



Saudi University Students' Perceptions towards Language Learning via Blackboard During Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of Department of Languages and Translation, Taibah University, Al-Ula Campus

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of Blackboard in teaching and learning English as a foreign language at the Department of Languages and Translation, Faculty of Science and Arts, Taibah University (TU) in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia. It aims to investigate the efficiency of using Blackboard in EFL. The study tries to answer the following questions: What are the effects of using Blackboard in teaching and learning English as a foreign language on the development of language skills? What are the attitudes of EFL learners toward using Blackboard at Saudi EFL colleges? The descriptive research design used a quantitative instrument to accomplish the study's objectives; a survey questionnaire was used to investigate the attitudes of EFL BA college students towards the use of Blackboard in EFL. The findings of the study help educators assess the efficiency of using Blackboard in teaching English. The results show that students have a positive attitude towards Blackboard but still face difficulties adapting to online learning.

INTRODUCTION

Through time and with the massive spread of the internet around the world, now online teaching and learning is much easier and more people are going to online education for knowledge. The outbreak of coronavirus has put the whole world in a difficult situation. Schools and universities were closed and study suspended in many parts of the world. Here comes the role of online learning as the best alternative. In Saudi Arabia, the blackboard plays a significant role in the educational process at Saudi universities. Now the attention is on what is after the Covid-19 crisis. Education will not be the same and people are discussing the use of online learning or blended learning. Blended learning becomes more used in teaching and learning around the world. The utilization of Blended Learning in advanced education has expanded altogether during the previous decade and it is going to be more used after the Covid-19 crisis.

Saudi Arabia is a country that has made progress in the field of electronic learning. It is one of the top countries with regard to rapid advancement and progress in the use of technology and this helped the country in facing the Covid-19 crisis. Teaching at Saudi Universities was not

suspended and the shift from traditional teaching to online teaching was quick because universities there have an infrastructure that made the shift easier than in some other countries. Most universities have been using blackboard in distance education and blended learning. Blackboard is an online course management software designed to enhance teaching and learning efforts. This issue attracts and motivates the researcher to dig deeper in investigating the effectiveness of using blackboard in EFL teaching-learning at Taibah University, Ula campus. Investigating the perceptions of students can help in finding out what can be done more to make more effective use of the blackboard in EFL.

The purpose of this study is to determine the overall attitude toward the use of the Blackboard in EFL courses at the department of Languages and Translation, Faculty of Science and Arts, at Taibah University (TU) in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia. It examines how college students view using blackboard in EFL learning and teaching, the challenges, limitations and suggestions for improvement. It is concerned with the use of authentic electronic learning materials available on the blackboard in the EFL classroom and how they can be used more effectively. Teaching materials such as audios, videos, PowerPoint, animation, links, and so forth can be added by the teacher to the Blackboard course shell. The teacher can also give students assignments, quizzes, and surveys. S/He can create discussion forums, blogs, wikis, portfolios and groups for student-student and student-teacher interaction. The teacher can also track and assess students. Other features of the blackboard can be used by the teachers and students.

The Study's Research Questions

What are the effects of using blackboard in teaching and learning English as a foreign language on the development of EFL learners' performance, and the attitudes of EFL learners toward using blackboard at Saudi EFL colleges?

This question suggests the following sub-questions: -

How do students use Blackboard to learn English?

What is the best level of achieving maximum benefit from using blackboard?

What are students' perceptions regarding the advantages and limitations of the blackboard?

METHODOLOGY

The Study's Objectives

As stated earlier in the background, the significance of the use of blackboard in the learning-teaching process has increased after the outbreak of coronavirus. This area of study has become attractive to researchers. The study is an attempt to contribute to this important field and it tries to accomplish the following objectives:

- To identify the effectiveness of using Blackboard as a medium of collaborative learning designed to develop English language teaching\learning.
- To examine the effectiveness, in terms of achievement and skills development, of using Blackboard for promoting communication in an interactive and collaborative environment.
- To investigate and evaluate the Blackboard learning management system for synchronous and asynchronous communication to promote English language skills.

