

Instructional Technology and Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL): Insights Into Digital Literacy From Saudi Environment

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Abstract—This study delves into the utilization of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) in the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among students enrolled at the College of Languages and Translation, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU). Within the academic context, the incorporation of Learning Management Systems (LMSs), such as Blackboard, represents a significant aspect of educational technology aimed at enhancing the integrated teaching and learning process. This study employs a mixed-methods, descriptive-explanatory design, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. It collected, analyzed, and systematized data from 310 students, who represented various levels of English proficiency, drawn from a total population of 598 students. The study provided valuable insights into the capabilities and advantages of using LMSs as teaching aids in EFL education. Additionally, it offered recommendations for optimizing the use of these pedagogical tools, based on current research and practical suggestions from the students. This research also highlights several avenues for future investigation in the field of EFL instruction and educational technology.

Index Terms—instructional technology, Learning Management Systems (LMSs), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), pedagogical tools, student perceptions

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid adoption of digital technologies has transformed education globally, shifting from traditional methods toward online and computer-assisted learning. Virtual learning, initially used to complement in-person education, became essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for ensuring educational continuity. On March 8, 2020, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia introduced virtual classrooms and distance learning, with platforms like Blackboard Collaborate gaining widespread use. Blackboard has become the primary Learning Management System (LMS) in Saudi state universities, including Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU), where it is widely used by academic staff for teaching (Al Shammari, 2021; Elsayed, 2022).

As institutions increasingly adopt instructional technology, Saudi universities have supported this transition through workshops. These orientation sessions, organized by the Skills Development Centre (SDC) at IMSIU, help students navigate platforms, submit assignments, and engage with online materials, supporting both synchronous and asynchronous learning (Alharbi, 2020).

The current study focuses on a relatively under-explored area: the perceptions of Saudi Arabian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students regarding virtual learning environments (VLEs). It examines how these platforms affect their language proficiency and learning experiences. The study aims to address the gap in literature regarding how Saudi EFL learners interact with instructional technology, specifically whether they fully utilize VLE functionalities as intended. The research also aims to gather insights and recommendations from student feedback to improve future EFL instruction and guide further research into the integration of technology in language learning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic forced schools and universities across Saudi Arabia to transition abruptly from traditional in-person learning to online education. This rapid shift posed significant challenges for both students and teachers, unprepared for the new virtual learning environment (VLE) and facing issues such as platform difficulties, lack of experience, and poor internet connectivity (Al Maghaslah & Alsayari, 2020; Al Salih, 2020). The Ministry of Education faced concerns about student resistance, challenges in adapting to online learning, and the effectiveness of distance education (Oraif & Elyas, 2021). However, the ministry collaborated with various stakeholders to provide students with

the tools and resources needed to complete the academic year, resulting in the widespread adoption of VLEs in higher education (Agaçi, 2017; Dumler, 2022).

VLE platforms, such as Blackboard, became essential for managing course materials, assignments, and communications, offering both students' and instructors' flexibility and accessibility (Zhang et al., 2022). These platforms serve as information repositories and facilitate communication through channels such as email, discussion forums, and podcasts (Baker & Fong, 2023). VLEs have been praised for their user-friendly features, customizable options, and comprehensive resources that enhance online learning (Alsuhaibani, 2022; Mason & Rennie, 2021; Alturki et al., 2023).

Collaborative Constructionist method and online learning

Online learning has the potential to foster collaborative communities, encouraging students to engage in meaningful dialogue and learn collectively, unlike the traditional teacher-centered model (Kahn et al., 2017). This collaborative constructionist approach emphasizes student interaction under teacher guidance. White (2003) introduced the concept of "collaborative control", where students and teachers jointly manage the learning process. Lopes et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of collaborative tools and the ongoing development of educational software. Additionally, online learning environments can promote connectivism, enabling students to build networks, develop decision-making skills, and engage with diverse perspectives (Siemens, 2005). This aligns with the theory of transactional distance, which encourages autonomy through dialogue and interaction (Andrade, 2017). With advancements in technology, the need for student autonomy in online learning has evolved, as tools now enable greater engagement and support in digital classrooms.

Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) offer significant benefits, including improved time management, convenient access to learning materials (Zhang, 2022), and enhanced student participation and interaction (Chen et al., 2021). VLEs also support skill development, facilitate real-time feedback, and monitor academic progress (Bickle & Rucker, 2022), contributing to better academic performance (Gat et al., 2022). Dhawan (2020) describes VLEs as dynamic systems that reduce educational barriers and improve learning outcomes. Moreover, VLEs enhance student-instructor communication through features like announcements, chat, and discussion boards, enabling real-time interaction and formative assessments (Darko, 2021). These platforms offer a variety of tools, such as grade books, document management, and collaborative features, to support students' learning and academic success (Ouyang & Stanley, 2022; Gördeslioglu & Yüzer, 2022). Educational technology platforms enhance student engagement and performance by providing diverse tools like quizzes, class notes, and audio-visual resources (Pusuluri et al., 2018).

UTAUT Framework and Its Impact on EFL Learning Among University Students

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), introduced by Venkatesh et al. in 2003, offers a comprehensive framework for understanding technology adoption and usage. It integrates components from earlier models, including the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT). UTAUT explains how users perceive and adopt technology by examining factors such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and social influence. This model is particularly useful for evaluating the acceptance and effectiveness of technology-based language learning tools, such as Learning Management Systems (LMSs), in enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction at universities.

Studies applying the UTAUT model, such as those by Liu et al. (2010) and Al Lily et al. (2013), highlight factors that influence students' use of technology for EFL learning. Liu et al. found that students' intentions to use technology for language learning were strongly influenced by perceived usefulness, ease of use, and social support. The effectiveness of LMS platforms like Blackboard in EFL contexts has been further affirmed in research by Opre et al. (2022) and Vahedi et al. (2019), emphasizing the positive impact of technology-supported learning on student outcomes.

Instructional technology, particularly LMSs, is recognized for enhancing knowledge dissemination and increasing learning efficiency (Elsawy & Ahmed, 2019). LMSs like Blackboard offer benefits such as fostering collaborative learning, enabling continuous communication, providing timely feedback, and supporting skills development (Mothlaka, 2020). Research by Baig et al. (2020) and AlMoeather (2020) supports the idea that LMSs lead to improved student performance, higher academic achievement, and greater engagement in the learning process. Additionally, LMSs contribute to language skill development, including writing (Ta'amneh, 2020), reading (Nasr, 2021), and vocabulary (Alamer, 2020). Studies such as those by Whitmer et al. (2016) show that high-achieving students actively use LMS functionalities to enhance their learning. Given these benefits, it is clear that virtual learning environments (VLEs) such as LMSs will continue to play an integral role in modern education.

Students' Perspectives about EFL Virtual Instruction

While technology offers numerous benefits in education, it is not a one-size-fits-all solution, as various factors can significantly impact organizational performance. A crucial aspect is the perspective of students, as the success of any technological tool largely depends on user acceptance and support (Hancı et al., 2022). The perceived usefulness of technology (Gao & Bai, 2020) and the willingness of users to adopt new tools (Opoku & Enu-Kwesi, 2021) are essential for successful integration. Some studies have identified resistance among educators to implementing online platforms like Blackboard. For example, AlMekhlafy (2021) found that EFL students in their preparatory year held negative attitudes toward using Blackboard for virtual instruction. Similarly, Al-Nofaie (2021) reported that EFL students preferred traditional in-person classes over online formats during the COVID-19 pandemic. Alotaibi (2021) confirmed these findings, indicating a preference for conventional classrooms over virtual EFL classes.

In contrast, other research highlights the potential of virtual learning environments (VLEs). Ahmed and Mohammed (2021) found that students at Al-Jouf University favored activity-based traditional sessions over Blackboard-based learning but still acknowledged Blackboard's potential. Tamrat and Teferra (2022) noted moderate student satisfaction with e-learning, suggesting that adequate resources and effective instructional design are necessary for success.

Despite these challenges, many educators recognize the advantages of VLEs. Tonsmann (2021) demonstrated that VLEs support distance learning and improve student engagement when they receive proper training. Al-Sof (2022) observed that educational technologies like Blackboard contribute to high student satisfaction and positive learning outcomes. Similarly, studies by Anas (2021), AlSuhāibani (2021), and Khafaga (2021) reported positive student attitudes toward online learning platforms.

