HyFlex learning [7], which enable learners to build their individual learning strategies in order to benefit from the class and teaching resources and make decisions regarding the type of interaction with classmates, instructors and educational materials. According to Eyal & Gil [8], when learners become independent in their learning, they can personalize their learning process and have more satisfaction and productivity from their educational experience by determining the time, place, manner and pace of learning. This independence and satisfaction in learning form learners' identity and over time, not only lead to an increase in the learning of course topics, but also play an important role in the development of students' lifelong learning skills.

## **2. Review of Literature and Significance of Problem**

The existing research on HyFlex courses mainly focus on two main domains. The first group of research investigate the benefits and challenges of this type of education from the perspective of language learners and instructors. The benefits of HyFlex learning include increased student satisfaction [9]; [10] due to flexibility of time and place [11], flexibility in choosing the type of class attendance according to students' individual and situational needs and constraints [12]; [13], flexibility in accessing educational content and curriculum resources [11], reduced educational costs [14], increased student independence and self-regulation in learning [15]. increased Responsibility [16], improved learning commitment [17], increased student participation and interaction during and outside the classroom [18];[13], development of both learners and instructors' digital literacy [19] and more increased individual courses benefit and satisfaction for language learners with different learning strategies and intelligences [20]. On the contrary, research that deal with the challenges of HyFlex education generally include the limitations of this type of education for some language learners due to



the digital gap between generations [14], students and instructors' insufficient level of digital literacy [21]; [22], certain adult learners' preferences for traditional learning methods [23]; [24], and lack of the necessary infrastructure for up-to-date and efficient use of technology-based teaching and learning tools as well as appropriate teaching and learning strategies suitable for HyFlex learning [21].

The second group of research examines the effectiveness of HyFlex learning, but due to the fact that longitudinal studies regarding the long-term effectiveness of this learning model are needed for drawing valid conclusions on its usefulness, and that this educational model is rather novel in many learning contexts and researchers still lack the necessary infrastructure as well as valid scientific frameworks for the development and evaluation of language skills and higher order cognitive competencies, the results of these research are still to be investigated and further enhanced [14]; [25]; [26]. For this reason, since the implementation of HyFlex learning in the Iranian context is in its first stages, and that when investigating a new learning model, researchers first opt for examining students and instructors' attitudes and perceptions regarding the model, this research also investigates French language learners' perceptions regarding HyFlex language courses and the ways in which this learning model improves students' satisfaction. More precisely, the questions that this research attempts to answer are: How satisfied are French language students with the implementation of HyFlex classes in Iranian universities?, and What are the most important challenges and benefits of HyFlex language courses in Iran?

### **3. Research Method**

#### **3.1. Participants**

The participants in this study include 80 undergraduate English Language and Translation students who attended French classes as part of their curriculum at Imam Reza International University located in Mashhad, Iran. All students were female, 90% of whom were aged 18-24. The majority of students (61%) were full time students, while 39% worked full time or part time alongside their full-time studies. 21% of participants were married and 9% had kids, whereas 79% were single. 51% of students attended the class in HyFlex mode, while 49% only attended the class in-person.

#### **3.2. Data Collection and Analysis**

The data for this research was collected quantitatively and qualitatively through a questionnaire regarding language learners' perceptions about HyFlex education, as well as semi-structured interviews about learners' language learning in HyFlex classes.

In order to investigate language learners' perceptions regarding HyFlex courses, a questionnaire was designed by researchers based on the research by Mentzer et al. [6]; Dziuban & Moskal [27] and Beatty [28]. The questionnaire consisted of 58 questions, and was electronically administered to students via Google Forms: the first 9 questions concerned participants' demographic information, and 49 questions analyzed the various dimensions of learners' perceptions based on the four core principles of HyFlex courses [2], namely the Learner's Choice, Equivalency, Accessibility, and Reusability with a 5-point Likert scale (from completely agree to completely disagree). The questionnaire was based on a five-point Likert Scale, with choices that ranged from Strongly agree to Strongly disagree. In the analysis, each choice was given a number (5 corresponding to Strongly agree and 1 corresponding to Strongly disagree) and the average for each group of questions, corresponding to the core principles of HyFlex courses was calculated. An average above 3 indicated an overall positive perception regarding the component, whereas an average below 3 indicated an overall negative perception among students.

