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English Language Four Skills Learning Via Blackboard During Covid-19

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Abstract

This study examined the perceptions of 125 Saudi Computer and Information. Technology (CIT) students at Tabuk University towards blackboard's efficiency as a sole medium of instruction during COVID-19 for Learning the four English language skills. The study administered a 24-item questionnaire with the five-point Likert Scale responses. Findings showed that participants had positive perceptions towards learning four English language skills via blackboard as a sole medium of instruction during COVID-19. Listening was the top developed skill while Writing was the least developed skill. This study supports connectivism theory in learning the four English language skills and proves that Blackboard was efficient in providing and offering opportunities for second language learning.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Online Education, Blackboard, English Language Skills.

Introduction

English language, four skills, learning, Blackboard, and COVID-19 are the phrases that just allude to a scenario in which the pandemic, education, and online instruction converged to give new dimensions to the teaching and learning process fraught with fantastic opportunities and unforeseen challenges. Everybody was in a panic. Flights were closed. Strict lockdowns restricted the mobility of life. Initially, the situation seemed to get normal in a short period but gradually, the situation worsened. Particularly, the students were taken by surprise when there was a sudden shift from face-to-face or blended learning to entirely online classes (Dahmash, 2020). Countries the world over swiftly responded to take initiatives for developing pedagogies to impart education online through various learning management systems and net meetings and video conferencing (Crawford, Butler-Henderson, Rudolph, Malkawi, Glowatz & Lam, 2020). However, in Saudi Arabia where students and teachers were already familiar with Blackboard, a learning management system (LMS), and this sudden change was comparatively less damaging given the fact that in many countries of the world, the education system was hard hit by this catastrophic exigency.

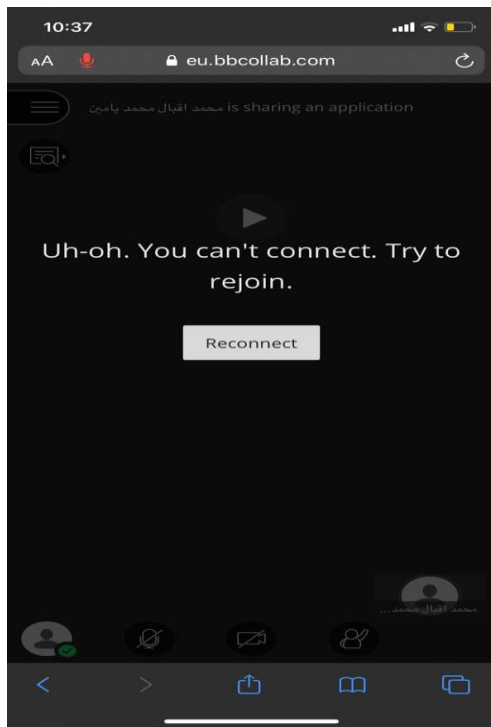
The success or failure of a system depends upon the perceptions and attitudes of those people who use it. Cognitively, background knowledge, training, experience, and motivation play a key role in developing beliefs about any program. The same is the case with learning management systems like Blackboard, D2L or Schoology, Moodle, etc. Each system has its advantages and disadvantages (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Khan et al., 2023). Before COVID-19, these systems were in use just for blended learning with more focus on face-to-face education. After the pandemic, there is a drastic shift to online coaching. This change has been registered in all the domains of education, and English learning is no exception. Since the use of technology expanded unexpectedly after the outbreak of coronavirus, its impact has been felt in every field of life involving the domain of learning English as a foreign or a second language in general, and four skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing in particular. To evaluate the

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efficacy of Blackboard, many studies are available in the research repository, yet it has to be analyzed how far English learning four skills have successful via Blackboard Collaborate (virtual class) and its allied tools like contents, discussions, blogs, assignments, and exams (Abang et al., 2023)

How the EFL learners respond to all the technological gadgets with varying learning styles, different levels of training and experience together with the availability of devices, the speed of internet connections, and the technological problems that create disruptions on the teachers' as well as students' sides need to be examined. Simultaneously, it has also to be looked into how the students feel about learning receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills while interacting through Blackboard. Mastering four skills, in the EFL context, centers around language learning and language acquisition as a part of the pedagogy. Students' perceptions about these processes on Blackboard can contribute a lot to its efficacy. Then, the learners' motivation is also a crucial thing for their ultimate outcomes and achievements. The purpose of the study is, therefore, to investigate the perceptions of students towards using Blackboard for learning the English language four skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading) as the sole tool of learning (Marshoudi et al.,2023).

This study is significant from several dimensions. It gives insight into the mental framework when they interact with a learning system in some emergency. Lack of knowledge and training about the deeper functions of LMS creates fears and confusion. Besides, technological issues further aggravate the problem. All this may lead to irritation and frustration. It is evident when students send such messages:



An Image from Whatsapp Messages

But this does not happen all the time. Despite such issues, students get connected most of the time and take advantage of the connectivity with various tools and applications together with the instructors who interact with them synchronously and asynchronously. The current paper also evaluates EFL learners' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes from a different angle i.e. from a connectivistic point of view

determining the extent of relevance of connectivists' theory via Blackboard Collaborate and other allied tools in situations like the one the world encounters in the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, it is anticipated that the study would make a valuable contribution to the domain of learning four language skills from theoretical and pedagogical viewpoints. In terms of theory, it shows the synergy of implementation of traditional and new concepts relying heavily on the integration of technology in the process of teaching and learning, and in pedagogical term, it how efficient BB is for attaining communicative skills by connecting learners to different modes of sources (Aziz & Asih, 2023; Khan et al., 2023).

