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The important of using blackboard learning management system on EFL Learners'

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A Case Study of University Students, Taif University, Saudi Arabia

Abstract
System Blackboard Learning Management is a web-based technology equips an instructor with a better way to plan, design and deliver content, monitor and assess students' performance. This study aims to determine whether the blackboard learning management system is as an effective tool to improve EFL learners' skills, find out if the use of the blackboard learning management system can improve EFL learners' computer skills. Identify the different tasks that EFL learners can perform when they use the blackboard learning management system. The analysis has led to these results: Blackboard LMS helps to develop knowledge of computer and internet, blackboard LMS helps improve computer skills, the Blackboard LMS helps to use time effectively. This study recommended that blackboard learning management system instruction should integrate into the EFL teaching methods course, EFL teachers should know how to use the blackboard-based instruction in their teaching, EFL teachers should empower students by creating learner-centered environment in which they are actively and engaged in the teaching process via blackboard learning management system, the activities of the EFL teaching methods course should be adapted to suit blackboard.

Keywords: blackboard learning managements system

1. Introduction
Blackboard learning management system has become a common feature in the contemporary higher education institutions worldwide. The paucity of learning management system literature shows that the level of interest and the knowledge among the students towards the importance and usefulness of this system and the opportunities it can bring to the teaching and learning are the central factors affecting the degree of the use of learning management system in higher education. Blackboard learning management system has adopted widely in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions, nevertheless there is no strong and detailed data regarding the subject in this context, which can impede future development. In this regard, EFL students at Taif University are chosen as the main subjects of this study to trace back the impact of the blackboard learning management system on EFL learners' skills.
According to Hall (2001) Blackboard Learning Management System is a set of software tools designed for providing online teaching and learning in most of higher educational institutions. Blackboard Learning Management System is a web-based technology equips an instructor with a better way to plan, design and deliver content, monitor and assess students' performance. Learning management system can also provide students with the ability to use some interactive features such as discussion forums, chat rooms for real time discussion, electronic mails, facilities to submit assignments electronically and taking quizzes and tests online (Gronlund, 2002) [12].

1.1 Objective of the Study
1. To determine whether the blackboard learning management system is as an effective tool to improve EFL learners' skills.
2. To find out if the use of the blackboard learning management system can improve EFL learners' computer skills.
3. To identify the different tasks that EFL learners can perform when they use the blackboard learning management system.

1.2 Questions of the Study
1. In what ways do students consider the blackboard learning management system as an effective tool to improve their EFL skills?
2. To what extend does the blackboard learning management system is effective on improving the EFL learners' computer skills?
3. What are the different tasks that EFL learners use the blackboard learning management system for?

2. Literature review
The Blackboard or popularly known as Learning Management System (LMS), in the community of higher institutions is an online portal that connects lecturers and students. Learning Management System (LMS) plays a central role in the web-based e-learning scenario. It connects learning contents and learners together in a standardized manner. Manages users, learning materials in the form of objects in Content Management System (CMS) and learning events, in addition to, it manages and administers learning progress and keep track on learning performance as well as it directs, facilitates and administers administrative tasks and student participation in e-learning materials (Recesso, 2001:1436-1438) [11].

2.1 Definition
Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS) is a software application or Web-based technology used to plan, implement, and assess a specific learning process. Typically, a learning management system provides an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitor

student participation, and assess student performance. A learning management system also provides students with the ability to use interactive features such as threaded discussions, video conferencing, and discussion forums (Cole & Foster, 2008:25) [3]. LMS (also referred to as Virtual Learning Environments, Digital Learning Environments, Course Management Systems or Electronic Learning Environments) are web-based applications, running on a server and accessible with a web browser from any location with an Internet connection. LMS presents educators with tools for the administrative support of learning processes (recording assessment results, agenda, and document management). De Smet & Schellens, (2009: 12-13) [4] says that:

> *"The facilitation of communication processes between school board, teachers, students and parents; electronic support of learning processes (knowledge collaboration, contact sessions, feedback module) and the design and implementation of course material (e.g., by bundling and/or sequencing learning objects into learning paths)"*.