Satisfaction with LMSs is critical to their success, as positive student perceptions are linked to effective use in language learning (Dhawan, 2021; Yen, 2021). Research by AlMusharraf and Khahro (2021) and Malkawi et al. (2021) also found that well-designed LMSs outperform traditional methods in motivating students.

While LMSs have shown effectiveness in various learning environments, there is a gap in research regarding their use in Saudi EFL contexts. This study aims to explore EFL students' perceptions of LMS accessibility, utility, adoption, and challenges at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, aiming to improve the teaching experience. Accordingly, this research seeks to provide insights and responses to the following questions:

- 1) What role do LMSs, specifically Blackboard, play in enhancing the integrated teaching and learning process within the academic environment of EFL instruction?
- 2) How do students at the College of Languages and Translation, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University perceive the effectiveness of LMSs as teaching aids in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL)?
- 3) What are the challenges associated with utilizing LMSs as instructional tools in EFL?
- 4) What are students' suggestions for addressing the challenges they have encountered while using instructional technology in EFL learning?

III. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to explore students' perceptions of instructional technology. This approach, as recommended by Creswell and Poth (2021), enables a deeper analysis and understanding of the research questions. The study follows a structured process with distinct stages for quantitative and qualitative data analysis, which are then combined to provide a comprehensive view of the research problem, as advocated by Panke (2018). This study fills a gap in the existing literature, which mainly favors quantitative methods and lacks the in-depth insights qualitative research can offer. An electronic survey was used to collect data, which was analyzed and compared with prior studies to enhance the academic discussion.

Population and Sample

This study fills a contextual gap by focusing on a specific demographic: students from the College of Languages and Translation at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Previous studies have not focused on this particular student group and often concentrated on only one gender or English proficiency level. This study includes both male and female students with varying English proficiency levels, providing a broader perspective and addressing a geographical gap by being conducted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. A random sampling method selected 310 students from a population of 598, ensuring a 95% confidence level and a representative sample.

TABLE 1
BIOGRAPHY OF STUDENTS (N=310)

Variables	Group	Participants	Percentage
Gender	Female	161	52%
	Male	149	48%
Colleges	Science	177	57%
	Engineering	75	24%
	Medicine	58	19%
Level of English Proficiency	Advanced	147	47%
	Intermediate	118	38%
	Beginner	45	15%
Ability to use LMSs such as Blackboard	Poor	9	3%
	Fair	17	5%
	Good	132	43%
	Excellent	152	49%
	All	310	100%

Source: Data provided by IMSIU Colleges

Instruments

Quantitative data were primarily gathered through closed-ended questions in a single questionnaire administered to students of both genders. The first section collected essential demographic information, which included participants' gender, college affiliation, and level of English proficiency. A five-point Likert scale was used to assess variations in opinions regarding students' experiences with different categories of visual aids. The final section included two open-

ended questions designed to gather further recommendations from participants about the challenges they encountered and potential solutions. These questions focused on any additional difficulties participants may have encountered while studying EFL virtually, as well as potential solutions they proposed to improve the effectiveness of their online EFL learning. Averages were calculated using statistical operations on the collected data for analysis.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Three experts in Applied Linguistics and TEFL validated the questionnaire. Once approval was obtained from university officials, the survey was hosted on QuestionPro.com for data collection. During the second semester of 2021, responses were monitored for one month to ensure the desired sample size. The data were analyzed with SPSS software. To ensure reliability, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated, and Pearson's correlation was used to assess internal consistency. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations, were used for analysis. The reliability of each questionnaire section was evaluated, with Cronbach's Alpha values reported based on student responses.

TABLE 2
CRONBACH'S ALPHA COEFFICIENTS FOR STUDENTS' SURVEY

Themes	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Effective role played by LMSs, specifically the blackboard in enhancing the integrated teaching and learning process within the academic environment of EFL instruction	0.932	11
Students' perception of the effectiveness of LMSs as Teaching Aids in EFL	0.974	16
Students' challenges in the utilization of LMSs as Teaching Aids in EFL	0.925	12
Students' insights and recommendations regarding the capabilities and benefits of using LMSs as teaching aids in learning EFL.	0.745	4

The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed with coefficients ranging from 0.745 to 0.932, indicating high reliability. To assess internal consistency, correlation coefficients were calculated between the items and their section totals, confirming alignment. For the open-ended questions, a five-step process was followed:

Exporting data to an XLS file.