Evaluating English learners' perceptions in the above-mentioned areas is of tremendous importance as it throws light on the implications involved in learning all four skills online. This becomes more important because this study exclusively focuses on how learners react to a process in an entirely new setting where theoretical frameworks already in vogue are implemented in different ways. After all, connections and communication go together as is the case of learning listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. In this way, the relevance of the theory of connectivism is also explored in relation to the earlier theories of learning language skills.

Research Questions

- 1- What are the perceptions of students toward Blackboard as the sole medium of learning English language reading skills during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 2- What are the perceptions of students toward Blackboard as the sole medium of learning English language writing skills during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 3- What are the perceptions of students toward Blackboard as the sole medium of learning English language listening skills during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 4- What are the perceptions of students toward Blackboard as the sole medium of learning English language speaking skills during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Objectives

This research aims to examine students' perceptions toward the efficiency of the Blackboard as the sole medium of learning the language four skills during covid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theoretical Framework

Learning foreign or second language skills theoretically finds its roots in Vygotsky's sociocultural concept of learning elaborated in Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) referring to "the gap between what a learner can do autonomously and what he can achieve in an adult guidance." (Behroozizad, Sorayya, Nambiar & Zaini, 2014). This theory was later accentuated by Sfar's (1998) acquisition-participation metaphor and Krashan's (1985) i+1 language input hypothesis together with his language acquisition hypothesis. Then Jerome Burner (1985) articulated the concept of scaffolding that represents the amount of support raised and laid off during the process of transfer of learning (Nfor, 2020). With the inception of globalization and the internet, Siemens (2008) propounded the theory of connectivism in which network connections play a key role in the learning process offering people opportunities for sharing "perceptions, knowledge, interests, skills, and ideas in a virtual environment" (Kropf, 2013). Siemens (2004) also made a distinction between synchronous and asynchronous learning facilities that enable people, particularly students, to benefit from myriads of resources with the choice to tap authentic and relevant information, and reject what they think is not accurate (Dunaway, 2011). More recently, Sozudogru, Altinay, Dagi & Altinay (2019) while examining connectivist theory in English language learning in the current digitalized world has become exceedingly significant. So, it is an undeniable fact that the relevance of connectivism theory has tremendously increased after the Covid-19 outbreak.

Blackboard, in this context, is used as a tool to connect synchronously and asynchronously with numerous through websites, links, blogs, emails, and collaborative virtual classes. It would, therefore, be interesting to evaluate this system as a set of tools through students' perceptions about its synchronous and asynchronous functions for learning four language skills with connectivism as a theoretical framework.

Literature Review

Language researchers minutely monitored the scenario created by an abrupt outbreak of coronavirus. Several multidisciplinary studies appeared evaluating the impact of this crisis in the teaching and learning process. There was a sudden shift of paradigm towards online instruction through the various language management systems and, applications offering video conferencing. Based on the experience of learners, Famuarsih (2020) analyzed the use of online applications the instructors increasingly used because of COVID-19 for EFL teaching and learning in an Indonesian university. The overall results of the surveys and interviews, in this case, indicated that the learners were happy with the use of online applications in the crisis that disrupted regular education systems. Despite this complacency, the students alluded to the impediments like slow internet, too many assignments, and not much live connection with the instructors. Learners favored WhatsApp groups more for their asynchronous communications. Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) explored teachers' views about the EFL classes going online. In their recommendations, besides emphasizing the training of teachers to maximize their performance in conducting online classes, they also impressed upon the need to enhance the literacy of students in the increasingly digitalized environment of the COVID-19 pandemic. This suggestion holds water because obviously there is a correlation between teachers' performance and students' perspectives, and the transfer of four skills in EFL largely depends upon the technological capability of the teacher to scaffold the learner psychologically as well as technologically. Examining the merits and demerits of "emergency distance education" during the pandemic, Karats & Tuncer (2020) focused on the sustainability of four language skills and found the situation more favorable for writing skills than for speaking skills. As for receptive skills, students got reading material in abundance, and synchronous listening faced disruptions from the teachers and the students. However, at the university level where programs like Blackboard Collaborate were available, recorded lectures facilitated the students in the audio and visual domain. On the contrary, there is another study that claims EFL students performed better in listening and speaking (Destianingsih & Satria, 2020).

Also, Blackboard in this exigency emerged as a boon in countries like Saudi Arabia. However, the investigations illustrate that the need for making it more efficient in the light of the students' experience increased manifold in Saudi universities. The findings of a study conducted regarding studying the courses of English language virtually during the spread of COVID-19 from students' perceptions at Najran University found that the use of Blackboard was very wholesome despite all issues that create momentary disruptions (Almekhlafy, 2020). Dahmash (2020) explored the pros and cons of blended learning from the EFL learners' perspectives at King Saud University without making any particular reference to four skills development. The study used Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and individual interviews to get data in qualitative terms. The findings revealed that online learning was beneficial for the students as it came up to the occasion when face-to-face education was completely suspended. Besides, it turned out to be easy and economical during quarantine days. It was challenging at the same time because of technical issues, the flawed performance of teachers, and problems in online tests. This study leaves a big gap in evaluating how Blackboard performed as a single tool for the development of four EFL skills. Apart from students' perceptions, studies were also conducted for the perspectives of EFL instructors. Al-Nofaie (2020), who attempts to evaluate the perceptions of learners at Taif University about online instruction during the coronavirus outbreak, discovered that educating the learners online "is not as appealing as projected in many of the corresponding studies.

