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The Integration of Technology into English Language Teaching: The Underlying Significance of LMS in ESL Teaching Despite The Ebb and Flow of Implementation

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role and effectiveness of a Learning Management System (LMS) in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction at an English Language Institute in Saudi Arabia, highlighting both its pedagogical value and the challenges faced during implementation. As a digital platform designed for the administration, delivery, and monitoring of educational content, LMS demonstrated significant potential in supporting independent learning and enhancing access to instructional resources. However, its integration encountered various obstacles, including resistance from users, technical limitations, and gaps in training. Using data collected through instructor and student questionnaires as well as end-of-module reports, the study identifies key factors influencing LMS adoptionnamely, planning and organization, institutional support, instructor digital competencies, and learner motivation. Although many users acknowledged LMS as a valuable tool for promoting learner autonomy, its overall effectiveness was limited by a combination of technical, infrastructural, and pedagogical challenges. The findings underscore the importance of aligning technological tools with institutional capacity and user readiness. The paper concludes with practical recommendations to improve LMS integration in language education, offering insights for educators, administrators, and software developers aiming to enhance the digital learning experience in multilingual contexts.

KEYWORDS: *Learner Management System (LMS), English Language Teaching (ELT), English as a Second Language (ESL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English Language Institute (ELI), Information Communication Technology (ICT)*

INTRODUCTION

The present study investigates the initial implementation of a Learner Management System (LMS) at an English Language Institute (ELI) within one of Saudi Arabia's leading universities. As a newly introduced platform, the LMS represented a significant shift in pedagogical practice, aimed at enabling instructors to assign and monitor independent language practice for Foundation Year students at the institute. The goal was to reinforce essential English language skills and support exam preparation through digital means. Prior to this transition, instructors primarily relied on printed student workbooks for homework and revision tasks. With the integration of the LMS, these activities could be delivered asynchronously—also referred to as "flexi-time" learning (Romiszowski, 2004, p. 6), allowing learners to engage in grammar, vocabulary, listening, and other skill-building exercises beyond the classroom. Despite the university's substantial efforts to promote the LMS and ensure its functionality, the initiative encountered several obstacles characteristic of early-stage implementation, including technical limitations, limited user familiarity, and evolving institutional support structures.While some instructors reported numerous technical and functional problems, others fully embraced the LMS, reporting enhanced language practice and improved performance on exams. These varied responses prompted a deeper examination of what caused the ebb and flow in LMS implementation. By exploring where the system excelled and where it faltered, this study aims to offer insights into how technology can be more effectively integrated into traditional teaching and learning structures.

The article begins by situating the study within existing literature and relevant theoretical frameworks before detailing the methodology, results, and implications. By exploring both challenges and successes, the study provides insights into how LMS can be incorporated for digital learning to promote autonomy and independent language practice. Guided by four research questions (presented in the next section), this analysis ultimately underscores the necessary conditions—technical, pedagogical, and administrative—for successful technology adoption in an ESL context.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Central Question

What underlying factors contributed to the limited success of the LMS implementation at the ELI?

To unpack this overarching issue, the study is guided by four specific questions:

- ***Institutional Strategy***

Which policies and practices should the institute adopt to weave technology seamlessly into a predominantly traditional teaching model?

- ***Instructor Agency***

How can teachers design and deliver technology enhanced lessons that maintain, or even heighten, student motivation?

- ***Organisational Support***

To what extent do administrative backing, leadership guidance, and day to day technical assistance influence the effectiveness of LMS deployment?

- ***Vendor Contribution***

How does the software provider's design, training, and ongoing support affect the overall success of LMS integration?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Institutional Strategies for Technology Integration

In considering strategies and approaches for successful technology integration, institutions must address core standards for implementing e-learning. These include interaction, authentic audience, authentic tasks, production and exposure, sufficient time, prompt feedback, intentional cognition, atmosphere, and autonomy (Egbert, 2005). Phillips (2002), cited in Romiszowski (2004, p. 21), argues that e-learning failures often occur at three interrelated levels:

1. **Product level** – poor course design and inadequate technological infrastructure.
2. **Learner level** – insufficient motivation and underprepared learners.
3. **Organizational level** – low managerial support and weak reward structures.

Similarly, Chitiyo and Harmon (2009), cited in Lamtara (2014, p. 401), stress that successful technology adoption depends not only on robust infrastructure but also on ensuring that faculty can use technology effectively. Effective use of ICT thus combines technical and pedagogical proficiency, a requirement often unmet in many educational contexts (Lamtara, 2014).