Categorizing responses into broad groups (positive, neutral, and negative).

Creating subcategories within these groups for detailed analysis.

Double-checking responses for accurate categorization.

Visualizing the categorized data after cleaning.

Out of 200 respondents, 160 answered the first open-ended question, and 145 answered the second. The qualitative data were analyzed using inductive coding and descriptive statistics to identify emerging themes.

IV. RESULTS

With respect to the first question regarding the effective role of Learning Management Systems (LMS), particularly Blackboard, in enhancing the integrated teaching and learning process within the EFL academic environment, the following table presents the mean and standard deviation of students' responses concerning the most impactful features.

TABLE 3
EFFECTIVE FEATURES OF LMSs SPECIFICALLY BLACKBOARD IN EFL

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Discussion Board	3.07	1.283
2. Emails	3.09	1.314
3. Recorded Presentation	3.21	1.347
4. Learning resources and related activities	3.27	1.315
5. Announcements	3.44	1.16
5. Course Materials	3.44	1.216
6. Online practice (on grammar, vocabulary & pronunciation)	3.49	1.232
7. Writing Portfolios	3.56	1.13
8. Practice Tests	3.61	1.309
9. Assessment (Feedback & Grading)	3.72	1.163
10. Quizzes	3.75	1.203
Overall	3.4	0.884

The arithmetic means for items 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 ranged from 3.44 to 3.75, indicating a level of effectiveness categorized as "Very Effective", exceeding the overall average of 3.4. In contrast, the arithmetic means for items 1, 2, 3, and 4 ranged from 3.07 to 3.27, reflecting a level of effectiveness described as "Moderately Effective", which is below the overall average of 3.4.

Regarding the second question about students' perceptions of the effectiveness of LMSs as instructional tools in EFL, the data presented in the following table illustrate their satisfaction levels with these systems.

TABLE 4
STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH LMSs IN EFL LEARNING

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. LMSs enhance my ability to communicate in English.	3.37	1.167
2. LMSs boost my motivation.	3.45	1.113
3. LMSs create an enjoyable environment for language learning.	3.46	1.083
4. LMSs foster collaboration among students.	3.47	1.124
5. LMSs contribute to improving my academic performance in English.	3.47	1.114
6. LMSs help develop my independence in learning.	3.53	1.043
7. LMSs promote interaction between students and teachers.	3.58	1.048
8. LMSs deepen my comprehension of the subject matter.	3.58	1.027
9. LMSs are my preferred platform for e-learning.	3.58	1.069
10. LMSs allow me to receive prompt feedback and grades from teachers.	3.61	1.081
11. LMSs are beneficial as a supplement to traditional classroom teaching.	3.66	1.041
12. LMSs encourage active participation in learning.	3.66	1.054
13. LMSs emphasize time management through strict deadlines.	3.69	1.051
14. LMSs help me save time.	3.7	1.077
15. LMSs are user-friendly.	3.73	1.147
16. LMSs can be accessed at any time and from any location.	3.76	1.102
Overall	3.58	0.833

The average response for item 1 was 3.37, indicating a neutral perception compared to the other items in this section. In contrast, the averages for the remaining items ranged from 3.45 to 3.76, reflecting general agreement among students. Notably, the averages for items 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16, which ranged from 3.61 to 3.76, were higher than the overall average of 3.58.

Regarding the third question about the challenges students face in utilizing LMSs as instructional tools in EFL, the majority of responses were predominantly neutral, as illustrated in the following table.

