

The Effectiveness of Adopting Learning Management System Tools to Enhance Formative Assessment in Teaching English for Saudi University Students

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تم استلام البحث في ٢٠١٨/ ١١ /٢٠ تم الموافقة على النشر في ٢٠١٨/ ١٢ / ٩

Abstract :

Adopting technologies in English language teaching, particularly in the field of assessment provides varied facilities for students' learning that are not possible with other traditional activities. Learning management system (LMS) is not a pedagogical approach or a method that has certain rules that have taken place inside or outside the class. It is a method for delivering course components. It ensures that students become active participants and self- paced learners compared with in the traditional classroom. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the effectiveness of adopting learning management system tools to enhance formative assessment in teaching English. The sample of the study was 72 students involved in three courses in English language Department, Qassim Private Colleges. This sample represented both of the experimental group, who were evaluated through the LMS during the second term, and controlled group. The result of the study was divided into two types; quantitative analyses that based on comparing both of the final exam results in both groups and qualitative analysis that based on experimental group interviews. It showed that the experimental group yielded better results than the controlled group in their posttest.

Key words: English, teaching, learning management system and literature review.

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

With 2.4 billion monthly active users of social media globally, social media communication is now the main activity all over the world. It becomes a connection on behalf of socialization. Social media refers to media used for social networking sites such as Facebook, Friendster, LinkedIn, Live Journal and MySpace are growing extensively (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). These social tools become a part of educational systems in many countries. Learning Management System (LMS) is a software application for managing, developing, tracking and evaluating students in online education. It is widely used term for creating collaboration between teachers and their instructors in online environment. A LMS is not nova trend in delivering courses. It moves from industry management to the learning field. Learning management systems have been a part of the e-Learning ecosystem for more than 22 years (Davis 2009).

With the appearance of e- learning in 1990s, LMS represented the core of all online activities. It allows teachers to create, edit and manage every aspect of a course, from the registration of students to the storing of test results, as well as allowing them to accept assignments digitally and keep in touch with their students. In essence, the LMS is the backbone of most e-learning activities. One of the most important tools of the LMS from the past till now is the assessment process. It enables the tutor to manage the assessment process in detail (**Davis 2009**)

There are many LMSs all over the world like Blackboard, ATUTOR, Eliademy, Forma and MOODLE. MOODLE is one the most popular open source LMS. It has many features like dashboards, learner tracking, and multimedia support. Additionally, it gives you the ability to create mobile-friendly online courses.

Advantages and disadvantages of learning management system

Advantages

Using learning management system in the teaching may lead to the followings:

1. LMS can increase motivation of learners, promote learning, encourage interaction, provide feedback and support can be provided during the learning process (Sharma & Vatta 2013)
2. A LMS supports content in various formats, e.g. multimedia, video, and text.
3. Learner can access to the course anytime and anywhere. Therefore, he is able to fulfil the course requirement.
4. Improve the student's evaluation process. Addition, it provides the teacher with a variety of assessment tools.
5. Keep student's privacy.
6. Re-use course content for many times. The teacher can modify it any time.
7. Auto correction save teacher's time and effort.
8. The teacher has various activities for the leaner. He could choose any activity and carry it out easily.
9. Available 24/7
10. Offer opportunity to review.

Disadvantages

1. Requires computer information from the teacher and the students.
2. LMSs tend to be course centered rather than student centered. At this time, a LMS does not accommodate a complete range of teaching styles (Sharma & Vatta 2013).

Assessment

Assessment is divided into seven types that are based on different purposes. El-Hmoudova (2016) enlisted them in the following table;

Table (1): Assessment Types (El-Hmoudova 2016)

	Assessment types	Purpose
1.	Diagnostic	To determine the needs of the students
2.	Placement	To assign students to certain groups
3.	Proficiency	To assess how good is a student at something.
4.	Achievement	To award a grade or certificate.
5.	Formative	To give feedback to students and determine the direction of the future learning opportunities.
6.	Summative	To establish what a learner has achieved at the end of the course.
7.	Quality	To evaluate teaching

The first refers to any assessment activity that is used as a judgment on student's performance whereas the later refers to any activity or feedback for students about their learning process. The formative assessment goal is to give feedback to students and to determine the direction of future learning opportunities. The formative assessment does not carry any grade or mark (Irons 2008). Knight (2001) indicating that summative assessment is for 'judgement' and formative assessment for 'improvement'. However, there is an inextricable link between both of the summative and formative assessment. Black (1993) suggests that assessment has three broad purposes, namely:

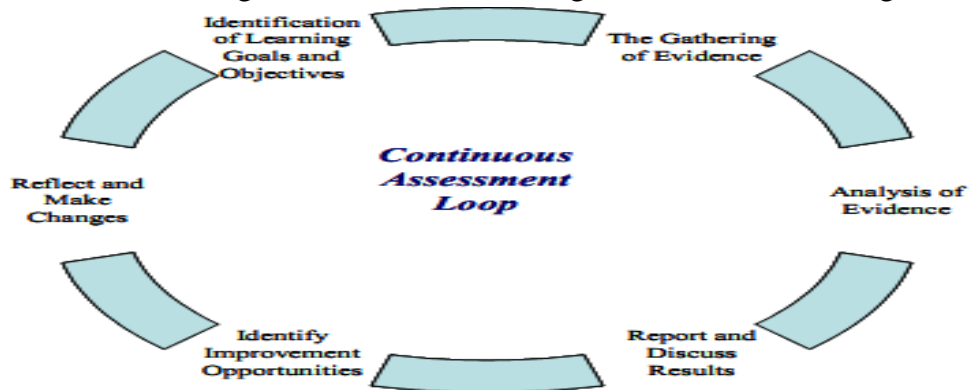
1) The certification of student achievement (normally through summative assessment);

- 2) The accountability of educational institutions and the education system through the publication and the comparison of results (summative results); and
- 3) The promotion of learning through the provision of helpful feedback.

Formative assessment concept first appeared in the late 1960s. However, it took time for this concept to be adopted by education researchers; in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, researchers and educators shifted their focus towards emphasizing the role of assessment in enhancing learning (Assessment Reform Group, 1999; Black & William, 1998a; Bloom, Hastings & Madaus, 1971; Broadfoot, 1998; Crooks, 1988; Gipps, 1999).

Learning management system and Assessment

With the shift of the learning management system from industry and commerce to the field of education, one of the main interest in adopting this system is the assessment process. The LMS provides the assessment process with new tools improve it. It varies from verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning, and inductive logical



thinking to a personality questionnaire.

Figure 1. The Assessment Process (Martell and Calderon, 2005)

Moodle and assessment

Moodle, as one of the widest spread learning management system in the field of education, allows for alternative to assessment strategies.

Quiz

The quiz module includes the following response types: fill-ins, multiple-choice, true-false, matching, short-answer. (Brandle, 2005). It is stated in Moodle homepage that quiz activity enables a teacher to create quizzes comprising questions of various types, including multiple choice, matching, short-answer and numerical.

The teacher can allow the quiz to be attempted multiple times, with the questions shuffled or randomly selected from the question bank. A time limit may be set. Each attempt is marked automatically, with the exception of essay questions, and the grade is recorded in the gradebook. The teacher can choose when and if hints, feedback and correct answers are shown to students.

Quizzes may be used

- a. As course exams
- b. As mini tests for reading assignments or at the end of a topic
- c. As exam practice using questions from past exams
- d. To deliver immediate feedback about performance
- e. For self-assessment

Context of the Problem

The assessment process represented a burden on the teachers as it takes time from the teachers to prepare it to different classes and to the students. Seeking to the improvement of assessment process in English language department, there was a need for implementing new technique not to grade the students but to develop their skills for the future.

Statement of the problem

Thus, the study problem was identified in seeking to improve the assessment process for the students in Qassim Private Colleges. Therefore, the current study attempted to investigate

the effectiveness of adopting learning management system tools to enhance formative assessment in teaching three courses in English language department. To reach this aim, the study tried to answer the following main question:

What is the effectiveness of adopting learning management system tools to enhance formative assessment in teaching the three suggested courses in English language department?

This main question is divided into the following sub-questions:

- 1- What are the theoretical bases of using learning management system in teaching English language?
- 2- What steps should be undertaken for carrying out the formative assessment via learning management system tools?

Hypotheses of the study

The hypotheses of the study is divided into two main parts; the first is a statistic one. It is bases on the students' results in the final exam that represented the posttest. It is stated that

- a. There would be a statistically significant difference ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in in final exam in the tree course between the control and experimental group for the favor of experimental group.

The second is based on the students' observations that are done through the interview checklist with the students while and after conducting the program. It stated that

- b. The students' observation would be in favor of adopting the learning management tools in developing the formative assessment process.

Objectives of the study

The present study aimed at adopting learning management tools to enhance formative assessment in English Department at Qassim Private Colleges.