Data Collection

The descriptive research design used a quantitative instrument to accomplish the objectives of the study; a survey questionnaire was used to investigate the attitudes of EFL college students at the Department of Languages and Translation, Faculty of Science and Arts, at Taibah

University (TU) in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia. The participants were all students in the department and their level of study ranged from first-year students to students expected to graduate in the second semester of 2020-2021. The participants were male and female and their ages started from 18 up to 24. The qualitative case study research design was selected for this study because this type of design is suitable for exploring a problem within a context about which little is known (Creswell, 2007); in this case, that context is the state of using blackboard in Saudi higher education. It is the preferred approach in qualitative case studies because it allows the researcher to explore and obtain knowledge from the sample that is thought to be able to disclose the most information (Merriam, 1988). As using the blackboard in learning was the main way of teaching and learning in Saudi higher education in the aftermath of the Covid-19 outbreak, there are gaps in the literature that can only be understood by conducting qualitative research.

The questionnaire consists of four sections. The first section gathered data regarding the student's ability to use Blackboard to learn English. The second section collated data regarding the challenges that students and teachers could face in using blackboard when teaching\learning EFL. The third section of the questionnaire focused on the best level of achieving maximum benefit from using blackboard. The fourth section collected data about students' perceptions regarding the advantages and limitations of the blackboard. The questionnaire was sent through social media, especially WhatsApp and Messenger to participants. They were not forced to give their names or give specific answers. The data were subjected to analysis through descriptive statistics. Students' responses were based on the percentage to show how they view the different aspects of using blackboard in EFL.

The findings of this research study tried to find out how EFL college students value the role of the Blackboard teaching and learning performance.

Limitations of the study

Spatially, the study is limited to Taibah University, Al-Ula campus. Objectively, the study is limited to the use of blackboard in learning and teaching English as a foreign language. The study was conducted during the second academic semester from January up to May 2021. Spatially, the study is limited to students of the Department of Languages and Translation at Taibah University, Al-Ula campus. The perceptions of the teaching staff were not investigated. Objectively, the study is limited to the use of Blackboard in learning and teaching English as a foreign language because as mentioned earlier, Blackboard is the main tool used by Saudi universities.

Sampling

In choosing the sample, the researcher uses purposeful sampling which is defined by Creswell as selecting people or sites who can give great help to understanding the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012;306). The research population included EFL students of both genders. There are 100 students and they are all pursuing bachelor's in the English language at the Department of Languages and Translation, Faculty of Science and Arts, Taibah University- Al-Ula campus, KSA. The reason why the researcher selects the samples is that they are suitable for the study because they interacted and were involved in using the blackboard for learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies were carried out on online learning and blended learning in Saudi Arabia in the previous decade. In Saudi Arabia, online learning and blended learning have been in use for years and many studies have been carried out on the use of online learning and the advantages and disadvantages of online and blended learning, especially in EFL. Most of these studies were done before the Cov0d-19 pandemic.

Mohammed Ali Mohsen (2014) investigates teachers' perceptions on the blackboard in EFL. To collect the data for the study they interviewed 32 university teachers from Saudi Arabia to know their perceptions on the use of the blackboard. The finds from the study show that EFL teachers have positive perceptions on Blackboard applications to English language teaching. Many teachers think of the blackboard as a structured e-learning platform that helps to improve the relationship between teachers and students in the course. The study results also revealed that using blackboard as a blending learning focusing more on administrative problems than pedagogical significance for language learning. The study also suggests further study of the topic to use other variables like age, gender, experience etc. with teachers' perceptions.

Badia Muntazer Hakim (2020) aimed to study teachers' perceptions on blackboard applications in the context of teaching EFL and its effect on each module in a periodic manner. They collated the data from 80 EFL teachers who were surveyed and interviewed to investigate their perceptions and experience with the use of the blackboard. The study found that EFL teachers have positive perceptions of the application of the Blackboard to English language teaching. What was interesting in the study is that the item which states teaching English via blackboard, teachers think that blackboard will increase student's motivation to learn got the highest mean which means that most of them have positive pedagogical perceptions toward of using technology in language teaching. This study also suggested for feather studies to use other variables like age, gender, experience etc. with teachers' perceptions.