TABLE 5
CHALLENGES FACED BY STUDENTS IN USING LMSs AS TEACHING TOOLS FOR EFL

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. LMSs are challenging to navigate.	2.54	1.22
2. LMSs do not offer additional course materials.	2.9	1.153
3. LMSs are time-consuming to use.	2.97	1.226
4. LMSs do not cater to diverse English language learning styles.	3.02	1.161
5. There is insufficient training on using visual aid tools.	3.07	1.148
6. The instructions for using LMSs are unclear.	3.08	1.107
7. LMSs do not foster interaction among students.	3.08	1.114
8. I encounter technical difficulties when using visual aid tools.	3.09	1.189
9. There is inadequate technical support to address issues.	3.11	1.146
10. I experience internet connectivity problems.	3.12	1.214
11. The demands of LMSs create significant pressure on me.	3.15	1.208
12. LMSs increase the workload associated with the curriculum.	3.15	1.16
Overall	3.03	0.871

Table 5 illustrates the key challenges students encounter when using various categories of visual aids. The average score for item 1, which is 2.54, indicates that students generally do not find LMSs difficult to use. The item averages ranged from 2.54 to 3.15, with an overall average of 3.03, reflecting a neutral stance.

To further address the third question regarding the challenges associated with utilizing LMSs as instructional tools in EFL, the researchers conducted qualitative coding of themes based on the responses to the first open-ended question included in Section 4 of the survey. The open-ended question, "Please use this space to tell us about any other challenges you think you are facing that we did not mention in the above list," received responses from 200 participants, representing 78.43% of the total sample size.

Regarding the difficulties students face when utilizing the LMSs in EFL, there were certain commonalities among their responses to the first open-ended question. Students indicated that they did not struggle with issues mentioned in the questionnaire, such as a lack of technological expertise and training, but did report problems with slow or unreliable internet access. They also identified other challenges, including difficulty uploading or downloading large files, issues related to home and family, physical and mental challenges, and problems with passwords.

In response to the fourth question regarding students' suggestions for addressing the challenges they have encountered while using instructional technology in EFL learning, the following table presents potential solutions to the most common difficulties identified by the participants in the survey.

TABLE 6
STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING ISSUES WITH LMS USAGE

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I would appreciate additional training on how to effectively use educational technology.	3	1.267
2. I seek assistance from my peers whenever I encounter issues with using educational technology.	3.46	1.137
3. Instructors provide guidance on how to use educational technology.	3.55	1.017
4. Instructors motivate students to utilize educational technology.	3.71	1.068
Overall	3.43	0.792

For instance, Item 1 received an average score of 3, reflecting a neutral stance, suggesting that students have some prior experience with instructional technology. Item 2, with an average of 3.46, indicates that students are inclined to seek assistance from one another when facing challenges with Blackboard. Item 3, with an average of 3.55, shows that students generally agree that instructors have provided explanations on how to use LMSs. Lastly, Item 4, with an average of 3.71, confirms that students feel faculty members have actively encouraged them to utilize instructional technology. To explore students' insights on the capabilities and benefits of using LMSs for EFL learning, the researchers analyzed responses to an open-ended question in the survey, receiving 190 replies from 75% of the sample. A three-stage qualitative coding approach (open, axial, and selective coding) was used to identify key themes, focusing on students' recommendations to address challenges in online learning. Students highlighted the need for reliable internet connections and suggested that the university provide laptops or tablets to those without access. Regarding LMS usability, students disagreed with the notion that LMSs were difficult to use, with a neutral score (2.54) for the item on whether LMSs were time-consuming or stressful. The overall responses indicated that LMSs were perceived as minimally difficult, reinforcing that ease of use is crucial for technology adoption in educational settings (Essel & Wilson, 2017).

V. DISCUSSION

The study's findings indicated that students favored LMSs as instructional tools for learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) due to their ease of use, flexibility, and accessibility. They appreciated these platforms as versatile resources that could be accessed anytime and from any location. These results align with previous studies, such as Malkawi et al. (2021) and Almusharraf and Khahro (2020).

Perceived utility plays a crucial role in the acceptance and adoption of any technological tool (Gao & Bai, 2020). When assessing the effectiveness of LMSs, specifically Blackboard, in enhancing the integrated teaching and learning process within the EFL academic environment, students indicated that features such as discussion boards, email communication, recorded presentations, learning tools, and related activities were moderately beneficial. In contrast, announcements, course materials, online grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation practice, writing portfolios, practice exams, feedback and grading, and quizzes were perceived as highly useful.