Nonetheless, the students were found more in favor of having instruction asynchronously because it is flexible enough for them to study at any time. The focus of this study is general irrespective of their disciplines. More recently, a case study of Saudi universities evaluating the perceptions of EFL undergraduates and instructors seems to be similar to the current study, but a deep insight reveals a big gap. Like the other studies reviewed above, Khafaga (2021) focused on the teaching-learning process in terms of attendance, classes, assessment, participation, and examinations rather than evaluating Blackboard Collaborate as a tool specifically for language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing from the perceptions of EFL students.

Hence, such a discrepancy leaves much space to re-evaluate the efficacy of Blackboard tools from EFL learners' perspectives for sustaining the four language skills. Whereas most of the studies carried out in the COVID-19 context showed overall satisfaction with online learning, research conducted at Taibah University, Saudi Arabia, posited dissatisfaction of EFL students with virtual arrangements because their language learning performance was not up to the mark. The challenges involved technological issues, academic performance, and communicative obstacles (Mahyoob, 2020). Regarding studies that investigated Blackboard's efficiency in instructing the four English language skills, they investigated skills single or two of four skills. For example, (Alzmor et al., 2013) investigated the EFL students' perception at King Khalid University about the advantages and limitations of integrating face-to-face classes into blending one through Blackboard learning. The study indicated that hybrid instruction in general and Blackboard in particular helped in developing students' reading comprehension skills and building their vocabulary. In addition to that, Elsayed (2022) conducted a qualitative study that investigated the benefits and challenges of using Blackboard Collaborate as a learning tool by EFL university preparatory program students during COVID-19 at Qassim University. He found that Blackboard developed listening and speaking skills. Alhaider (2023) is the only study that investigated the four language skills titled "Teaching and learning the four English skills before and during the COVID-19 era: perceptions of EFL faculty and students in Saudi higher education". This study took place at King Khalid University. It investigated the perceptions of EFL faculty and learners regarding the effectiveness of Blackboard in developing four English language skills before and during the pandemic. The study revealed different perceptions among EFL faculty and learners. The findings revealed that instruction through Blackboard was most useful for writing skills development and least useful for developing speaking skills.

The University of Tabuk is one of the Universities that shifted to online learning during COVID-19. One study conducted at the University of Tabuk after COVID-19 investigated a single skill (writing). Al Khotaba (2022) evaluated EFL undergraduate students' perceptions toward learning basic writing skills through Blackboard. The finding revealed that students have a positive perception toward learning basic writing skills through Blackboard.

From the overview of the previously conducted studies, it can be concluded that most of the studies evaluated or investigated the overall views of the students and teachers about the performance of various language management systems, specifically Blackboard which is more commonly used in Saudi Arabia. The most concentration has been on the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching and learning during the pandemic. Additionally, most of the studies have investigated students' perceptions toward one or two of the skills. However, none of these studies goes deep enough to analyze the learners' perceptions about the specific features of Blackboard as LMS and collaborative virtual classes for learning English language skills among students, instructors, and Blackboard itself. No study evaluated the helpfulness of Blackboard in connecting instructors and students by asking questions to students and receiving feedback from instructors. Learning skills occur when a potent virtual connection between the teachers and students is established particularly in the current dimensionality of the pandemic (Hakim, 2020). Besides, the completion of tasks needs interactions between students and students, as well as between students and teachers (Layali & Shlowiy, 2020). There needs to be more studies on

Blackboard's efficiency in promoting all four English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) considering the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly at the University of Tabuk. Therefore, there is a necessity for more studies that investigate Blackboard's efficiency for all four skills. At Tabuk University, there was only one study that evaluated one skill. Hence, the current study aims to explore an area that still needs in-depth investigation in a theoretical framework most relevant in an increasingly digitalized era after COVID-19 broke out in the world. Also, this study would contribute to the present body of knowledge on Blackboard's efficiency as an online learning tool for four English language instruction in circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Methodology

This study utilized a quantitative methodology represented in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed with the help of GPTChat version 4.00 (2023). Two experts in the field of TESOL reviewed the questionnaire and approved utilizing it in this study. Data were collected from students at the Faculty of Computer and Information Tech at the University of Tabuk, Saudi Arabia. Students completed English 1 and 2 in the first academic year which is equivalent to B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Confirmatory factor analysis was used for questionnaire validation and reliability of the measurement scales. Data was collected from 125 students who participated in completing this questionnaire. IBM SPSS Statistics 27.0 software was used in analyzing data and data was summarized via descriptive statistics. The study was done according to the research ethics of human subjects which ensure the protection of privacy

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Validity is the most important property to consider when creating or selecting an instrument for information collection because the instrument must measure what it is intended to measure (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017). Reliability is the degree to which the same instrument provides a similar score when used repeatedly (Thyer, 2009). In this study data validity and reliability were examined by running confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on data collected from questionnaires answered by 125 students. CFA is a method of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), used to assess the unidimensionality, Validity, and Reliability of a latent construct. The CFA was performed using the software AMOS version 24.

Data Analysis Results

In this chapter, the results and analysis of the questionnaire data are presented with the aim of achieving the main research objective of evaluating students' perceptions toward blackboard as the sole medium of learning the language four skills during covid the COVID-19 pandemic. The study instrument (the questionnaire) was validated by performing a confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 24.0 software, and statistical procedures were performed to answer research questions using IBM SPSS Statistics 27.0 software.