LMS gives educators tools to create online course websites, and provide access to learning materials (Cole & Foster, 2008: 26) [3]. LMS find their origins in the late nineties. Nevertheless, the current commercial market leader Blackboard was founded in 1997. Their open source opponent Moodle was established in 1999 (Delta Initiative, 2009) [5]. At the start, individual educators also adopted 'home-made' solutions, combining a number of basic tools such as navigation, text forums, roles, etc. By 2004, most universities felt a need to centralize their e-learning systems and moved to a single, centrally hosted and supported environment Weller, (2010: 65) [7]. Today, most LMS provide a number of basic features and a set of specific tools and functionalities to support learning.

2.3 Types of blackboard learning management system

There are different types of blackboard learning management system such as:

2.3.1 Blackboard collaborate

Blackboard collaborate is a system that allows participants to collaborate online in real time. CLMS has been designed with educational uses in mind and has a multitude of features including:

1. Audio-conferencing
2. Video-conferencing (allowing up to six simultaneous web-cams to be viewed)
3. Real-time polling and quizzes (including multiple-choice questions)
4. Application sharing (allowing applications on one computer to be seen by all participants)
5. Text chatting (instant messaging)
6. Playing of audio and video files
7. File transfer
8. Whiteboard (a shared space that everyone can see, allowing attendees to, e.g., draw/write on and import graphics, photos, and PowerPoint files)
9. Shared web browsing called "web tour" (allowing attendees to follow one person as they browse the web)
10. Break-out rooms (for small-group discussions and collaboration)
11. Recording of sessions (allowing playback at a later time) and capturing of content generated in a session, e.g., text-chat and whiteboard (Blackboard, 1997-2011).

2.3.1.1 Benefits of Blackboard Collaborate

The following are the benefits from using blackboard collaborate

1. It can help build learner peer collaboration and a sense of community, particularly with distance learning/work-based learners
2. It used to support a wide range of teaching/learning methods and styles, potentially in highly engaging and collaborative forms with seamless integration with each attendee's desktop computing
3. Recording of sessions allows learners to access them anytime, e.g., to help re-enforce the learning and all participants can save the Whiteboard, text-chats, and screen images.
4. It allows external participants cost-effectively in sessions, e.g., external experts, external examiners, mentors, supervisors, assessors, and interviewees.
5. It extends geographical reach to anyone with an Internet connection and computer
6. It provides greater flexibility to arrange sessions cost-effectively without participants having to travel as well as providing potential savings in travel costs.
7. It can be used in a multitude of ways in addition to teaching, learning, and assessment, e.g., to support collaborative working (thereby potentially increasing staff efficiency), running of online conferences, socializing, staff professional development, and "web-casting" of workshops, seminars, and interviews.
8. It combined and integrated with other e-learning methods, e.g., VLEs (Virtual Learning Environments), asynchronous discussions, and wikis.
9. Blackboard Collaborate is a multi-platform device, e.g., PCs (personal computers), Apples, and Linux-based systems, therefore most participants are likely to be able to access it. Furthermore, it works even on low-bandwidth connections.
10. Its use minimizes the impact on the environment (minimizing travel and printing).
11. The tool, blackboard collaborate, supports online synchronous collaboration.
12. The blackboard collaborate platform enables lecturers to implement instructor-led synchronous and asynchronous online training into their teaching and learning methodologies;
13. Blackboard collaborate allows students or lecturers to launch a synchronous or an asynchronous session directly from blackboard learning management system (Blackboard, 1997-2011).

2.3.2 Dynamic Blackboard

Dynamic blackboard can be used for interactions and exchanges with the instructor Dziuban, *et al.*, (2015:1-2) [8]. It can also be used for interactions among students through the use of WIMBA, WIKI and discussion forum. On the interactions side, the blackboard facilitates communication between students and the instructor through announcements,

a discussion board and email or instant messaging Alturki, *et al*, (2016:33-34) [1]. Moreover, it improves communication through discussions and virtual classroom Nii, (1986:39-40).This type of blackboard allows students to download course materials like videos and interactive PowerPoint slides, Hong (2002: 276). Dynamic blackboard can also contain forms students can use to order textbooks and make payments (Dziuban, *et al*., 2015: 3) [8]. This type of blackboard can contain registration forms allowing students to join discussion groups and participate in education forums (Lata and Luhach, 2014:18-20) [10].