Hosam El-Sawy (2018) investigates students' perceptions of flipping EFL classes with the blackboard system. A course was designed to allow students to experience flipped learning context in developing their reading skills. English department students participated in the project during a complete academic semester consisting of 15 weeks at the University of Al-Jouf, KSA. A detailed questionnaire was prepared and used to enquire about students' perceptions. Results of the research showed that the majority of participants were able to use the blackboard system's flipped learning model. Mixed explanations for this willingness were offered by the participants, including getting grades, better learning, better contact with the teacher, and having fun. The results also showed that the majority of participants viewed flipped learning as a beneficial learning background with the blackboard system. The most important benefits included improved pronunciation of new vocabulary, facilitating the acquisition of new vocabulary, preparing students for classwork, increasing students' time practising reading at home, reading silently more often, better communication with the instructor and submitting homework easily and quickly. The study also found that by using the blackboard in the flipped learning model, participants encountered some problems. Most of these issues were technological and the use of the device itself could be solved with proper preparation. The study suggests the inclusion in EFL groups of flipped instruction. The study also suggests further study of the topic with various courses, especially theoretical courses taught in English departments to university students.

Another study was carried out at another university. Anas, (2020) used a survey to examine learners' perceptions and satisfaction towards blended learning environments designed around the transactional and transformational approaches of learning theories in a blended course in the College of Arts & Sciences, Al-Namas, the University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. The purpose of the research was to determine the attitudes and expectations of students towards the three components of a blended learning environment: digital learning materials, evaluation, and interactive activities. The researcher used a mixed method of study design to collect data in the form of 12 Likert artifacts in which 22 Saudi students are asked to test their learning experiences in three categories of the blended learning environment. These categories are multimedia learning materials, assessments, and interactive activities in a blended course on Blackboard, a virtual learning platform used by the University of Bisha to support online learning. The researcher's observation is used to decipher, and qualitatively explain the responses of the participants. The Findings of the study show that learners prefer illustrated text materials to video, plain text and audio materials, flexible evaluations to non-flexible assessment, and embedded communication tools like WhatsApp, blogging, wikis, collaborative activities, and discussion forums.

Al Meajel and Sharadgah (2017) think that the success of faculty members in embracing technology definitely impacts the success of their students in this digital era and, eventually, the educational institution. There are many teachers, however, who have not implemented software resources such as Blackboard into their courses. Therefore, this paper discussed faculty experiences of difficulties in teaching and learning to use the Blackboard method. This research was conducted during the 2015/2016 academic year at King Saud University in Saudi Arabia. To decide how they view challenges to using blackboards, an online questionnaire was distributed to 117 faculty members. The findings of the study showed that academic rank, experience, gender, and training had statistically significant effects on faculty perceptions regarding barriers to using Blackboard in teaching and learning. However, there were no statistically significant differences in faculty perceptions regarding barriers to the utilization of Blackboard triggered by the use or non-use of Blackboard. The current research also found that the 'technological barriers' and 'institutional barriers' among the four types of barriers examined in this study were the most frequently defined barriers. The category of student barriers came as a third significant factor, while the category of faculty barriers ranked at the lower end

Ali (2017) Blackboard is a learning management system (LMS) that provides students with an opportunity to access the course at their convenience. Blackboard allows students to do online exercises, communicate with other students and their teachers, review teaching materials, and listen to the classes recorded. Students may also attend live lectures and discussions from homes, cafés, or from anywhere they want through virtual classes (collaborative blackboard). All of these features can be accessed by students anytime and anywhere. This facility might motivate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students to study effectively and efficiently. The purpose of this research is to investigate the use of the Blackboard system in teaching and learning and evaluate its influence on motivating Saudi English students. It looks at the role of Blackboard on English students' motivation from their point of view and tries to determine whether or not students encounter issues that affect their motivation. This research was carried out in Saudi Arabia at the University of Bisha. The study consisted of 80 English Department students. This is a mixed approach review of the students who use Blackboard for online

learning. The study showed that students were inspired by using Blackboard to work harder and learn better than conventional learning methods. It also found that learners assume that a motivational factor is Blackboard. This research also described several demotivating variables Fageeh (2013) study aimed to recognize the pedagogical effects of Blackboard as a computer-mediated communication (CMC) environment for teaching academic writing and improving students' attitudes toward academic writing. Learners' interactions in the CMC environment of Blackboard were analyzed via a controlled descriptive design to examine how students negotiate academic literacy using two types of collaborative online strategies: synchronous chat and asynchronous discussion boards concerning students' academic writing. This study followed a qualitative research design using a variety of methods, such as observations, online experiences of students, questionnaires, interviews, and written tasks to examine the role of computer-mediated communication (CMC) in the production of academic writing for EFL learners. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS and In Vivo was used to analyze qualitative data. The results showed that the perceptions of using computers, the internet, and Blackboard differed among the students. The more optimistic their attitudes were towards the use of CMC to improve academic literacy, the greater the experience of the students. Furthermore, the quantitative results showed that students with Blackboard contact had a more optimistic attitude towards success, teamwork, and participation variables. The findings also showed that CMC, mainly in the form of online discussion and online peer review activity, facilitated students' interactions and scaffolded learning within their online community.

