

Impact of Using Blackboard on Vocabulary Acquisition: KKU Students' Perspective

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Abstract—This research aims to investigate the impact of employing the learning management system (Blackboard) on attitudes of King Khalid University (KKU) students. The research examines the students' knowledge and skills in employing the Blackboard in their learning process, and investigates the elements, which influence the students' attitude and performance in using Blackboard in classroom instruction from their perspectives. To this end, the author has selected a sample of 34 of KKU students, where they have been requested to complete a 14-item questionnaire. Findings of the current study revealed that KKU students faced several difficulties in learning English language vocabulary. Consequently, the students have developed negative attitudes towards English vocabulary. The study found that Blackboard had a little influence on the attitude and performance of the KKU students in vocabulary learning. The study also showed that there were some limitations in the use of Blended Learning. It needs an action plan in order to make supportive learning opportunities for the university students.

Index Terms—Blackboard, performance, attitude, English vocabulary

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning a foreign language covers multiple areas of study. Yet, there is a general consensus amongst linguists, educators and researchers that vocabulary is one of the most significant components of language teaching and learning. Indeed, according to Nushi and Jenabzadeh (2016, p51) what differentiates intermediate and advanced learners of a foreign language “lies not in how complex their grammatical knowledge is but in how expanded and developed their mental lexicon is”. Acquiring a large vocabulary is essential for learners to be able to convey thoughts, express ideas and successfully communicate with others in the target language. Yet, teaching and learning vocabulary can be quite challenging which can have a negative impact on the students' attitude towards acquiring it. Therefore, in the recent years there has been a growing interest in employing technology for vocabulary acquisition (Hajebi et al., 2018).

The age of the internet and the ongoing technological developments are continuously transforming the teaching and learning processes all across the globe. Learning in virtual spaces is becoming increasingly significant and prominent in the educational spheres (Hajebi et al., 2018; Tsai, Shen & Fan, 2013; Wong et al., 2018). In fact, a recent research suggests that “most EFL teachers prefer to decrease the utility of traditional approaches and enhance the use of technology-based learning approaches (Hajebi et al., 2018, p372). Consequently, educators are investigating the effectiveness and the impact of various learning management systems within the foreign language classrooms. The current research aims at exploring the Blackboard as one of the most prominent and used learning management systems in the context of Saudi higher education in order to assess the extent to which Blackboard helps students learn vocabulary efficiently and whether it has a more positive attitude towards learning.

The current study is highly motivated by the challenges of the Saudi higher education context especially in the area of teaching and learning vocabulary, and by the urge to boost the learners' performance and attitude towards this particular area of language acquisition as it is of the utmost importance. Besides, the current study goes in parallel with the global modern trends in applying and assessing the Blackboard technology within the language acquisition practices with a focus on the Saudi context in order to give an insight of the impact of this technology use in improving King Khalid students' performance and attitude towards vocabulary and to overcome the challenges it represents.

A. Literature Review

Several teachers and instructors, in the past years, embraced the learning management system. Several educators have been also concerning with integrating technology into the educational sector. According to research findings, the most prominent feature of learning management system (LMS) is that it enhances the learning-teaching process and strategies (Adam & Deon Nel, 2009). In the learning management system, the most common LMS that is currently available to several higher education institutions are Blackboard, Moodle, WebCT, SAKAI, and LAMS. Founded in the year 1997, Blackboard is a licensed LMS, and one of the most common marketable LMSs embraced in the HEIs (Chang, 2008). The potentials in Blackboard have the possibilities to alter the teaching and learning method in general. Blackboard offers an interactive learning medium that can be modified in order to meet the students' educational needs.

Blackboard has been embraced by the HEIs its easiness, ubiquity, and accessibility. For Alenezi and Shahi (2012), it is understood as the comprehensive technological platform for learning and teaching, management the educational content, and the learning measurement outcomes. Moreover, it consists of integrated models, with an essential set of

skills that function together. In their research, they provided the essence and importance of integrating the LMS into the educational process. Furthermore, Tarhini and Masa'deh (2016) stated that the LMS approach as Blackboard provides the academic staff with the required course management methods for tracking the students' interactivity with learning materials, grading, and observing closely the progress of the class.

Hockly (2011) has provided three new reasons and causes for implementing the LMS and its tools. Hockly provided the reason for the technological innovations at the present time, as learners mainly expect the technological integration into their classes in order to assist them in their educational process. Moreover, learners expect to have the abilities to fit this difficult process into their daily routine and busy lives. In addition, several education directives expect the educators to get the options to accessing the LMS such as Blackboard.