Moreover, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with students regarding their experiences in HyFlex courses. Interviews focused on students' experiences regarding course attendance flexibility, course outcomes and learning objectives, course accessibility, resource accessibility, student-student and instructor-student interactions, and participation in class activities. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed through the MAXQDA software, which coded students' responses based on Beatty [2]'s core principles of HyFlex learning in order to investigate students' satisfaction with this learning model.

### **4. Results**

#### **4.1. Findings of the questionnaire**



In this section, participants' answers to the questionnaire about their overall level of courses satisfaction based on Beatty [2]'s four core principles of HyFlex courses will be examined.

#### 4.1.1. Learners' Choice Component of HyFlex Education

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics related to students' perceptions regarding learner's choice in HyFlex French language courses:

Learner's Choice Component	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. The flexibility of the type of attendance in class and the possibility of choosing the type of attendance of students in class has had a positive effect on my learning	4.37	0.65
2. When I attend the class face-to-face, I am more motivated to learn	4.50	0.89
3. I am more motivated to learn when I participate in online classes	3.35	1.03
4. In my opinion, the type of participation in the class (face-to-face and/or online) play an important role in my learning rate	4.2	0/84
5. In my opinion, the type of class participation (face-to-face and/or online) plays an important role in the quality of my learning	4.25	0/85
6. In my opinion, the type of participation in the class (face-to-face and/or online) plays an important role in the level of interaction with the professor	4.19	0.82
7. In my opinion, the type of participation in the class (face-to-face and/or online) plays an important role in the level of interaction with my classmates	4.13	0.82
8. In my opinion, the type of participation in the class (face-to-face and/or online) plays an important role in the quality of my interaction with the professor	4.16	0/98
9. In my opinion, the type of class participation (face-to-face and/or online) plays an important role in the quality of my interaction with my classmates	4.21	0.64
10. Participating in HyFlex classes gives me more time to think about the class content	4.13	0.77
11. I manage my learning better in HyFlex classes.	3.97	9.97
12. According to my life conditions, the possibility of choosing the type of presence in the class leads to an increase in my attention and learning in the class	4.41	0.70
13. According to my life conditions, the possibility of choosing the type of presence in the class leads to an increase in my self-confidence	4.28	0.77
14. According to my life conditions, the possibility of choosing the type of attendance in the class leads to an increase in the motivation to participate in the class	4.37	0.69
15. According to my life conditions, the possibility of choosing the type of presence in the class leads to an increase in my commitment to learning in the class	4.38	0.96
<b>Total</b>		<b>4.17</b>

**Table 1. Learner's Choice Component**

As illustrated Table 1, students' average perceptions regarding Learner's Choice is 4.17, which is higher than the median or 3. This number indicates students' positive perception regarding HyFlex courses' flexibility and the possibility of choosing the type of attendance in classes according to their conditions.

#### 4.1.2. Equivalency Component of HyFlex Education

Table 2 shows students' perceptions regarding the Equivalency component of HyFlex French courses:

Equivalency Component	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. I feel that the amount of my learning in this face-to-face and online class was appropriate	4.01	0.88
2. In my opinion, the contents of the classes, whether face-to-face or online, were appropriate to the objectives of the class and useful in my learning	4.37	0.76
3. Regardless of my attendance mode, I feel that the objectives of the class and the professor's expectations are clearly stated.	4.38	0.64
4. Regardless of my attendance, I feel the class assignments were challenging.	4.15	0.82
5. Regardless of my attendance, I feel that I have the opportunity to participate and benefit from meaningful learning activities in the classroom	4.16	0.78
6. Regardless of my attendance mode, I feel that the course is organized in such a way	4.28	0.74