Particularly, emails, learning resources, associated activities, course materials, reading and listening comprehension tasks, recorded presentations, assessments, grammar and vocabulary quizzes, discussion board assignments, and practice tests were considered very effective for learning English. Notably, announcements were regarded as extremely effective. Overall, these findings corroborate previous research regarding students' general satisfaction with virtual learning environments (VLE) compared to traditional classrooms. The results of this study resonate with numerous other studies that enhance understanding of the efficacy of technology-supported learning in educational contexts (Opre et al., 2022; Vahedi et al., 2019) and affirm the effectiveness of LMSs, particularly Blackboard, in classrooms, fostering positive perceptions among students (Al-Sof, 2022; Rahmatullah, 2021; Malkawi et al., 2021; AlMoeather, 2020; AlMusharraf & Khahro, 2020; Baig et al., 2020; Tamrat & Teferra, 2022).

While the findings of this study align with those of previous research, they also revealed conflicting results, contributing to a gap in the literature. Unlike earlier studies that reported negative perceptions of online learning (AlMekhlafy, 2021) and a preference for traditional in-class instruction over online formats (Al-Nofaie, 2021), this study found that students perceived discussion boards, emails, recorded presentations, and learning resources as moderately helpful. Some students suggested that the effectiveness of announcements over email might explain this favorable view. However, other participants noted that discussion boards and recorded presentations were only graded on a minimal scale, which may have affected their perceived utility. Some respondents also considered educational materials as supplementary, relying on IQ Skills for Success Books. Despite this, they rated announcements, teaching materials, virtual training on grammatical rules, vocabulary and phonetics, writing portfolios, practice exams, evaluation feedback, and quizzes as moderately effective, achieving an overall mean of 3.4 with a significance level of 0.884. Additionally, students proposed incorporating more video explanations of English course content, providing concise guidance on effective LMS usage in virtual EFL classes, and offering more creative tasks that diverge from traditional teaching models.

User acceptance is critical for the successful adoption of any technological tool (Opoku & Enu-Kwesi, 2019). Regarding their perceptions of LMS effectiveness as teaching aids in EFL, participants reported a neutral acceptance and satisfaction level of 3.35, suggesting that these tools could enhance communicative competence in English. Nevertheless, item averages ranged from 2.43 to 3.74, indicating a general agreement on acceptance and satisfaction. The study concluded that LMSs also facilitated e-learning tools, prompt teacher feedback, and were beneficial supplements to classroom instruction.

The responses to both closed-ended and open-ended questions underscored the effective role of visual aids, particularly Blackboard, in enhancing the integrated teaching and learning process within the EFL academic environment. This included promoting productive learning, saving time, fostering encouragement, and providing open access anytime and anywhere, with an overall average of 3.56 and a significance level of 0.813. The qualitative and quantitative findings highlighted the importance of LMSs in facilitating successful teaching and learning operations. Due to their significant impact on enhancing achievement, communication, interaction, creativity, feedback, engagement, and active learning, students expressed a high level of satisfaction with LMS usage. These positive pedagogical effects were supported by previous research (Darko, 2021; Majewska & Vereen, 2022; Malkawi et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2021).

In response to the inquiry regarding the challenges students faced while using LMSs as teaching aids in EFL, participants unanimously disagreed with the notion that visual aid categories were difficult to navigate. This finding contrasts with previous research that identified the complexity of using any LMS as a significant barrier (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2014; Tonsmann, 2014). The overall average rating was 3.03, indicating a neutral stance on the remaining items. Students did not perceive LMSs as particularly time-consuming or stressful. They reported some trouble connecting to the internet, as noted in responses to the first open-ended question. Students also mentioned difficulties related to excessive screen usage, claiming that despite enjoying online English lectures, they frequently experienced headaches from extended screen time. Some also reported eye strain and occasional challenges with concentration.

Family-related issues also emerged as challenges in the students' comments. For example, some had to attend EFL classes while their families were watching TV, or they had visitors who made it difficult to focus. Others mentioned the noise made by younger siblings, requiring them to turn off their microphones. In these situations, students found it hard to concentrate fully on the lecture. However, in response to the second open-ended question, students proposed solutions for these family-related challenges. They expressed the desire for more support from family members and a better learning environment, with suggestions such as improving internet services.