2.3.3 Integrative Blackboard

Integrative blackboard can contain all functions found in the interactive blackboard Hong (2002:278). In addition, it can be integrated to software like "Respondus" which allows students to take exams on Blackboard. The exams are then automatically graded by Blackboard (Alturki, *et al*, 2016:33) [1]. The students' grades are automatically reported in the grade center of Blackboard (Alturki, *et al*, 2016:34) [1]. The integrative Blackboard can also be compatible or connected to software like "Adobe Connect Professional", allowing students to attend a synchronized lecture online. Sometimes, the integration between Blackboard and "Adobe Connect professional" can allow students to attend hybrid classroom sessions when some students are online and some are on-campus. For this type of Blackboard, security can be an issue. Security can be defined in this context like the degree of confidentiality and authentication the college perceives students may have on its Blackboard (Dziuban, *et al*., 2015:3) [8]. The students should feel safe in their educational activities they are conducting on the blackboard. Some authors suggest to have some of the security standards and protocols for the Internet used to protect data and privacy visible on blackboard to the students (Lata and Luhach, 2014: 20) [10].

By contrast, college administrators and teachers require some control safeguards against plagiarism on Blackboard, especially, when students take exams using proctors. Actually, taking the test online may require a proctor. A proctor designation procedure will be available on blackboard. But how safe that procedure can be is another challenge faced by this type of blackboard. Another challenge presented by this type of blackboard is the seriousness of the students. Most of the time the instructors could not see students through the presentation videoconference. Some students keep the video on but are not attending the course session. The last challenge is the technical issues during the synchronized class meetings (Hong, 2002: 268) [9]. Many universities have put in place technical support teams to overcome or minimize these technical challenges.

2.3.4 Measuring Students' Performance

Many studies have measured student academic performance using the final grades scored in the particular courses Firat (2016:75-76) [6]. Some studies used GPAs (grade point averages) to identify students who perform well or not. In this regard, qualitative study measures to show how the use of Blackboard can contribute to passing or failing in EFL classes. More specifically, qualitative study adopts the basic level of understanding of the students, the students' perception of the exams' levels of difficulty, the motivation of the students in classes, the frequency of the students seeking feedback in classes, and the level of class participation of the students.

Table 1: Source; Issues in Information Systems Volume 16, Issue II, (2015: 209-216)

Static Blackboard Category	**Lack of self-discipline**
	Lack of a learning atmosphere
	High level of relying on solutions key
	Lack of class attendance
	Increased learning by reading
Dynamic Blackboard category	Availability of information in real time
	Quick and instant grading
	Improved communication
	Improved two-way interactions
Integrative Blackboard category	Synchronized online sessions.
	Online classroom discussions and problem solving
	Automated traditional face-to-face learning
	Effective application of the accounting rules, principles and assumptions
	Security and privacy concerns
EFL Students Performance	Students class participation
	Quick feedback
	Boost of the basic level of understanding
	Motivation

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample of the study

A random sample allows a known probability that each elementary unit will be chosen. It is sometimes referred to as a probability sample. In this study the sampling frame includes 100 English language learners, but the actual sample has 100 English language learners. The 100 subjects are of similar age, ranges from 19 to 24 years at the time of conducting the study. The sample has been chosen randomly from the Deanship of the Supportive Studies. They are all Saudi studying English as a foreign language and they are all homogeneous with regard to age, sex, ethnicity, mother tongue, exposure to English, formal educational and cultural background.

3.2 Instruments of data collection

The researcher used one tool to collect the data for this study. This tool is, a questionnaire for students.

3.3 Procedures

The questionnaire is designed and used as a tool to collect data for investigating the topic the impact of using blackboard learning managements system on EFL learners' performance, at university level this questionnaire is distributed to the EFL students at Taif university.