that I can understand the content of the course		
7. Regardless of my state of attendance, I feel that the course content is presented in a way that matches my attendance mode	4.13	0.78
8. Regardless of my attendance mode, I feel that the classroom LMS (Skyroom) is effectively used to teach the course content.	4.06	0.81
9. When I attend the class in person, the presence of classmates online does not disturb my learning	3.41	1.15
10. When I attend the class in person, the presence of classmates online does not disturb my concentration	3.47	1.24
11. When I participate in the online class, I feel that I can benefit from the instructor as much as I need despite the classmates who are in the class in person	3.57	1.05
12. When I participate in the class online, I feel like I can use the class interactions like in-person classmates	3.28	1.10
13. When I participate in the online class, I feel that I can benefit from the class activities like my classmates.	3.13	1.18
14. When I participate in the class in person, I feel that the online participants are part of the class	4.15	0.75
15. When I participate in the online class, I feel like I am part of the class	3.53	1.13
16. In general, the professor involved me in classroom discussions in face-to-face classes and this improves my learning	4.36	0.69
17. In general, the professor in the online classes involved me in class discussions like in-person students, and this leads to the improvement of my learning	4.12	0.87
18. In general, in face-to-face classes, like in online classes, I was able to use class materials usefully	4.40	0.60
19. In general, I was able to use the class materials usefully in online classes like face-to-face classes	4.12	0.78
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.96</b>

**Table 2. Equivalency Component**

According to table 2, the average perception of students regarding HyFlex courses' Equivalency is 3.96; since this number is higher than the average (3), it indicates an overall positive perception about Equivalency in HyFlex courses.

#### 4.1.3. Reusability Component of HyFlex Education

Table 3 illustrates students' perception regarding the reusability component of HyFlex courses.

<b>Reusability Component</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
1. In HyFlex classes, the possibility of using classroom resources at any time and place leads to the improvement of my learning	4.16	0.91
2. In HyFlex classes, constant access to class activities leads to the improvement of my learning	4.32	0.79
3. In HyFlex classes, constant access to classroom resources leads to easier homework completion	4.10	0.96
4. In general, I was able to use classroom resources usefully in the face-to-face classes.	4.23	0.67
5. In general, I was able to usefully use class resources in online classes	4.12	0.79
6. According to my life conditions, the possibility of choosing the type of my presence in the class leads to a better use of class materials and teaching resources	4.42	0.62
<b>Total</b>		<b>4.22</b>

**Table 3. Reusability Component**

Considering that the average score of the participants in the reusability component is higher than the 3 ( $M=4.22$ ), it can be argued that the participants have a positive perception regarding the reusability of course material and course content in HyFlex courses.

#### 4.1.4. Accessibility Component of HyFlex Education

Table 4 shows students' perceptions regarding HyFlex course accessibility.

<b>Accessibility Component</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard</b>
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		<b>Deviation</b>
1. Participating in the class in a HyFlex mode led me to be more satisfied with this course because I had unlimited access to all course materials and activities	4.45	0.88
2. In my opinion, the materials of the classes, both face-to-face and online, were completely accessible and usable to all	4.61	0.55
3. Participating in a HyFlex class gives me more opportunity to access and use class materials	4.20	0.76
4. In general, I was able to participate in individual class activities in face-to-face classes	4.36	0.85
5. In general, I was able to participate in individual class activities in online classes	4.08	0.79
6. In general, I was able to participate in group activities in face-to-face classes	4.64	0.85
7. In general, I was able to participate in group activities in online classes	3.65	1.03
8. Considering my living conditions, the possibility of choosing the type of my presence in the class leads to an easier access to the course content	4.37	0.74
<b>Total</b>		<b>4.30</b>

**Table 4. Accessibility Component**

As illustrated in Table 4, in general, the average students' perceptions regarding HyFlex courses' accessibility is 4.30, which is higher than 3, and indicates an overall positive perception regarding this component of HyFlex courses.

#### **4.2. Interviews**

The thematic analysis of the interviews indicated that flexibility, which is the most important component of HyFlex courses' Learner's Choice principle was the most significant factor contributing to student satisfaction. Course attendance flexibility allowed students to balance their personal, professional, and academic responsibilities more effectively. Participants appreciated the option to choose between different learning modes, including in-person, online, or asynchronous attendance, which catered to their individual needs and schedules. Moreover, the student-centered nature of the HyFlex model was identified as a key element in fostering satisfaction, since it promoted autonomy and self regulation and made students more competent learners.