Hill (2014) has concluded that the Blackboard was the leading giver and provider of the LMS for all higher education institutions with larger than (800) enrolment. Moreover, Mohsin and Shafeeq (2014) indicated that the EFL instructors have favorable perceptions on the applications of Blackboard for teaching the English language skills. Most instructors see Blackboard and its applications as a structured platform of E-Learning that assists promoting the instructor-student relationship in a certain educational program to provide as easy process of learning and teaching.

Al Zumor (2013) has conducted a research study aimed to explore the views of English as Foreign Language (EFL) students at King Khalid University concerning the advantages and disadvantages of mixing the face-to-face instruction features and Blackboard's language instruction. The research's sample consisted of 160 male students. They found that there were advantages for this method where it can offer a setting in order to get more efficient implementation of the indirect strategies of language learning such as affective strategies, social, and meta-cognitive strategies. In addition to that, the authors recommended several suggestions in order to establish supportive chances in learning for language students such as providing suitable training programs for students, solving technical issues, and increasing the labs number.

In the same line of research, Fageeh, (2013) has investigated the educational effects of the spin as a computer-mediated communication environment (CMC) to teach academic writing and improve student attitudes towards academic writing. Learners' interactions in CMC's Blackboard environment were analyzed using two types of online collaborative strategies: simultaneous chat and asynchronous discussion boards for academic writing for students. The study adopted the quantitative method in analyzing and collecting data using the SPSS program. The researcher found that the students' experiences on using the Blackboard were uneven. The analysis showed that the more students experience using a blackboard, the greater their knowledge of using CMC. Also, the results showed that CMC and Blackboard helps to interact and enrich the learning of English. At the end of his study, the researcher recommends to research more on this topic in the future.

Alharbi, (2015) has conducted a research study, aiming at studying the impact of online training tools, namely blogs, discussion boards, wiki, and integrated facilities in Blackboard as a computer-mediated communication; also, regarding the EFL students' behaviour towards literacy abilities in the environments of e-learning. The researcher has used a mixed-method approach to examine the impact of such methods on students' behaviour and writing/reading performance. The study concluded that the students' performance s on an integrated writing/reading test was noticeably improved. It also concluded that the tools of the e-course supported the writing/reading abilities and facilitated students' interactions. In addition to that, the researcher recommended to conclude and to discuss the pedagogical implications and recommends tips for prospective research.

Similarly, Alshwiah, (2009) has examined impact of a proposed strategy in blended learning in medical vocabulary teaching at Arabian Gulf University (AGU) on several outcomes of the learning/teaching process. The researcher's sample was (50) students. This study concluded that regarding behavior and achievement towards English, there were no statistically significant differences between the control and the experimental groups except the second exam in the midterm, where the total score of the control group was noticeably better than the other group. The study also concluded that though language learners were satisfied with the learning environment, the learners lacked the administrative endorsement.

Lastly, Fageeh, (2014), has examined the impact of implementing an online dictionary to show a new vocabulary etymological analysis through accessing encyclopedia, thesaurus, and web on improving vocabulary and whether it could lead to positive behaviors towards learning vocabulary in language students. The study also examined the etymological analysis feature of the Online Dictionary in Blackboard settings for the improving vocabulary acquisition and behavior towards such process. The researcher concludes that the best technique for learning new vocabulary is the new learning strategy of vocabulary, i.e., etymological analysis. The study recommended more studies in this field.

What distinguishes the current study from previous studies?

Through previous literature revisions, Hill (2014) and Mohsen and Shafeeq (2014) aligned with the results of this research that EFL teachers have positive perceptions of Blackboard applications to teach English language skills. Most Blackboard trainers and its applications see it as a structured e-learning organization that helps to strengthen the teacher-student relationship in a particular learning program to provide an easy learning and learning process. Alharbi (2015) believes that student performance in the integrated reading/ writing test and acquisition of new vocabulary English language by using Blackboard.

The novel aspects of this study which distinguishes from the previous studies are:

1. Previous studies have focused on learning English as foreign language by e-learning tool method in general, while this study focuses on analyzing the students' attitude and performance when involved in studying English using Blackboard at King Khaled University.
2. This study focuses on determining the impact of using Blackboard as a means of using it to learn English vocabulary at KKU. In addition, there is no previous study that has addressed such an issue.

B. Study Questions

The researcher noticed that many King Khalid students face many difficulties in learning English vocabulary. Consequently, the students have developed negative attitudes towards English vocabulary. This issue has been clear through the university tests and the teachers' evaluation of the students' performance in the learning process. As it appears that the current teaching method used in the university does not assist the students in overcoming the difficulties in using the Blackboard in learning English vocabulary.