Definition of Terms

a. Learning management system:

Lonn and Teasley (2009) defines Learning Management Systems as web-based systems that enable teachers and students to share materials, to submit and return assignments and to communicate online. Meanwhile Almrashdeh et al. (2011) point out that an LMS is software used to plan, implement and evaluate a specific learning process. Hence, learning management system is defined, in this study, as a virtual environment that aims to enhance formative assessment.

b. Formative Assessment:

Irons (2009) defines formative assessment as any task or activity that creates feedback for students about their learning. It does not carry any grade. In this study, formative assessment is used to contribute to student learning through the delivery of information about performance.

Review of the literature

Oliveira et al. (2016), in their review for learning management system researches concluded the following:

- a. The searches returned 78 references, full papers written in English, Portuguese or Spanish.

Table 2 shows the year, the authors, the objective and the Gil's (2011) research design:

	Author(s)	Year	Objective	Research design
1.	Masiello, Ramberg & Lonka	2005	Evaluate the validity of LMS Ping Pong as a tool for e-learning considering attitudes of teachers and students.	Survey
2.	Sánchez-Alonso & Vovides	2007	Suggest the use of specific ontologies as the basis for incorporating information about metacognition in learning objects so that an	Experimental research

			LMS can select and recommend designed tasks for the development and / or improvement of metacognitive skills of students in the context of e-learning.	
3.	González & Blanco	2008	Suggest a prototype that integrates a 3D game with the Moodle LMS, enabling the exchange of information between the two systems.	Experimental research
4.	Chang et al.	2009	Suggest a mechanism of learning style classification to classify and identify students learning styles in LMS.	Experimental research
5.	Louw et al.	2009	Investigate the access that students of social sciences in South African universities and staff had in the use of ICTs in Western Cape.	Survey
6.	Lonn & Teasley	2009	Investigate the uses and perceived benefits of using a LMS to support the teaching of traditional classroom by teachers and students of a big Midwestern American university.	Survey
7.	Boumarafi	2010	Reflecting about the development of a new	Study of case

			learning environment within the library of the University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates.	
8.	Ritchie	2010	Explore the role of a health library in implementing an e-learning in an organization.	Study of case
9.	Judd & Kennedy	2010	Reports on a five-year study (2005–2009) of biomedical students' on-campus use of the Internet.	Survey
10.	Graf, Liu & Kinshuk	2010	Investigate how students with different learning styles use the LMS regarding to their browsing behavior.	Study of case
11.	Macfadyen & Dawson	2010	Investigate student's online activities seeking to predict their academic performance.	Survey
12.	Lazakidou & Retalis	2010	Investigate the efficacy of a proposed computer-based teaching using a method of self-regulation of problem solving.	Study of case
13.	Calvani et al.	2010	Suggest a methodology to evaluate effective collaborative interactions within the module Forum for the Moodle learning management.	Study of case
14.	Lonn,		To compare differences in	Survey

	Teasley & Krumm		the use of a LMS between instructors and students.	
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b. The researcher concluded researches related to teaching English language and LMS as follows;

Table (3) shows the year, the authors and the objective for modern English language researches via LMS.

	Author (s)	Year	Objective	Research design
1.	CAVUS, N.	2007	Finding out the success rate of students when using an advanced and a standard collaborative tool in teaching programming languages over the Internet.	Experimental study
2.	Suppasetsee, S. & Dennis, N.	2010	study the facts influencing teachers in integrating Moodle into their English classrooms and to explore the opinion from students who learn English by using Moodle.	
3.	Hsieh, P. & Ji, C.	2013	Comparing the effects of three instructional methods—synchronous online communication, asynchronous online communication, and traditional grammar translation method—in English reading	quasi-experimental Design

			comprehension.	
4.	Bolsunovskaya et al.	2015	E-learning as one of the efficient technologies implemented in National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University (TPU) for teaching Russian and foreign students. The paper introduces the courses designed for teaching General English.	Survey
5.	Sagar, C.	2015	This thesis relates research in the domains of the English language learning paradigm, Second Language Acquisition theories, and online language learning findings to produce a model for an English Language Learning Online Network (ELLON) for usage from within an educational institution. This model is partially designable over Moodle	Experimental Design
6.	Feizabadi, et al	2016	Impact on English learning software Moodle	quasi-experimental Design
7.	Bataineh, Ruba & Mayyas, Mais	2017	Investigate the effect of Moodle-enhanced instruction on Jordanian EFL students' reading comprehension and grammar performance	quasi-experimental Design
8.	Gunduz, N. &	2017	Examine students'	Survey

	Ozcan, D.		perception on using the Moodle system in secondary school in English as a foreign language lessons. A mixed method approach was used in this study with qualitative and quantitative research models	
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It is concluded from the two previous tables some important issues.