Students also highlighted the support from instructors across all modes of participation, emphasizing that this support ensured equal access to resources and comparable learning outcomes for everyone, regardless of students' attendance mode, which underlines HyFlex courses' Equivalency principle. In sum, according to students, HyFlex courses' most important advantages yielding to satisfaction include course flexibility (Learners' Choice), work-life balance (Learner's Choice), equal course accessibility in learner-centered courses (Equivalency), and instructor support (Equivalency). In addition, students appreciated the opportunity for technology-enhanced learning and participation mode switching (Learner's Choice).

As far as the most important challenges faced by students in HyFlex courses, while many learners found the use of recorded materials and technological tools beneficial, some expressed concerns about over-reliance on technology, particularly when technical issues arose or access to resources was inconsistent. This occasionally led to fluctuations in the quality of learning. Furthermore, students expressed concerns regarding student-student and student-instructor interactions in online courses, which, according to them, were not always as constructive and beneficial as in face-to-face classes, which explains the reason for which despite the benefits of course attendance flexibility, many students valued in-person classes for the direct interaction with instructors and peers, as well as the enhanced learning environment they provide. This suggests that maintaining more equally interactive learning opportunities and designing engaging activities in HyFlex courses is essential to ensure that students remain satisfied with their learning experience regardless of their participation mode.

#### **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

This research examined French language students' perceptions regarding HyFlex courses in order to investigate the ways in which this learning model could enhance both traditional and non-traditional students' course satisfaction. The HyFlex model allows to tailor education in such a way as to suit the individual needs and objectives of students, thereby ensuring more satisfaction from academic success alongside personal and/or professional endeavors. Based on the results, the most important characteristic of HyFlex courses that yielded to satisfaction among students was course Accessibility (M=4.30) since it allowed learners to access course content and instruction regardless of personal or



professional constraints. Furthermore, the unlimited possibility to revisit and reuse course materials and content (Reusability;  $M=4.22$ ) also played an important role in enhancing students' satisfaction, as it allowed them to complete course work in a more efficient way. The flexibility offered by students' choice of class participation mode (Learner's Choice;  $M=4.17$ ) allowed students to tailor their educational pathway in such a way as to balance personal, academic and professional engagements. Finally, the Equivalency component ( $M=3.96$ ) fostered equal benefits regardless of course participation mode in that students felt that regardless of their attendance mode, they equally benefited from course content and meaningful activities.

Yet, students believed that participation in group activities and interaction, especially with classmates, in online courses was not as easy, frequent, and beneficial as in face-to-face courses; This may be a reason for which students' perceptions regarding Equivalency in HyFlex courses are slightly lower than the other three principles of these courses. According to Beatty [29] a practical and well-designed HyFlex learning model with effective alternative participation mode that leads to the same learning outcomes can provide meaningful learning opportunities for all students. The key, therefore, in HyFlex courses' success lies in the Equivalency principle, which could encourage (or not) students to choose their participation mode without concerns regarding course efficiency. Although students in this research believed that the course was in general successful in all four HyFlex courses' principles, it could be suggested that instructors plan and provide the necessary tools for online collective activities. Furthermore, establishing more frequent and more equal interaction opportunities for all students regardless of their participation mode could be beneficial, although challenging, as it requires the instructor and all participants to collaborate in providing equal constructive and meaningful opportunities for expression. It is however worth mentioning that according to students, instructor's support was equally available and useful to all learners, but when it came to classroom interactions and collective activities, those who attended classes in person seem to have benefited more compared to those attending online.

This research, a first step into the research on the implementation of HyFlex courses in language teaching in Iran, can help researchers and scholars gain an understanding of students' perceptions regarding HyFlex language courses in higher education. More research needs to be conducted on higher number of students and through longer periods of instruction in order to provide more comprehensive results regarding HyFlex courses' benefits, challenges, and needs for improvement. The HyFlex model, although requiring more empirical evidence and research in its present shape or suggestions for development and adjustment, has proven to be a promising language learning and teaching model in that it allows the learners to decide how, when, and where their learning could take place. This resembles the acquisition of a person's native language, which is acquired in a natural way in a natural environment in which knowledge and competencies are acquired according to students' needs and objectives at their own pace, with their personal learning strategies and preferences. The results of this research present inspiration and encouragement for the proponents of HyFlex language learning model in Iran to implement this model after sufficient training, and help students with varying needs and constraints to continue or pursue their studies alongside their other personal and professional duties and responsibilities.

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