The Instructor's Role in Technology-Oriented Lessons

Healey et al. (2013, p. 2) emphasize that although technology can benefit language learners, it remains intimidating for many teachers who have not received adequate training. Malek (2013, p. 174) notes that integrating technology into lessons enhances student learning only if it is thoughtfully embedded in the curriculum and if teachers are sufficiently trained. Levin and Wadmany (2008), cited in Lamtara (2014, p. 400), similarly observe that teachers must possess the technical and pedagogical skills to design effective learning experiences. Meanwhile, Romiszowski (2004, p. 4) notes that e-learning demands new skills not only from students but also from instructors, who must shift their roles to "online teachers" or "facilitators." Banados (2006), cited in Blake (2008, p. 107), concurs that both teachers and students are challenged by new roles in digital learning environments: instructors become guides and collaborators, while students assume greater autonomy.

Learner Motivation and Readiness

Another focal point is the role of learner motivation in using technology successfully. Moss (2009), cited in Malek (2013, p. 175), points out that students often face difficulties in online learning environments. However, Ezza and Bakry (2014, p. 55) counter that technology empowers learners by nurturing multiple intelligences and cultivating a sense of responsibility for their own learning, both inside and outside class. Alkahtani (2001), cited in Lamtara (2014, p. 400), underscores Saudi Arabia's significant efforts toward ICT integration in education, although gaps remain in teacher training, as noted by Alkahtani (2005).

Administrative Support and Leadership

Ali (2013, p. 36) identifies two conditions essential for administrators when integrating technology:

1. A systematic introduction to the technology, preceded by consultation with future users and ongoing training.
2. Efficient, regular technical support to keep technology running at optimal levels.

These points highlight that even the best technology may fail if training or technical support is lacking. Supervisors' willingness and expertise to help teachers integrate new tools effectively is equally important (Lamtara, 2014).

The Role of the Software Provider

Tuzlukova (2013, p. 286) notes that technology can be frustrating for teachers if it is unreliable or if insufficient training opportunities prevent faculty from mastering its use. Additionally, Harris (2003), cited in Romiszowski (2004, p. 19), argues that project failures often stem from technical design flaws. Consequently, software developers share responsibility for ensuring user-friendly platforms that are adequately supported and suitable for the institution's specific pedagogical goals.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Adopting a case study approach this research focuses on a Language Institute within a prominent Saudi university, aiming to provide a detailed and context-specific account of the technical and functional challenges associated with the introduction of a LMS. The case study method allows for an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of both instructors and students, capturing the complexities of LMS integration in a real-world educational setting. To achieve a comprehensive understanding, the study employs a mixed-methods research design that combines both quantitative and qualitative data. Structured survey questions yield measurable trends and user perceptions, while open-ended responses offer interpretive insights into individual experiences, attitudes, and concerns (Wardak, 2014, p. 131). This blended methodology enables the triangulation of data sources, enhancing the validity of the findings and offering a nuanced view of the successes and setbacks encountered during the LMS's early implementation phase.

Participants and Sampling

The study involved a total of 80 participants: 40ESL instructors and 40 Level 4 Foundation Year students. Participants represented a wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, reflecting the diverse makeup of the institution's academic community. Among the instructors, there was notable variation in levels of technological proficiency, ranging from those with extensive experience in educational technology to others who were relatively new to digital platforms. Similarly, students exhibited differing degrees of comfort and competence in using digital tools for language learning, influenced by factors such as prior exposure, access to technology, and personal learning preferences. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and all participants were fully briefed on the purpose and scope of the research. They were also assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential, in accordance with ethical research protocols designed to protect participant privacy and encourage honest feedback.

Data Collection Tools

1. **Instructor Questionnaires (22 items)**

- Included closed, multiple-choice, dichotomous (yes/no), and Likert-scale (strongly agree–strongly disagree) questions, plus open-ended prompts for deeper insights.

2. **Student Questionnaires (16 items)**

- Focused on students' use of computers, experiences using the LMS, and their perceived challenges and benefits of online language practice.

3. **End-of-Module Feedback Forms**

- Instructors provided reflective feedback on LMS performance each teaching module, highlighting technical issues, student engagement, and recommendations for improvement.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data (Likert-scale, frequency counts) were aggregated to identify agreement or disagreement levels on LMS-related statements. Qualitative comments were analyzed thematically, coding for recurring issues such as "technical glitches," "lack of motivation," or "insufficient training" (Denscombe, 2007). By triangulating results from questionnaires, feedback forms, and open-ended commentary, the study sought a comprehensive view of the LMS's implementation strengths and weaknesses.

DATA FINDINGS/RESULTS

Overall, most instructors expressed enthusiasm for technology in general, while many still faced difficulties adapting to the LMS. For instance, 73% considered computer-based language teaching "very important," yet 33% occasionally reverted to paper-based grammar quizzes due to fewer logistical complications.