Instrument Validation

The CFA was used to assess the unidimensionality, Validity and Reliability of the used questionnaire. Based on Stevens (2002) and Fabriger et al. (1999) recommendations, the sample size was considered adequate. The ratio of the sample size in the current study to the number of items was almost 5:1 (125:24). The researcher used modification indices (MI) for pairs of correlated errors, as shown in Figure 1. As recommended by Kline (2005), model chi-square, RMSEA, 90% confidence interval for RMSEA, CFI, and SRMR were reported. Determination for statistical consistency was tested using Chi-square (χ^2), relative Chi-square (χ^2/df), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Results in Table 1 showed consistency between the model and empirical data i.e., $\chi^2 = 393.051$, $df = 240$, $\chi^2/df = 1.638$, $CFI = 0.904$, $SRMR = 0.068$, and $RMSEA = 0.072$. Findings conformed to the concept of Kline (2005) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2007).

Figure 1: English Skills Measurement Model.

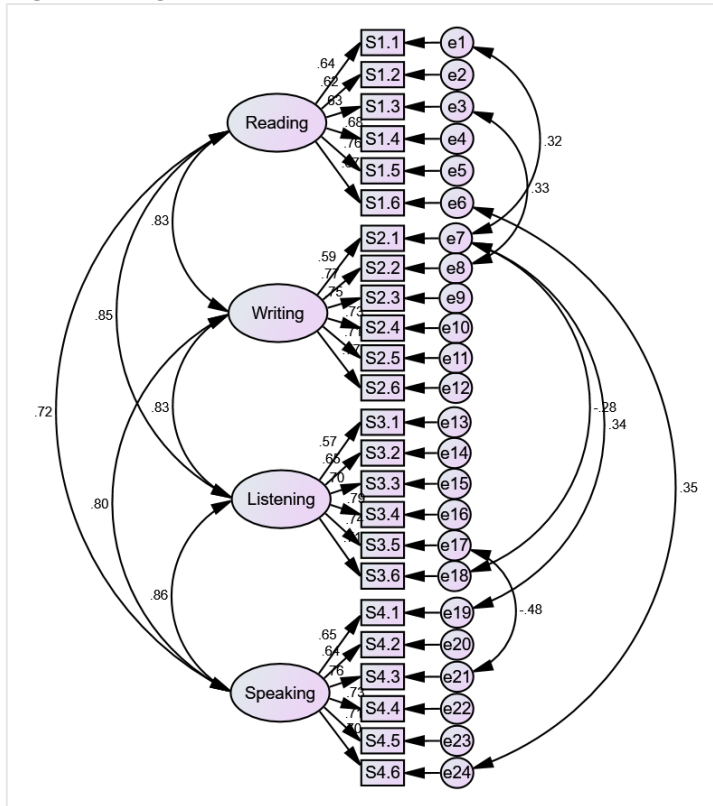


Table 1: The Fitness Indices for the Measurement Model.

| Fit Indices | Cut-off Value | Obtained Value | Comment |
|-------------|---------------|------------------|---|
| χ^2 | None | 393.051 | - |
| χ^2/df | < 2 | 1.638 | Adequate (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007) |
| CFI | > .90 | .904 | Reasonably good fit (Kline, 2005) |
| SRMR | < .08 | .068 | Favourable (Kline, 2005) |
| RMSEA | < .08 | .072 [.059,.084] | Reasonable error of approximation (Kline, 2005) |

Psychometric Evaluation of the Measurement Model

The measures, presented in Table 2, indicate the validity and reliability of the model constructs. Unidimensionality of the model constructs was achieved as all items had factor loadings above 0.6 (Afthanorhan, 2017). Although item 1 in Writing and item 1 in Listening had lower factor loadings, they were retained as their factor loadings exceeded 0.55. The validity of the measurement model could be achieved through the following.

The results in Table 2 demonstrate convergent validity as factor loading values of all observed variables are significant and above 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Cronbach’s alpha (α) values range between 0.830 and 0.867, which satisfies the minimum threshold of 0.6 for exploratory research (Hair et al., 2006; Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991). Composite reliability (CR) is used to test the internal reliability of measurement models, all CR values reported in were above 0.7. AVE values ranged between 0.450 to 0.525, demonstrating convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 2: The CFA Report for Model Constructs.