Despite these challenges, the benefits of using LMSs as teaching aids in EFL learning outweighed the drawbacks. Two key benefits included the ability to complete more exams and have more free time at home. Students also appreciated the ability to review lesson recordings and access additional materials. They mentioned that being able to look up unfamiliar vocabulary during lectures was another advantage. Additionally, students noted that there were no clothing code issues in online classes. They often had the option to turn off their cameras, allowing them to attend class in more casual attire, such as pajamas or shorts, and with unstyled hair. Regarding the challenges in uploading and downloading large files, some students noted that these issues were a significant hurdle, particularly when files exceeded the allowed size. They also mentioned that passwords sometimes did not work properly. Additionally, some students expressed a lack of motivation, preferring in-person interactions with instructors and classmates. Nevertheless, they agreed that LMSs fostered interaction and catered to their learning preferences. The issue of digital self-efficacy was also raised, with some students stating that they did not require formal training to navigate LMSs, as the instructions were clear, and they did not face technical difficulties. Despite lacking prior experience with LMS platforms like Blackboard, students reported confidence in using the system, citing the availability of support. These responses appear to contradict some research suggesting the need for better infrastructure and training programs for effective LMS use (Almekhlafy, 2021; Al-Nofaie, 2021). However, the findings of this study align with previous research showing positive outcomes in terms of student-instructor interaction, timely feedback, formal assessment, academic achievement, and improved grades (Chen et al., 2021).

The results of the current study align with previous research indicating that Learning Management Systems (LMSs) positively impact various aspects of student engagement and learning, including teamwork, communication, active learning, interaction, comprehension, competence, responsibility, involvement, motivation, and trust (Anas, 2021; Lopes et al., 2020). This is in line with the fundamental principles of constructivism, which emphasize collaboration and communication as key drivers of academic growth. In response to open-ended questions, students generally expressed the view that LMSs play a positive role in enhancing language acquisition. However, some studies suggest that LMSs should not replace traditional face-to-face learning but rather serve as a supplementary tool that fosters an online community, thereby enriching student participation and overall learning experiences.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the use of Learning Management Systems (LMSs) as educational tools for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among students at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU). The results indicated that students generally found LMSs easy to use, beneficial, valuable, and non-demanding. The various features of LMSs were highly advantageous, facilitating learning by making it more accessible, enjoyable, and engaging. Specifically, LMSs proved effective in helping students learn and practice key aspects of the language, such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. However, students also reported challenges, including difficulties accessing virtual classrooms, poor internet connectivity, and the added burden these issues placed on users. Additionally, many students struggled with technological literacy, which hindered their ability to fully explore and utilize the full range of LMS features available. Despite these challenges, the university administration had customized and made the LMS system available for students' use.

In conclusion, assessing students' perceptions of LMS usage is essential to better familiarize them with emerging technological tools, diversify learning approaches, and enhance overall academic performance. This study addressed a key topic regarding students' opinions on utilizing LMSs in EFL learning, and its findings may contribute to the improvement of both teaching and learning in this field. The results suggest that certain elements of LMSs could be more effectively integrated into EFL instruction, while others have already had a favorable impact on language acquisition. These findings may offer valuable insights into the application of technology in EFL learning and could potentially serve as a protective approach for future educational strategies. Undoubtedly, the use of modern technology in EFL instruction, such as Blackboard, provides students with access to up-to-date knowledge and skills, as well as a sophisticated method of international communication.

Limitations of the Study

This study had several limitations. First, it focused exclusively on the perceptions of students at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU) regarding the use of Learning Management Systems (LMSs) as teaching aids for English as a Foreign Language (EFL). As a result, the findings are specific to IMSIU and may not be generalizable to other universities in Saudi Arabia. Future research could benefit from including a broader range of institutions and academic disciplines to explore whether students' perspectives on LMS usage evolve over time. This could yield more comprehensive insights and foster further discussion on the topic. Additionally, further investigations are needed to examine the specific challenges students encounter when using LMSs and to explore potential solutions for enhancing the effectiveness of these systems in EFL learning.

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