Instructor Feedback

- **What They Liked Most**: Over half mentioned greater learner autonomy, immediate feedback on exercises, and the LMS's variety of tasks as key advantages.
- **What They Liked Least**: Common complaints included technical problems (sign-in failures, slow internet), difficulties licensing students, and the challenge of monitoring off-site learner participation.

Student Feedback

- **Frequency of Computer Use**: 70% used computers for 1–2 hours daily, mainly for general internet browsing (83%), while only 10% cited online language practice as their primary use.
- **Challenges**: 60% reported facing problems—such as unrecognized usernames/passwords (28%), difficult exercises (20%), and sluggish connectivity.
- **Preference for Future Use**: 40% wanted to continue with an LMS in upcoming modules; 45% were hesitant ("maybe"), indicating the need for better reliability and training.

The data suggest that although the LMS offered valuable interactive practice and contributed to improved exam performance for some learners, recurring technical issues and sporadic student motivation weakened overall adoption rates (see tables below).

Table 1. *Instructors' responses to questionnaires about key elements*

Key LMSRelated Statements	**Instructor Responses (*% of sample)***
Frequency of technology use in teaching	75 % use technology in *every* lesson
Perceived importance of teaching with technology	73 % rate it *very important*
Preferred mode for independent language practice	70 % = LMS 30 % = workbooks / other online sources
Selfreported competence with educational technology	53 % feel *competent* or *very competent*
LMS perceived as difficult; preference for a simpler platform	15 % = Yes 85 % = No
LMS more useful than traditional workbooks for assigning practice	83 % = Agree 17 % = Disagree
Attendance at *initial* LMStraining workshops	53 % = Yes 27 % = No 20 % = No response
Attendance at *followup* LMStraining workshops	53 % = Yes 30 % = No 13 % = No response
Received oncampus guidance/instructions from LMS team	100 % = Yes
Helpfulness of that guidance	83 % = Very helpful 17 % = Helpful
Students using LMS achieved better exam results	88 % = Agree 12 % = Disagree
Paperbased quizzes are easier and involve less hassle	33 % = Agree 67 % = Disagree
Student interest and enthusiasm for LMS	68 % = Most or all students 32 % = Some students
Rating of assistance from the LMS Head (campus level)	83 % = Very good 17 % = Good
LMS should be graded like other supplementary programmes	80 % = Agree 20 % = Disagree

Table 2. *Instructors' responses to most-liked features of the LMS*

Aspect instructors liked most about the LMS	***% of sample***
Promotes learner autonomy / independent practice with immediate feedback	*28%*
"Cool" interface & motivating, engaging exercises	*18 %*
Wide variety of tasks and exercise types	*5 %*
Ability to track student progress and grades	*5 %*
Becomes easy to use once familiar	*8 %*
Effective for practising grammar and vocabulary	*8 %*
Reinforces language skills taught in class	*3 %*

Table 3. *Instructors' responses toleast-liked features of the LMS*

Aspect instructors liked least about the LMS	***% of sample***
Frequent technical glitches and login failures	*30 %*
Cumbersome student registration / licensing process	*15 %*
Students could not be reliably monitored outside class (risk of others doing the work)	*3 %*
Late or staggered rollout of the system	*3 %*
Poor functionality on mobile phones and iPads	*3 %*
Students reluctant or unable to log in and complete tasks	*5 %*
Disappointment that such a promising platform did not deliver the expected languagepractice benefits	*3 %*

Table 4. *Instructors' responses to common problems associated with the LMS*

Problem reported by instructors	**% of Sample**	**Additional / related difficulties (**Estimated from qualitative comments)
Slow or unstable internet connection	68 %	—
Incomplete student registration in LMS	65 %	
Student IDs/passwords not recognised	65 %	—
Limited access to computer labs / facilities	58 %	—
LMS login page repeatedly redirected or offline	53 %	System often demanded repeated logins
Insufficient time to train teachers (and, in turn, their students)	53 %	Instructors and students lack training on how to use the system
Late implementation of LMS	45 %	Courses disappeared from teacher/student homepages; LMS launched after semester began
Students' low motivation to use LMS	30 %	Some tasks completed by family members rather than students
Unable to license students	25 %	—
Students refused to complete LMS tasks	25 %	—
Courses disappearing from teacher or student homepages	15 %	"My courses keep hiding from my home page"
Instructor lacked basic LMS knowhow for effective integration	8 %	—
Minimal guidance from administrative team	5 %	—
Listening component malfunctioned	5 %	Some students reported audio not playing