| Construct/Item | Factor Loading | α | CR AVE |
|---|----------------|-------------|------------------|
| Reading | | .830 | .830 .450 |
| 1. Blackboard helped me to develop reading skills during remote learning? | .644 | | |
| 2. Blackboard has provided resources (e.g., textbooks, articles, online readings) that have enhanced my reading skills. | .620 | | |
| 3. Blackboard offered interactive reading activities that have improved my comprehension skills. | .633 | | |
| 4. Blackboard has provided timely feedback on my reading assignments, which has helped me improve my English reading skills. | .683 | | |
| 5. The reading materials provided on Blackboard are engaging and cover a range of topics. | .761 | | |
| 6. The feedback I receive from my instructor on my reading skills is helpful and timely. | .673 | | |
| Writing | | .867 | .868 .525 |
| 1. Blackboard helped me to develop writing skills during remote learning? | .590 | | |
| 2. Blackboard has offered writing resources (e.g., writing guides, grammar exercises) that have enhanced my writing skills. | .775 | | |
| 3. Blackboard has provided writing assignments that have improved my ability to express ideas in writing. | .754 | | |
| 4. Blackboard has provided timely feedback on my writing assignments, which has helped me improve my writing proficiency. | .733 | | |
| 5. The writing activities on Blackboard are engaging and relevant. | .707 | | |
| 6. The feedback I receive from my instructor on my writing skills is helpful and timely. | .771 | | |
| Listening | | .846 | .849 .486 |
| 1. Blackboard helped me to develop listening skills during remote learning? | .573 | | |
| 2. Blackboard has offered audio and video materials online discussions, audio recordings that have enhanced my listening comprehension skills. | .654 | | |
| 3. Blackboard has provided listening exercises and activities that have improved my ability to understand spoken English. | .702 | | |
| 4. Blackboard has provided timely feedback on my listening assignments, which has helped me improve English listening skill. | .789 | | |
| 5. The listening materials provided on Blackboard are engaging and diverse. | .738 | | |
| 6. The feedback I receive from my instructor on my listening skills is helpful and timely. | .707 | | |
| Speaking | | .849 | .851 .488 |
| 1. Blackboard helped me to develop speaking skills during remote learning. | .639 | | |
| 2. Blackboard has provided opportunities for interactive speaking practice (e.g., online discussions, video conferences) that have improved my speaking skills. | .763 | | |
| 3. Blackboard has offered speaking activities and assignments that have enhanced my ability to communicate orally in English. | .726 | | |
| 4. Blackboard has provided feedback and assessments on my speaking assignments, which have helped me improve my spoken English proficiency. | .709 | | |
| 5. The speaking topics and materials provided on Blackboard are engaging and cover a range of topics. | .697 | | |
| 6. The feedback I receive from my instructor on my speaking skills is helpful and timely. | .649 | | |

The Construct Validity for the measurement model was achieved as all Fitness Indices met the required level as shown in Table 1.

Discriminant validity was examined by the factor correlation matrix in Table 3 that shows the square root of AVE's on the diagonal cells, which is a measure of variance between construct and its indicators, and the off-diagonal cells represent squared correlations between constructs (Cooper & Zmud, 1990; Hair et al., 1998). In addition, another criterion was adopted, the correlation between the constructs should not exceed 0.85. As shown in Table 3, the correlations reported in the cells above the diagonal values, ranged between 0.611 and 0.732, which do not exceed the cutoff of 0.85. This indicates that the constructs neither are redundant nor have multicollinearity issues (Awang, 2014), and that the discriminant validity was established.

Table 3: The Discriminant Validity Index Summary for the Construct.

| | Reading | Writing | Listening | Speaking |
|-----------|---------|---------|-----------|----------|
| Reading | .671 | .721** | .731** | .611** |
| Writing | .681 | .724 | .715** | .688** |
| Listening | .726 | .687 | .697 | .732** |
| Speaking | .521 | .638 | .736 | .698 |

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

In conclusion, the results of instrument validation process indicate that the questionnaire is statistically valid and reliable and can be used for further analysis.

Results and Discussion

Generally, students showed an overall positive perception toward the blackboard as the sole medium of the four language learning skills during covid the COVID-19 pandemic. Generally, 56.1% of responses were between “agree” or “strongly agree”, indicating that most students showed their agreement with the language skills measurements proposed by the researcher. A grand mean score of 3.40 with a standard deviation of 0.780 was calculated indicating above average general students' perception. In addition, the relative percentage (calculated as the mean divided by the 5-point Likert scale) R% of 68.0% indicates a positive perception level, which is above average. This finding is similar to other studies that found the efficiency of Blackboard in English language learning (Almekhlafy, 2020 and Dahmash 2020).

Reading Skills

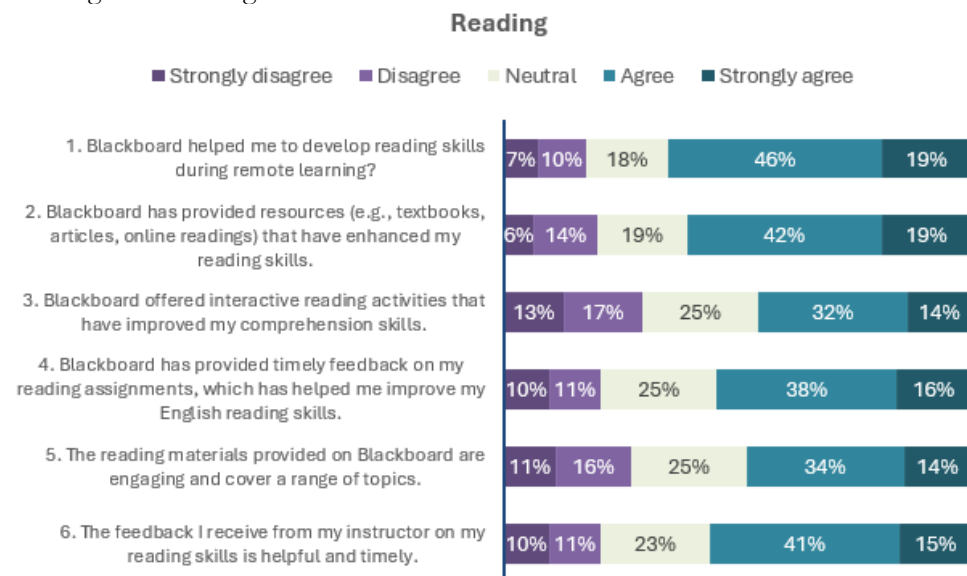
Studying the six measures of students' perceptions toward the blackboard as the sole medium of the Reading skill during covid the Covid-19 pandemic, students showed relatively good perceptions with R% ranging from 63.4% for item 3 (blackboard offered interactive reading activities that have improved my comprehension skills) to 71.8% for item 1 (blackboard helped me to develop reading skills during remote learning), with an overall good perception of 67.8%. From the statistics reported in Table 4 and the chart shown in Figure 2, it can be said that the blackboard mostly helped students to develop reading skills during remote learning (R% = 71.8%) and has provided resources (e.g., textbooks, articles, online readings) that have enhanced their reading skills (R% = 70.8%). Generally, the results of responses showed that students had a positive perception toward Blackboard for developing reading skills. This finding is similar to other study that found the efficiency of Blackboard in developing reading skills (Al Zumor, Al Refaai, Eddin, & Al-Rahman, 2013) and in providing reading materials (Karats & Tuncer,2020)