Al-Mashaqba (2017) argues that learning has come a long way from the traditional blackboard that marked the previous decades to the Blackboard Collaboration of the modern age that allows learners to work and learn in a collaborative online world. Virtual classrooms, especially with learners sharing in academic workload on portals such as Google Docs, have arrived as a natural development of the ICT (In-Circuit Tester) wave. In addition to offering ample scope for peer interaction, Blackboard Collaborate gives learners the electronic environment they are most familiar with and keeps them updated with the latest educational tools. However, for it to succeed, the perception of the teachers is a factor that needs scrutiny before this tool can be incorporated into the system. This paper aims to explore the views of teachers at Qassim University, KSA (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) on the inclusion of Blackboard Collaborate in the teaching-learning atmosphere and its effectiveness as a learning tool in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) situation at the university.

Zawaidy (2014) believes that as the online learning environment for universities around the world, including in developing countries, is rising, there are still some challenges that could interrupt the implementation of this environment, such as lack of technical difficulties and/or skills. This study aimed to identify the difficulties that are facing these faculty members in using Blackboard as a blended learning system and recognize the perceptions of faculty members who were involved in e-learning programs and trained to use the blackboard in teaching. The sample surveyed in this study was 360 faculty members and instructors at King Saud University (Riyadh), King Khaled University (Abha) and Taif University College of Education. The descriptive methodology involved analysis of the implemented online system at these universities and how faculty members are dealing with that. The main obstacles found in the study were: Lack of needed training and experience in using ICT (Information & Communication Technology) – lack of internet signal that interrupts continuous connection and smooth communication and lack of encouragement and restricted rules that oblige faculty

members to develop their technological skills, the experience in using ICT especially in producing electronic materials such as recording lectures via Echo application, upload videos on YouTube channel, slide share etc.

Pusuluri, and Alsayer (2017) investigate the perceptions of students on the use of Blackboard in the Department of English at Al Jouf University. Al Jouf University is located in Al Jouf province in the northwestern part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A cohort of 50 male students of the university participated in this study. The sample population was selected randomly. The data was collected using a questionnaire. The results of the study indicate that although the students do not agree or disagree with the vibrant and interesting atmosphere provided by Blackboard, they report that Blackboard provides variety in the learning of their courses and allows them to learn different aspects of their courses at their own pace. The results show that Blackboard could be used as an efficient medium to provide learning diversity as well as to help create a motivational atmosphere for learners.

Hussein thinks that the use of Learning Management Systems (LMSs) in Saudi universities has brought about noteworthy changes in the scholarly environment. Her study investigates female students' perceptions on the accessibility, usability and effectiveness of using Blackboard (Bb) in a web-enhanced listening and speaking course at the University of Hail. The study was carried out during the first semester of the academic year 2015-16. To achieve the objectives of the study an attitudinal questionnaire and Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from 37 female students at the Department of English to validate the study and elicit elaborate responses regarding the advantages of Bb, the challenges the participants faced and the suggestions they have to improve the effectiveness of using Bb. The findings of the study revealed that students generally had positive attitudes toward using Bb particularly because they found it useful in improving their language skills and the communication between students and instructor. The study also states that issues such as improving student-student communication and course design on Bb need further attention.

Mohammed, Nimairy Mohammed Omer argues that Blackboard Learning Management System offers an avenue for classroom materials and activities to be shared easily. His study investigates the role of the Blackboard Learning Management System in improving EFL learners' skills, helping the EFL learners to develop their abilities and providing students with background and awareness of the system. The findings of the study revealed that the blackboard learning management system gives EFL learners additional teaching and learning resources. It also helps in student-centred learning. This study recommended that EFL teachers build a learner-centred environment that empowers students by engaging them actively in the teaching process and using all types of online feedback (oral, and written) on the syllabus.