Table 5. *Students' perception of LMS*

Statement (Students' perception of the LMS)	**Student Responses (% of Sample)**
Daily computer use	• 70 % – 1–2 hours • 25 % – 2–4 hours • 5 % – 4–6 hours
Primary purpose of computer use	• 83 % – Browsing the internet • 10 % – Online language practice • 7 % – Sending emails
Used the LMS for independent language practice	• 85 % – Yes • 15 % – No
Enjoyed practising with the LMS	• 51 % – Yes • 49 % – No
Encountered problems while practising	• 60 % – Yes • 40 % – No
Nature of problems	• 28 % – Usernames/passwords not recognised • 20 % – Exercises too difficult • 13 % – Exercises froze/stuck • 5 % – Listening component failed • 15 % – Slow internet connection • 3 % – Uncertain how to proceed
Received help from the LMS team	• 43 % – Yes • 18 % – No • 39 % – No response
Would like to use the LMS in future	• 40 % – Yes • 45 % – Maybe • 5 % – No • 10 % – No response

Preferred exam format	• 35 % – Computerbased • 15 % – Paperbased • 40 % – Either/both • 10 % – No response
Online practice easier than books/library	• 60 % – Yes • 31 % – No • 9 % – No response
Technology improves targetlanguage practice	• 63 % – Agree • 18 % – Disagree • 19 % – No response

DISCUSSION

Technical and Organizational Barriers

Despite the ELI's ongoing efforts to promote a blended-learning environment, unpredictable technical issues (redirected log-in pages, broken course links, partial or failed student registrations) led to frustration for both teachers and learners. These findings align with Romiszowski (2004, p. 19), who attributes e-learning project failures largely to design flaws and poor technical infrastructure. Additionally, the abrupt or delayed implementation of the LMS further exacerbated existing pressures and allowed little time for instructors and students to master the new platform.

Administrative and Pedagogical Support

Both instructor and student questionnaires highlight the significance of administrative support. Where training sessions, ongoing workshops, and immediate technical guidance were available, instructors reported smoother LMS deployment and heightened enthusiasm. This resonates with Ali (2013, p. 36), emphasizing that continuous, structured support and practical troubleshooting are key to successful technology integration.

Instructor Competence and Student Motivation

While instructors generally recognized the pedagogical benefits of online exercises (e.g., immediate feedback, autonomy and flexible practice), the data also underscore varied levels of digital literacy. Some instructors felt unprepared to solve recurring technical glitches, leaving them reliant on overwhelmed support teams. Moreover, students' motivation to use the LMS was not uniform. Factors such as perceived difficulty of tasks, fear of technology, and weak internet connectivity led certain students to prefer traditional paper-based activities. This echoes Moss (2009), cited in Malek (2013), acknowledging that even potentially useful digital tools can fail if learners lack adequate support or confidence.

Balancing Autonomy and Monitoring

A recurring concern among instructors was the inability to confirm that students were completing LMS tasks independently. Although an LMS can enhance self-directed learning, it also raises questions about academic honesty. The data suggest that educators may need better systems for tracking student progress, such as in-class lab sessions or random spot checks, ensuring that online practice genuinely reflects individual learning.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study illustrates the promise of LMS-based instruction in an ESL setting, particularly regarding autonomous practice, immediate feedback, and alignment with digital trends in education. However, it also highlights major hurdles—technical failures, infrastructural insufficiencies, and inconsistent training—that hindered implementation and dampened enthusiasm.

Recommendations

1. ***Pre-Implementation Testing***

Software providers should deliver thoroughly tested LMS platforms with clear documentation, minimizing post-launch disruptions.

2. ***Ongoing Training and Support***

Institutions must schedule workshops and refreshers to address instructor and student needs, ensuring everyone can navigate LMS features confidently.

3. ***In-Class Lab Sessions***

Dedicated labs or partial class sessions using the LMS can help instructors monitor progress, demonstrate tasks, and troubleshoot issues on the spot.

4. ***Enhanced Technical Infrastructure***

Upgrades to internet connectivity and device compatibility must be prioritized to avoid repeated log-in failures and slow speeds.

5. ***Institutional Policies and Incentives***

Linking LMS use to grading or mandatory participation can boost engagement, while formalizing support structures motivates both teachers and students.

Future Outlook

Although technology inevitably experiences occasional glitches, the results here demonstrate that major disruptions can undermine the entire e-learning initiative. By addressing

the root causes; software reliability, staff training, infrastructural readiness, ELIs and similar institutions can avoid costly setbacks and foster a more consistent, fulfilling learning experience for ESL students.

Ultimately, the LMS's success depends on close collaboration between software providers who ensure robust functionality and institutional leaders who facilitate supportive, well-resourced environments. While a less successful initial implementation may deter some educators, the lessons gleaned from these challenges can pave the way for more resilient and student-centered educational technologies.

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