1. There are two main idea in learning management system; the first deals with the general idea about LMS and its effectiveness in the teaching field. It was clear through mentioned studies in the first table. The second deals with the techniques and administration process of learning management system and its relation with teaching different subject.
2. There is untrodden area in learning management system. It deals with conducting specific characteristics of learning management system tools.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The present study is a quasi-experimental study using two experimental and control groups. It had two approaches in dealing with data analysis; the first is a quantitative approach with the statistical hypothesis, the latter is a qualitative approach to deal with the individual interview analysis. The data collection toolkit of a qualitative researcher is quite versatile, ranging from completely unstructured to semi-structured techniques. The most commonly applied qualitative methods include individual interviews

1.2. Variables

The study included an independent variable (learning management tools) and dependent variable (learning).

1.3. Participants

The subjects of the study were 58 students in sixth level at Qassim Private Colleges, English Department. Students' ages ranges from 19 to 26 years old. They were studying three different courses; computational linguistics, applied linguistics and teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). The number of students in each course was as follows:

Table (4) Number of the students in each course

No.	Course	Number of students
1.	Computational linguistics	20
2.	Applied linguistics	۲۴
3.	TEFL	۱۴
4.	total	58

Procedures

The experimental group was exposed to the independent variable tested in this study (assessment via Moodle). The control group participated in the common program. Measuring the dependent variable (learning) for both groups was done at two times and under the same condition. It depends on comparing the midterm results and the final term results between the control and experimental group.

The experimental procedures of the present study were carried out at Qassim Private Colleges, Saudi Arabia, during the second term of the 2017/2018 academic year. The experimental group was exposed to the independent variable for ten weeks. The practice was thus:

1. Creating the resources, content, assessment tasks on Moodle software,
2. Teaching students how to create their usernames and password to be enrolled in the class.

3. Attending the class,
4. Studying the through Moodle,
5. Performing the suggested assessment tasks.
6. Attending discussion meeting after assessment tasks to check their answers and results.

Results

The research result is based on two hypotheses. The first is related to the quantitative approach. Independent-samples t-test was used to test the difference between the means of scores of the students on the posttest of the experimental and control group in the three suggested courses. It was as follows:

- a. Computational Linguistics Course.

Table (5) Independent sample posttest for computational linguistics course

	Independent Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 VAR00001 - VAR00002	50.0 43.10	7.998	2.410	-11.185	24.985	.863	9	.410

Independent-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in favor of the posttest ($t=.863$) $p<0.05$). It proved that the students of the experimental group yielded better results in the posttest than the controlled group. It was clear in the mean score of both groups; 50.0 for the experimental group and 43.1 for the control group.

b. Applied linguistics Course

Table (6) t-test of comparison of the pre-post test

	Independent Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
VAR00001 - VAR00002	٥٣,٥٠ ٤٢,٤٢	2.121 ٧,٩٧١	1.500 2.301	-1.657	23.824	1.895	١٢	.232

Independent-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in favor of the posttest ($t=-1.657$, $p<0.05$). It proved that the students of the experimental group yielded better results in the posttest than the controlled group. It was clear in the mean score of both groups; 53.5 for the experimental group and 42.42 for the control group.

Independent-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in favor of the posttest ($t=.266$, $p<0.05$). It proved that the students of the experimental group yielded better results in the posttest than the controlled group. It was clear in the mean score of both groups; 39.7 for the experimental group and 38.3 for the control group.

Based on the previous results in the three courses results, we could conclude that the first hypothesis stated that there was significant statistic difference between the experimental and control groups for the experimental group was verified.

The second hypothesis is related to the qualitative approach. It is based on analysis of the interview. The researcher concluded that

The students' observation would be in favor of adopting the learning management tools in developing the formative assessment process. The interviews were held during and after the treatment.

The interview was oral with each participant in each course and asked about formative assessment. Process through Moodle. The main problem for them was at the beginning of the courses through registration process. In addition, they had a problem with contacting with the teacher online through Moodle. Therefore, the researcher added a new chat form to Moodle site. More than 89% of the participants assured the need for continuous assessment.

Discussion :

Based on the result of the present study, the researcher concluded that the learning management system tools were effective in developing formative assessment process. It aroused a great deal of discussion between students. They were active. They could reach the course and quizzes at anytime and anywhere. Some students performed the requ Hence, investigating the effectiveness of using these tools offers possibilities not only to the students but also to the researchers and instructors to develop their teaching techniques and provide them with new teaching tools. With these tools, learners can improve their ultimately learning the targeted language.

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