Accordingly, the study seeks to find out the answer to the study's main question 'Does Blackboard have a positive influence on the attitude and performance of the Saudi university students' in vocabulary learning?'

C. Study Hypothesis

The researcher hypothesis the following:

- Blackboard possesses a positive influence on the attitude and performance of the Saudi university students' in vocabulary learning.

II. METHODOLOGY

The researcher employs a survey study for examining the student's attitude and performance in Blackboard for learning vocabulary.

The target population of this current study are the students at King Khalid University. According to Verma and Mallick (1999), the survey method is considered as a popular employed process in terms of the educational studies. Through this method, as the researcher mentioned above, the questionnaire was administered to meet the goals set for this study, as it is considered a proper method in the data gathering. The researcher employed the questionnaire to gather the data for this study in order to have a full view of the instruments utilized.

A. The Participants

34 students from King Khaled University formed the sample of the current study. The participants were informed that their identities remained confidential and would be used for the research purposes.

B. Instrument: Questionnaire

Oppenheim (1992) states that questions are useful as they can produce the answer frequencies, which is adjustable for statistical and analysis treatment. The study used a questionnaire as an instrument, which was set into (2) sections. The first one gathered the information of the academic level of the English students (Whether they are learning through Blackboard or other tools). The second consisted of (14) Likert-type scale and focused on identifying whether these students have a negative or a positive attitude towards blackboard.

III. RESULTS

In order to answer the research questions, descriptive statistics were run to analyze the students' responses to the data collection tools. Table 1 summarizes the levels of the students participating in this study.

The participants in the study will be 34 students, and it is proposed to be conducted on the participants in order to view their opinion on the matter of this study in order to gain the necessary data. The participants will be informed that their identities are going to remain confidential in their role in the research; thus, using their answers for study purposes only.

TABLE (1):
THE DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE IN THE LIGHT OF STUDY LEVEL

Level	Frequency	Percent
2	10	29.4
3	1	2.9
5	1	2.9
6	20	58.8
7	2	5.9
Total	34	100.0

Table (1) provides the percentage of students in different academic levels who have positive opinions toward studying vocabulary through the Blackboard. The output has three columns. The left column names the different levels of students, and the middle column demonstrates the number of students equitable to each level, and the right column presents the percentage of interest in the Blackboard for learning vocabulary. It is shown that ten students in level two

exhibit 29.4 percent of approval. Similarly, only one student in both levels 3 and 5 show a typical percent of 2.9. The highest percentage of 58.8 is shown by 20 students in level 6. The percentage decreased to 5.9 percentages by two students in level 7.

Reliability and Validity of Questionnaire

The researcher has used Guttman's method to test the reliability of questionnaire, and the results are as following:

TABLE (2):
RELIABILITY STATISTICS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Lambda	value
1	.603
2	.681
3	.649
4	.536
5	.653
6	.763

Validity of questionnaire:

The questionnaire was presented to a number of specialists in the field of languages, translation and psychology. They were asked about:

- 1- The extent of appropriate phrases to measure the subject of the questionnaire.
- 2- Is the statement negative or positive?

To test the study hypothesis (**Blackboard possesses a positive influence on the attitude and performance of the Saudi university students' in vocabulary learning**), the researcher used the descriptive statistics, and the results as summarized in Table 3.

TABLE (3):
MEANS AND SD OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE STATEMENTS

No	Statement	Means	St. deviation	Order
1	I frequently use Blackboard.	1.85	.857	14
2	I find it convenient for me to implement Blackboard in learning vocabulary	2.35	1.070	6
3	I attend virtual classrooms for some English courses.	2.12	1.250	12
4	I feel that I learn new vocabulary when I attend the virtual classes	2.35	1.125	7
5	It is interesting to use Blackboard to learn English language vocabulary.	2.35	.981	8
6	I feel that I learn new vocabulary from the announcements sent by my teachers.	2.21	1.038	10
7	I better learn vocabulary from Blackboard rather than traditional learning styles.	2.50	1.022	2
8	Online discussions that supports text-based chat via Blackboard help me to enhance my vocabulary knowledge.	2.47	.992	3
9	I like the use of Blackboard in learning English language vocabulary because of the varieties of its tools and features.	2.41	1.019	5
10	Submitting my assignments via blackboard is an effective way to improve my English vocabulary	2.00	.953	13
11	I like the use of blackboard in learning English language vocabulary because of its features, such as color, graphic, animation and layout.	2.35	1.070	9
12	The use of virtual classes gives me quick feedback which improves my vocabulary	2.44	.960	4
13	The use of Blackboard encourages me to search for online sources	2.15	1.077	11
14	Online discussions give me a chance to speak freely and listen to others' speech. Subsequently, my vocabulary has been increased easily.	2.62	1.181	1