Hussein Alsowayegh and et. examine pedagogically the impact of blended learning activities to strengthen listening and speaking at the tertiary level. Teachers offered content online that can measure the students' engagement, satisfaction, content and examination and, the teacher's role. The teacher provided the blended learning activities employing the tools on Blackboard including discussion on forums and listening activities. The study focused on how blended learning activities motivate the engagement of students, their satisfaction, the role of the teacher, content and assessment from the students' point of view. A questionnaire was used to collect data in which 38 students from two sections of listening and speaking class (control G1

n = 20 and blended G2 n = 18) participated. A placement test, examination results and responses from a questionnaire were used as tools to examine the effect of blended learning activities on the students' engagement, satisfaction, teacher's role, content and examination. The findings demonstrate the positive effects of using blended learning activities in supporting the improvement of students' learning of listening and speaking at the elementary level.

DISCUSSION

Saudi Arabia has made great progress in the field of electronic learning in the past and that helped them to face the crisis of Covid-19. Teaching at Saudi Universities continued and the shift from face-to-face teaching to online teaching was smooth because universities there have an infrastructure that made the shift easier. Most universities start using Blackboard as a way of teaching, it has become a real phenomenon to enhance teaching and learning efforts. This part discusses the four sections of the results.

First Section: How do students use Blackboard to learn English?

Items	Strongly agree	agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Online learning can take place in a synchronous or asynchronous environment.	48 %48	39 %39	6 %6	6 %6	1 %1
In a simultaneous environment, students and teachers can interact in real time.	45 %45	38 %38	12 %12	5 %5	0 %0
Course members meeting at a specified time that can be considered negative.	33 %33	19 %19	21 %21	24 %24	3 %3
Time set can help students stay on track and manage their time.	51 %51	27 %27	12 %12	6 %6	4 %4
Semester students can meet for a lecture.	43 %43	33 %33	21 %21	3 %3	0 %0
Students and teachers can hold office hours and study sessions, have impromptu discussions, and host guest speakers.	48 %48	37 %37	13 %13	2 %2	0 %0
Students can take the time necessary to obtain the most effective communication.	48 %48	33 %33	12 %12	7 %7	0 %0
The tools available on blackboard display information of all courses. For example, the calendar shows events for all courses.	52 %52	32 %32	10 %10	4 %4	2 %2
Students can see what's new in all of your courses and go directly to Course Activities from the menu!	44 %44	41 %41	9 %9	6 %6	0 %0
You don't need to dig deeper into the system or miss assignments from students.	48 %48	25 %25	16 %16	7 %7	4 %4
Students will see a prioritized list of everything relevant to them.	55 %55	29 %29	10 %10	4 %4	2 %2
Enjoy a comprehensive look at course activity and direct access to course items.	50 %50	34 %34	11 %11	5 %5	0 %0
Students filter their view. Use the filter menu and choose to show all, assignments and tests, or grades and notes.	49 %49	33 %33	14 %14	4 %4	0 %0

The results indicate that Blackboard can help students to learn English, students know the significance of online learning that can be taken in a synchronous or asynchronous environment, and they believe that students and teachers can interact, manage their time, hold office hours, have discussions, and host guest speakers. Blackboard contains many tools and features that can assist students and teachers to communicate and have a better learning experience.

Second Section: What are the challenges that students and teachers face in using Blackboard when teaching\learning EFL?