4. Data analysis and discussion

Table 4.1

Options	Frequency	Percent
Never	16	16.0
Sometimes	16	16.0
Often	18	18.0
Usually	19	19.0
Always	31	31.0
Total	100	100.0

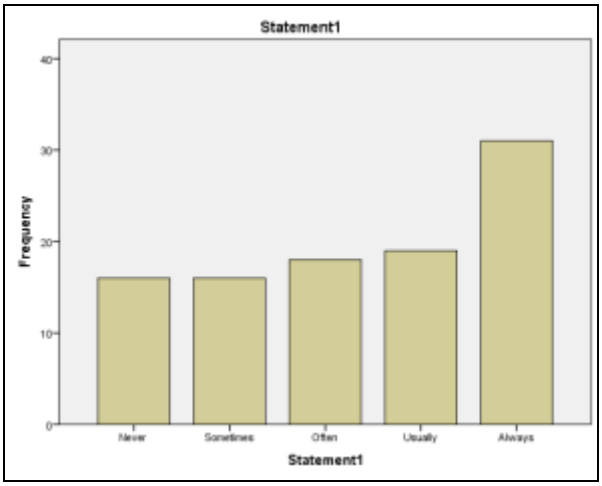

Fig 4.1

Table and diagram (4.1) show that, (31%) of the respondents always with the statement, this means that blackboard LMS helps me to develop knowledge of computer and internet, therefore the statement is accepted.

Table 4.2

Options	Frequency	Percent
Never	16	16.0
Sometimes	13	13.0
Often	17	17.0
Usually	27	27.0
Always	27	27.0
Total	100	100.0

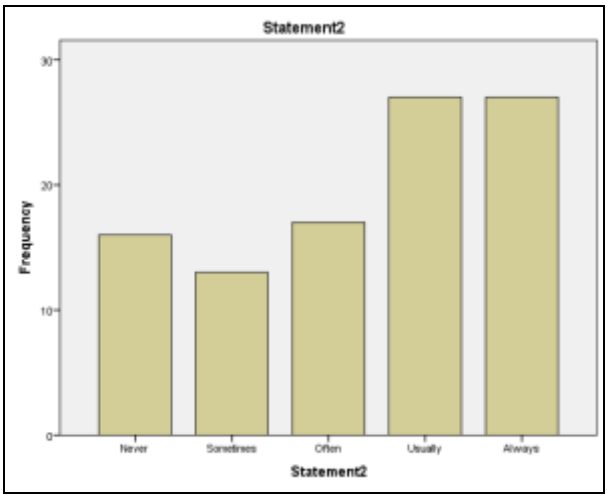

Fig 4.2

Table and diagram (4.2) show that, (27%) of the respondents usually with the statement, (27%) always this means that blackboard LMS helps me improve my computer skills, therefore the statement is accepted.

Table 4.3

Options	Frequency	Percent
Never	6	6.0
Sometimes	15	15.0
Often	17	17.0
Usually	28	28.0
Always	34	34.0
Total	100	100.0

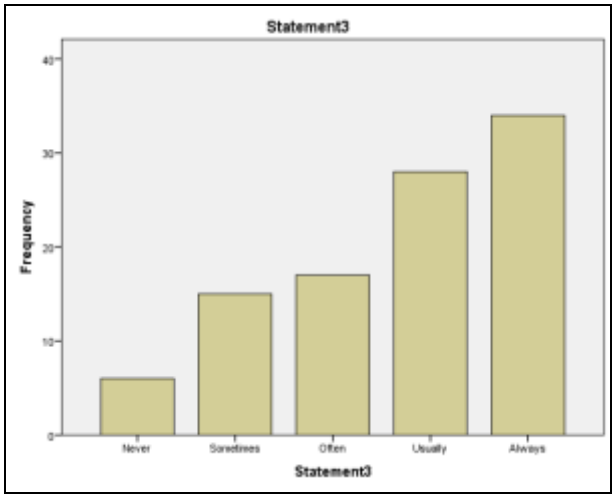

Fig 4.3

Table and diagram (4.3) show that, (34%) of the respondents always with the statement, this means that the Blackboard LMS helps me to use my time effectively, therefore the statement is accepted.