Table 3 presents many statements related to their means and standard deviation. The first order with the highest mean of 2.62 and a high St. Deviation of 1.181 is in the online discussions gives the students a chance to speak freely and listen to others' speech. Subsequently, their vocabulary has been increased easily. The second order "I better learn vocabulary from Blackboard rather than traditional learning styles" decreases to a mean of 2.50 and St. Deviation of 1.022. The third order of "Online discussions that supports text-based chat via Blackboard help students to enhance my vocabulary knowledge" is nearly as equal as to the second order with a slight decrease to 2.47 but with a noticeable decrease of St. Deviation to .992. "The use of virtual classes gives me quick feedback which improves my vocabulary" ranks the fourth order with a mean of 2.44 and St. Deviation of .960. The St. Deviation shows an increase to 1.019 in the fifth order of "I like the use of Blackboard in learning English language vocabulary because of the varieties of its tools and features", but the mean is stable with 2.41. The sixth order is as nearly stable in St. Deviation and mean as the fifth order. The seventh order "I feel that I learn new vocabulary when I attend the virtual classes" has the same mean of 2.35 as the one of the sixth order and St. Deviation of 1.125. The eighth order "It is interesting to use Blackboard to learn English language vocabulary" has the same mean of 2.35 as the previous two, yet the St. Deviation decreases to .981. The ninth order has the stable mean of 2.35; however, the St. Deviation increases to 1.070. The tenth order of "I feel that I learn new vocabulary from the announcements sent by my teachers" demonstrates increment in the St. Deviation to 1.038 but with a slight decrease in the mean to 2.21. The eleventh and twelfth orders maintain a mean from 2.12 to 2.15 and the St. Deviation ranges between 1.077 and 1.250. The thirteenth order of "Submitting my assignments via blackboard is an effective way to improve my English vocabulary" shows decrement in both of the mean with 2.00

and St. Deviation of .953. The last order demonstrates the lowest mean of 1.85 and St Deviation of .857

IV. DISCUSSION

The current study found that the online discussions get a little chance for students to speak freely and listen to others' speech and gave them new vocabulary; while Alharbi's (2015) study found the students' performance on getting new vocabularies were high when teacher used e-course tools. As for the better learning and getting new vocabulary from blackboard, the current research concluded that a little effect for students was noticed. Fageeh (2014) has found the same result in his research. As for the online discussions that support text-based chat via Blackboard help students to enhance their vocabulary knowledge, the analysis of current study ensures that there is almost no effect on students learning. The other study of Fageeh (2013) concluded that learners who were taught through Blackboard had more favorable behavior toward the elements of collaboration, productivity, and participation. Al Zumor (2013) concluded that Blackboard settings and Blended Learning offer an environment for more efficient implementation of indirect strategies of language learning; while the current study found that the Blackboard's features and tools do not have a strong impact on learners in learning new vocabulary. As for the learning could take place more effectively by using Blackboard rather than traditional learning styles, the analysis of current study found that there was a little effect on students' learning outcomes by using Blackboard in English language study, and in the same context, Alshwiah, (2004) has found that Blackboard had more positive effect on students learning.

As for the remaining questionnaire statements, which are: "The use of virtual classes gives me quick feedback which improves my vocabulary", "I find it easier and convenient to use Blackboard in learning vocabulary". "I feel that I learn new vocabulary when I attend the virtual classes". "It is interesting to use Blackboard to learn English language vocabulary", "I feel that I learn new vocabulary from the announcements sent by my teachers", "The use of Blackboard encourages me to search for online sources". "I attend virtual classrooms for some English courses", "Submitting my assignments via blackboard is an effective way to improve my English vocabulary" and "I frequently use Blackboard", the researcher did not find any previous studies that looked at such aspects and questions that were mentioned earlier in the current study, so this is one of the strengths of this study.

V. CONCLUSION

The current study shows that Blackboard manages to improve the King Khalid university students' performance and attitude towards learning vocabulary to a certain extent despite the limitations. In fact, the study shows that many challenges and difficulties still face learners and faculty members in the implementation and use of such blended learning methods and technologies. Therefore, the Blackboard is considered a learning management system with great potentials that deserves further study and investigation in order to fully benefit from the learning opportunities it offers. This study is a first step that should be followed by many more in the field of technologies utilized for language acquisition within the context of Saudi higher education so that Saudi institutions can evolve and develop more effective and adequate practices.

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