Items	Strongly agree	agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Switching from traditional classroom and face to face instructor training to blackboard in a virtual classroom makes the learning experience entirely different for students.	48 %48	39 %39	6 %6	4 %4	3 %3
Students' resistance to change doesn't allow them to adapt to the online learning environment, whereas it takes time for them to get accustomed to Course Management Systems (CMS) and the methods of blackboard education.	32 %32	33 %33	18 %18	16 %16	1 %1
While passive listening and note-taking are expected in a traditional classroom, online discussions or creating a web page demand springing into action.	37 %37	46 %46	12 %12	4 %4	1 %1
Students with a "traditional" mindset find it difficult to adapt; however, they need to accept the new learning circumstances with an open mind and heart.	43 %43	30 %30	16 %16	5 %5	6 %6
Understanding the benefits of eLearning and even discussing them with their peers may change this mindset and better prepare students for online classes.	42 %42	38 %38	17 %17	2 %2	1 %1
Many students are not provided with the high bandwidth or the strong internet connection that online courses require, and thus fail to catch up with their virtual classmates.	40 %40	35 %35	17 %17	7 %7	1 %1
Students' weak monitors make it hard to follow the Course Management System and their learning experience becomes problematic.	35 %35	40 %40	16 %16	9 %9	0 %0
Although students are generally tech-savvy, and thus able to manage computers well, lack of computer literacy is a major issue among students today.	39 %39	32 %32	21 %21	4 %4	4 %4
Many of them cannot operate basic programs such as Microsoft Word and PowerPoint and therefore are not able to handle their files.	36 %36	33 %33	17 %17	6 %6	8 %8
Technological proficiency is a must for following online courses, as it enables students to manage their assignments and courseware in an organized manner without struggling.	49 %49	40 %40	9 %9	2 %2	0
Basic courses in computer literacy enhance students' knowledge in the usage of the blackboard.	43 %43	44 %44	10 %10	3 %3	0 %0
Time management is a difficult task for eLearners, as online courses require a lot of time and intensive work.	38 %38	37 %37	12 %12	7 %7	6 %6
Self-motivation is an eLearning essential requirement; however, many online learners lack it.	35 %35	37 %37	19 %19	9 %9	0 %0
Students need to find the motivation to follow the new educational trends and also properly equip themselves for future challenges in their education and career.	39 %39	43 %43	16 %16	2 %2	0 %0

Shifting from face-to-face classes to online classes can be difficult for students especially if it happens suddenly. Zawaidy (2014) believes that as the online learning environment for universities around the world, including in developing countries, is rising, there are still some challenges that could interrupt the implementation of this environment, such as lack of technical difficulties and/or skills. The findings from the second section show that the majority of students say that it took them time to adapt to the online classes. The shift was more difficult for students with a traditional mindset and they find it difficult to adapt to the online classes but they had to accept the new learning circumstances forced by covid and the lockdown. They got used to online learning and discover its benefits. The most important difficulty which was expected is that students faced internet issues and that did not help some of them catch up with their virtual classes. Another difficulty they faced was handling their files as some of them cannot operate basic programs. The university provided training courses to help to improve students' skills.

Third Section: What is the best level of achieving maximum benefit from using Blackboard?

Items	Strongly agree	agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Only a positive attitude will help students overcome the challenges in eLearning.	49 %49	38 %38	8 %8	3 %3	2 %2
students need to understand that a positive attitude is necessary in order to reap the eLearning's benefits in the future.	52 %52	36 %36	9 %9	2 %2	1 %1
Blackboard learn may give academic staff and students potential benefits like increased availability, quick feedback, improved two-way interactions, tracking, and building skills such as organization, time management and communication.	53 %53	31 %31	15 %15	1 %1	0 %0
Users always access blackboard learn through the internet anytime and anywhere.	48 %48	31 %31	16 %16	5 %5	0 %0
Students can view and download course materials and other information as well as submitting assignments online as soon as they are complete.	52 %52	33 %33	12 %12	3 %3	0 %0
Blackboard has three types of interactivity that act as the evidence of its usage, that is, student to content interaction, student to instructor interaction and student to student interaction.	50 %50	37 %37	10 %10	3 %3	0 %0
Blackboard discussions forums, email boards and blogs that happen in real time and have a stronger sense of social presence	43 %43	39 %39	14 %14	2 %2	2 %2
Interactions with instructors and other students provide opportunities for knowledge building as much learning that occurs within social contexts.	43 %43	40 %40	15 %15	0 %0	2 %2
The electronic messaging creates new opportunities for groups to work together by creating shared electronic conversations and discussions.	36 %36	47 %47	14 %14	3 %3	0 %0

This section shows that the majority of participants (49%) agree that only a positive attitude can help students overcome the challenges of online learning. Students understand that a positive attitude is necessary to reap eLearning's benefits in the future. Students can find many positive points in Blackboard, for example, Increased availability, quick feedback, improved two-way interaction and time management. All these positive points can help students achieve the maximum benefit of using Blackboard and that would assist them to have a better learning experience.

Fourth Section: What are students' perceptions regarding the advantages and limitations of Blackboard?