Table 4.4

Options	Frequency	Percent
Never	37	37.0
Sometimes	18	18.0
Often	17	17.0
Usually	13	13.0
Always	15	15.0
Total	100	100.0

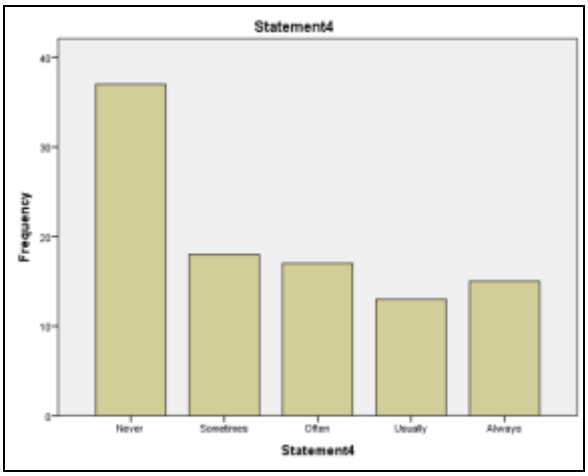

Fig 4.4

It is clear from the above table (4.4) and figure (4.4) that (37%) participants who never that It is difficult to handle and therefore is frustrating to use, (18%) sometimes, often (17%), usually (13%) and (15%) always.

Table 4.5

Options	Frequency	Percent
Never	31	31.0
Sometimes	24	24.0
Often	19	19.0
Usually	13	13.0
Always	13	13.0
Total	100	100.0

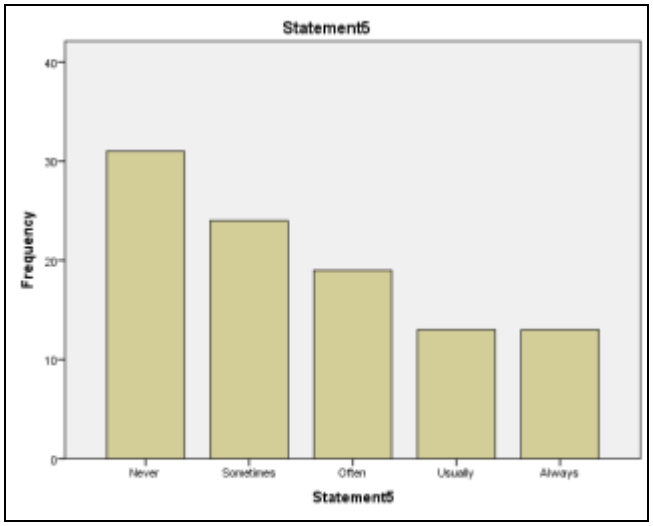

Fig 4.5

Table and diagram (4.5) show that, (31%) of the respondents never with the statement, this means that the instructions provided on Blackboard LMS are difficult for me to follow, therefore the statement is accepted.

5. Conclusion, findings and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The objective of this study is to conduct qualitative research to understand the effectiveness of using the Blackboard Learning Management Systems on EFL learners' performance at the Deanship of Supportive Studies, Taif University. This objective raised important research questions. To answer these questions, the researcher used a questionnaire as a main tool for collecting the data from the students. The data analyzed by SSPS to determine what categories are emerged from the data to draw conclusions. The results found that the use of Blackboard Learning Management Systems is effective for EFL learners and improve their English skills. In terms of practical implications, all instructors and students can use the results of this study. The results will also allow the EFL instructors to know what Blackboard characteristics are appropriate to improve EFL students' learning ability.

5.2 Findings

1. Blackboard LMS helps to develop knowledge of computer and internet.
2. Blackboard LMS helps improve computer skills.
3. The Blackboard LMS helps to use time effectively.

5.3 Recommendations

Blackboard learning management system instruction should integrate into the EFL teaching methods course.

EFL teachers should know how to use the blackboard-based instruction in their teaching.

EFL teachers should empower students by creating learner-centered environment in which they are actively and engaged in the teaching process via blackboard learning management system.

The activities of the EFL teaching methods course should be adapted to suit blackboard.

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