Table 4: Descriptive Summary of Students' Perceptions toward blackboard as the sole medium of learning the Reading skills during covid the Covid-19 pandemic.

| Reading Skill | Scale (n/%)* | | | | | Statistics** | | |
|--|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|-------|
| | SD | D | N | A | SA | M | StdD | R% |
| 1. Blackboard helped me to develop reading skills during remote learning? | 9 | 13 | 22 | 57 | 24 | 3.59 | 1.129 | 71.8% |
| 2. Blackboard has provided resources (e.g., textbooks, articles, online readings) that have enhanced my reading skills. | 8 | 17 | 24 | 52 | 24 | 3.54 | 1.140 | 70.8% |
| 3. Blackboard offered interactive reading activities that have improved my comprehension skills. | 16 | 21 | 31 | 40 | 17 | 3.17 | 1.236 | 63.4% |
| 4. Blackboard has provided timely feedback on my reading assignments, which has helped me improve my English reading skills. | 12 | 14 | 31 | 48 | 20 | 3.40 | 1.171 | 68.0% |
| 5. The reading materials provided on Blackboard are engaging and cover a range of topics. | 14 | 20 | 31 | 42 | 18 | 3.24 | 1.214 | 64.8% |
| 6. The feedback I receive from my instructor on my reading skills is helpful and timely. | 12 | 14 | 29 | 51 | 19 | 3.41 | 1.165 | 68.2% |
| Overall Perception | 9.5% | 13.2% | 22.4% | 38.7% | 16.3% | 3.39 | .865 | 67.8% |

*. SD: Strongly disagree, D: Disagree, N: Neutral, A: Agree, SA: Strongly agree

**.: M: Mean, StdD: Standard Deviation, R%: Relative Percentage (calculated by dividing the mean/5)

Figure 2: Bar Chart of Students' Perceptions Toward Blackboard as the Sole Medium of Learning the Reading Skills During Covid the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Writing Skills

The descriptive statistics reported in Table 5 indicate an overall positive perception of the blackboard as the sole medium of learning the Writing skills during covid the Covid-19 pandemic, R% = 64.4%, which is above average. The relative percentage ranged between 56.5% for item 1 (blackboard helped me to develop writing skills during remote learning) and 68.2% for item 6 (the feedback I receive from my instructor on my writing skills is helpful and timely). This suggests that the blackboard helped students to develop reading skills more than writing skills during remote learning. However, the blackboard was helpful for students to get timely

feedback on their writing skills. The different percentage of responses categories are illustrated in Figure 3. Generally, these findings indicate that Blackboard would help learn English writing skills, as the only method of instruction in case of circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic. This result is similar to Dahmash (2020), Karats & Tuncer (2020), Al Khotaba (2022), and Alhaider (2023) who found that blackboard instruction is a beneficial tool for developing writing skills. Importantly, Blackboard may not be as efficient as other tools in learning writing skills. Therefore, instructors should offer more resources and activities via Blackboard to ensure the sufficiency of online writing skills instruction.

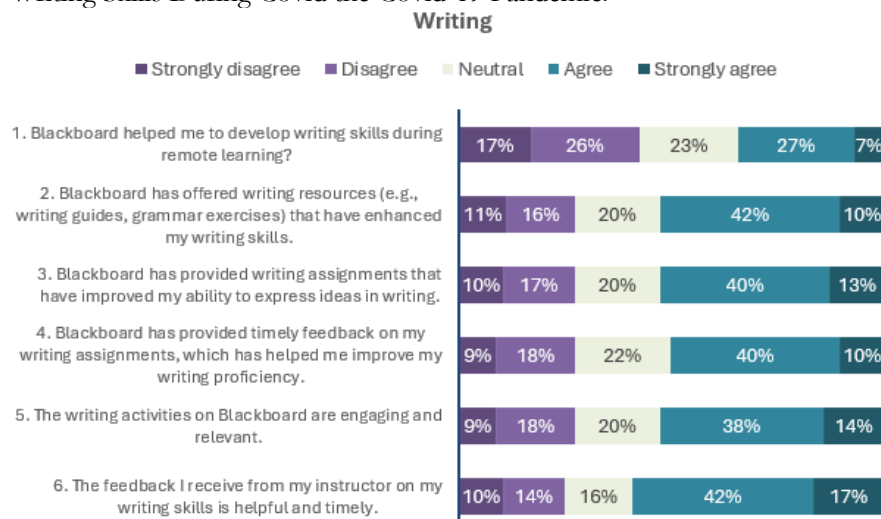
Table 5: Descriptive Summary of Students' Perceptions toward Blackboard as the Sole Medium of Learning the Writing Skills During Covid the Covid-19 Pandemic.