Items	Strongly agree	agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Ease of access to course materials	54 %54	33 %33	10 %10	3 %3	0 %0
Promote group discussion and class participation	47 %47	39 %39	11 %11	2 %2	1 %1
Solicit Feedback from peers and the instructor	43 %43	42 %42	13 %13	2 %2	0 %0
students can check grades	56 %56	27 %27	12 %12	5 %5	0 %0
students can take part in collaborative group projects	56 %56	26 %26	13 %13	5 %5	0 %0
Instructors can check for plagiarism	41 %41	38 %38	16 %16	4 %4	1 %1
Professors don't know how to use it effectively	35 %35	29 %29	20 %20	11 %11	5 %5
Inconsistent use of Blackboard by instructors	37 %37	25 %25	19 %19	15 %15	4 %4
Frequent technical problems and access issues	35 %35	32 %32	26 %26	5 %5	2 %2
Not used to its potential by some instructors	32 %32	30 %30	30 %30	5 %5	3 %3
Missing face-to-face communication	41 %41	25 %25	29 %29	4 %4	1 %1
Having to check every day if something is posted	36 %35.5	35 %36.4	18 %19.6	3	4
System goes down frequently.	37 %37	26 %26	27 %27	10 %10	0 %0

The results indicate that students have a positive perception regarding the advantages and limitations of Blackboard. In Blackboard students have access to course materials, they can make group discussions and class participation, students can check grades, can take part in collaborative group projects. Both teachers and students should learn how to use Blackboard effectively and this can be achieved through training courses by the university. As was expected students still miss face-to-face classes, that's normal because the shift was quick and they are still not familiar with online classes.

The research results were limited to students without the teachers, further research should take into consideration investigating students' and teachers' performance, and the attitudes of EFL learners toward using Blackboard at Saudi EFL colleges.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, during the Covid-19 crisis Blackboard became a real phenomenon to enhance teaching and learning efforts. This issue attracts and motivates the researcher to dig deeper in investigating the effectiveness of using Blackboard in EFL teaching-learning at Taibah University, Ula campus. The data were collected using a questionnaire to answer the research questions. The results show that students are aware of the significance of online learning which can be taken in a synchronous or asynchronous environment. They believe that students and teachers can interact, manage their time, hold office hours, have discussions, and host guest speakers. They can also see what is new in all the courses and go directly to course activities. They enjoy direct access to course items including assignments and tests.

As far as the challenges that students face are concerned, the majority of students believe that it took them time to adapt to online learning because the shift from the traditional classroom to the virtual classroom was quick. Students with a traditional mindset find it difficult to adapt but they had to accept the new learning circumstances forced by the lockdown. Gradually they got used to online learning and discover its benefits. The most important obstacle they faced was a weak internet connection that did not help some of them catch up with their virtual classes. Another difficulty they faced was handling their files as some of them cannot operate basic programs. The university provided them with training courses to improve their skills.

The majority of participants agree that only a positive attitude can help students overcome the challenges of online learning. Increased availability, quick feedback, improved two-way interaction and time management are among the positive points students find in Blackboard. To use Blackboard effectively both instructors and students should learn how to use Blackboard's potential and this can be achieved through training courses by the university. Another important point that the results show is that despite their enthusiasm for online learning, students still miss the face to face communication. This means that university authorities should think of blended learning as a future form of learning.

The results of this study are expected to give a contribution to increasing the quality of English Language Teaching (ELT), especially in the use of virtual classes in language learning and teaching. Hopefully, it gives more understanding for educational practitioners to integrate technology in teaching and improve the use of Blackboard in online learning. Resolving the obstacles and problems raised by this study will be reflected in a better educational process in the post-Covid-19 era. The study can also be used as a reference for other researchers in terms of doing new research that is still related to online learning.

The practical benefits are divided into three. The first is for learners. The use of technology can invite learners to be more creative in delivering their ideas and in participating more actively in the learning process. Blackboard allows them to communicate with classmates and instructors, solicit feedback from peers and the instructor, and take part in collaborative group projects, discussions and work. It helps them to strengthen their language skills especially listening, speaking, and writing.

The second benefit is for instructors. The result of this research hopefully can give additional references for instructors in conducting the teaching-learning process. It is a known fact that Integrating technology in the language classroom will help teachers in managing the class, especially in time management. If instructors can use Blackboard to its potential and use it effectively, this will have a positive impact on the whole learning process. Teachers can post assignments or additional materials outside the classroom, can start a forum or post a link. In addition, teachers can have authentic, meaningful and purposeful materials for learners and can also check for plagiarism

The third benefit is for the researcher to gain deeper knowledge and understanding of integrating technology in language teaching particularly promoting the use of Blackboard in EFL.

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