| Writing Skill | Scale (n/%)* | | | | | Statistics** | |
|---|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------------|
| | SD | D | N | A | SA | M | StdD R% |
| 1. Blackboard helped me to develop writing skills during remote learning? | 21 | 32 | 29 | 34 | 9 | 2.82 | 1.212 56.5% |
| 2. Blackboard has offered writing resources (e.g., writing guides, grammar exercises) that have enhanced my writing skills. | 14 | 20 | 25 | 53 | 13 | 3.25 | 1.182 65.0% |
| 3. Blackboard has provided writing assignments that have improved my ability to express ideas in writing. | 13 | 21 | 25 | 50 | 16 | 3.28 | 1.195 65.6% |
| 4. Blackboard has provided timely feedback on my writing assignments, which has helped me improve my writing proficiency. | 11 | 23 | 28 | 50 | 13 | 3.25 | 1.141 65.0% |
| 5. The writing activities on Blackboard are engaging and relevant. | 11 | 23 | 25 | 48 | 18 | 3.31 | 1.187 66.2% |
| 6. The feedback I receive from my instructor on my writing skills is helpful and timely. | 13 | 18 | 20 | 53 | 21 | 3.41 | 1.225 68.2% |
| Overall Perception | 11.1% | 18.3% | 20.3% | 38.4% | 12.0% | 3.22 | .924 64.4% |

*. *SD*: Strongly disagree, *D*: Disagree, *N*: Neutral, *A*: Agree, *SA*: Strongly agree

***M*: Mean, *StdD*: Standard Deviation, *R%*: Relative Percentage (calculated by dividing the mean/ 5)

Figure 3: Bar Chart of Students' Perceptions Toward Blackboard as the Sole Medium of Learning the Writing Skills During Covid the Covid-19 Pandemic.



Listening Skills

Students' perceptions of the blackboard as the sole medium of learning the Listening skills during covid the

Covid-19 pandemic were the most positive among other language skills, R% = 70.0%. The highest perceptions were for item 2 (blackboard has offered audio and video materials online discussions, audio recordings that have enhanced my listening comprehension skills) with R% of 74.7% and item 3 (blackboard has provided listening exercises and activities that have improved my ability to understand spoken English) with R% of 71.7%. Also, with R% of 69.3%, the Blackboard helped students to develop their listening skills during remote learning. This finding is similar to other studies that have found the efficiency of Blackboard in developing listening comprehension skills (Destianingsih & Satria, 2020, Elsayed 2022).

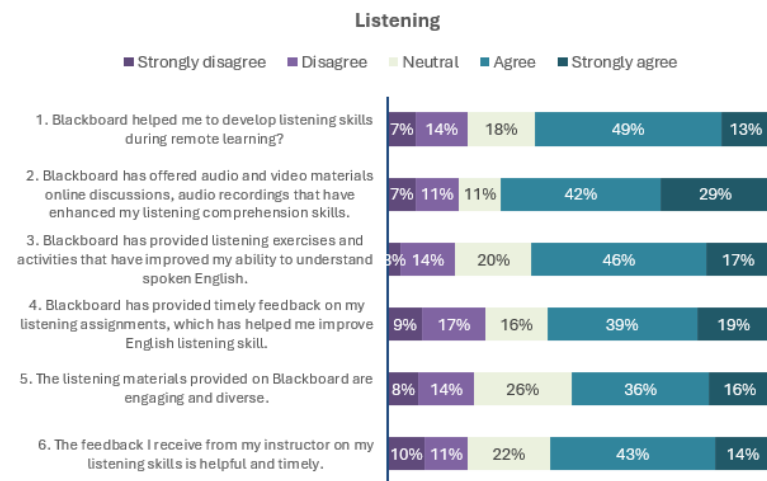
Table 6: Descriptive Summary of Students’ Perceptions Toward Blackboard as the Sole Medium of Learning the Listening Skills During Covid the Covid-19 Pandemic.

| Listening Skills | Scale (n/%)* | | | | | Statistics** | |
|--|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|------------|
| | SD | D | N | A | SA | M | StdD R% |
| 1. Blackboard helped me to develop listening skills during remote learning? | 9 | 17 | 22 | 61 | 16 | 3.461.104 | 69.3% |
| 2. Blackboard has offered audio and video materials online discussions, audio recordings that have enhanced my listening comprehension skills. | 9 | 14 | 14 | 52 | 36 | 3.741.199 | 74.7% |
| 3. Blackboard has provided listening exercises and activities that have improved my ability to understand spoken English. | 4 | 18 | 25 | 57 | 21 | 3.581.033 | 71.7% |
| 4. Blackboard has provided timely feedback on my listening assignments, which has helped me improve English listening skill. | 11 | 21 | 20 | 49 | 24 | 3.431.227 | 68.6% |
| 5. The listening materials provided on Blackboard are engaging and diverse. | 10 | 18 | 32 | 45 | 20 | 3.381.155 | 67.5% |
| 6. The feedback I receive from my instructor on my listening skills is helpful and timely. | 12 | 14 | 27 | 54 | 18 | 3.421.158 | 68.3% |
| Overall Perception | 7.3% | 13.6% | 18.7% | 42.4% | 18.0% | 3.50 | .862 70.0% |

*. SD: Strongly disagree, D: Disagree, N: Neutral, A: Agree, SA: Strongly agree

** M: Mean, StdD: Standard Deviation, R%: Relative Percentage (calculated by dividing the mean/5)

Figure 4: Bar Chart of Students’ Perceptions Toward Blackboard as the Sole Medium of Learning the Listening Skills During Covid the Covid-19 Pandemic.



Speaking Skills

Overall students’ perception about the blackboard as the sole medium of learning the Speaking skills during covid the Covid-19 pandemic was relatively high, R% = 69.6%. This finding corresponds with previous studies that have proved the possibility of Blackboard to aid in developing speaking skills in different

contexts (Ismail Al-Oqaily et al., 2022, Destianingsih & Satria, 2020 and Elsayed2022) and Contradict with Alhaider (2023) who found that learning via Blackboard was least useful for developing speaking skills.

The relative percentages for the six measurements ranged between 64.6% for item 1 (blackboard helped me to develop speaking skills during remote learning) and 72.6% for item 6 (the feedback I received from my instructor on my speaking skills is helpful and timely). In comparison with other language skills, Speaking skills had the most engaging materials and helpful and timely feedback.

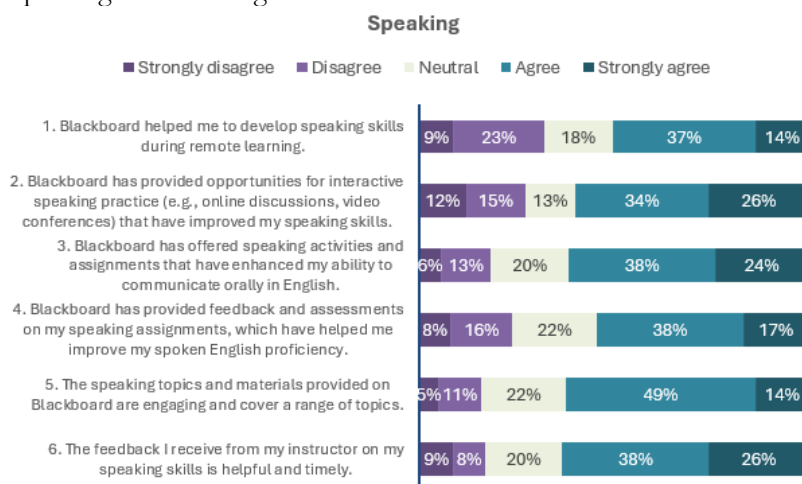
Table 7: Descriptive Summary of Students' Perceptions Toward Blackboard as the Sole Medium of Learning the Speaking Skills During Covid the Covid-19 Pandemic.

| Speaking Skills | Scale (n/%)* | | | | | Statistics** | |
|---|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| | SD | D | N | A | SA | M | StdD R% |
| 1. Blackboard helped me to develop speaking skills during remote learning. | 11 8.8% | 29 23.2% | 22 17.6% | 46 36.8% | 17 13.6% | 3.231 | 1.206 64.6% |
| 2. Blackboard has provided opportunities for interactive speaking practice (e.g., online discussions, video conferences) that have improved my speaking skills. | 15 12.0% | 19 15.2% | 16 12.8% | 43 34.4% | 32 25.6% | 3.461 | 1.341 69.3% |
| 3. Blackboard has offered speaking activities and assignments that have enhanced my ability to communicate orally in English. | 7 5.6% | 16 12.8% | 25 20.0% | 47 37.6% | 30 24.0% | 3.621 | 1.149 72.3% |
| 4. Blackboard has provided feedback and assessments on my speaking assignments, which have helped me improve my spoken English proficiency. | 10 8.0% | 20 16.0% | 27 21.6% | 47 37.6% | 21 16.8% | 3.391 | 1.177 67.8% |
| 5. The speaking topics and materials provided on Blackboard are engaging and cover a range of topics. | 6 4.8% | 14 11.2% | 27 21.6% | 61 48.8% | 17 13.6% | 3.551 | 1.020 71.0% |
| 6. The feedback I receive from my instructor on my speaking skills is helpful and timely. | 11 8.8% | 10 8.0% | 25 20.0% | 47 37.6% | 32 25.6% | 3.631 | 1.202 72.6% |
| Overall Perception | 8.0% | 14.4% | 18.9% | 38.8% | 19.9% | 3.48 | .895 69.6% |

*. SD: Strongly disagree, D: Disagree, N: Neutral, A: Agree, SA: Strongly agree

** M: Mean, StdD: Standard Deviation, R%: Relative Percentage (calculated by dividing the mean/ 5)

Figure 5: Bar Chart of Students' Perceptions Toward Blackboard as the Sole Medium Of Learning The Speaking Skills During Covid the Covid-19 Pandemic



Conclusion

This study examines students' perceptions toward the efficiency of the Blackboard as the sole medium of

learning English language four skills during covid the COVID-19 pandemic. It can be noted that the Listening was the top developed skill via Blackboard instruction during COVID-19. The second highest perception was related to Speaking skills. Reading skills come in the third position while Writing skills come last.

In terms of what the blackboard provides for each language skill, the blackboard was the most helpful in developing reading skills and provided resources mostly for listening skills, offered interactive activities more for listening and speaking skills, offered engaging materials more for speaking skills, and most feedback for speaking skills was helpful and timely. Finally, the finding of this study supports connectivism theory. Teaching students via Blackboard as a sole medium of instruction, offered them many opportunities to develop their four English language skills. Therefore, ESL instructors can consider Blackboard as an efficient platform for teaching English language skills, specifically for reading, listening, and speaking skills. Regarding writing skills, instructors should be aware of the shortages of Blackboard in supporting this skill. To develop Blackboard's efficiency for this skill, instructors should ensure offering Blackboard with more resources, activities, and helpful feedback.

Limitation

This study is only conducted among male students at the Faculty of Computer and Information Technology

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