

## The Impact of e-learning platform and social networking tools on teaching English

تأثير منصة التعلم الإلكتروني وأدوات التواصل الاجتماعي على تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية

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Date de réception 15/08/2021

Date d'acceptation 26/02/2022

### Abstract:

The aim of this study is to undertake a research on the impact of the e-learning platform Moodle vs. the social networking tools on English language learners' effective learning. It represents a user testing research based on the student's experience using both tools for learning in a foreign language (FL) department more specifically, the department of English at Djillali Liabes University, Sidi Bel Abbes, Algeria. It attempts to show the way students learn English as digital users. Our target population in this study is the third-year LMD students. For this purpose, a mixed approach was used as a data collection tool. As expected, the findings revealed the poor use of Moodle platform compared to the use of social networks by our students and pointed to the ability of the mis-integration of that digital technology as the main factor sharing responsibility for this challenging situation. At last, it suggests some solutions that can be helpful for an EFL learner in the English department or any other student from FL departments.

**Keywords:** English language teaching/learning, E-learning platform (Moodle), social networking tools (Facebook).

### ملخص:

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو إجراء بحث حول تأثير منصة التعلم الإلكتروني موودل مقابل أدوات الشبكات الاجتماعية على التعلم الفعال لتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية. إنه يمثل بحثًا تجريبيًا يعتمد على تجربة الطالب في استخدام كلتا الأدوات للتعلم في قسم اللغة الأجنبية ، بشكل أكثر تحديدًا ، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة جيلالي ليايس ، سيدي بلعباس ، الجزائر. نحاول من خلال هذه الدراسة إظهار الطريقة التي يعتمد عليها طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كمستخدمين رقميين للغة الأجنبية. الشريحة المستهدفة لهذا الغرض في هذه الدراسة هم طلاب السنة الثالثة نظام ليسانس، ماستر، دكتوراه (ل/م/د)، تم استخدام نهج مختلط كأداة لجمع البيانات. كما هو متوقع ، كشفت النتائج عن الاستخدام السيئ لمنصة موودل مقارنة باستخدام الشبكات الاجتماعية من قبل طلابنا ،

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وأشارت إلى مدى سوء دمج تلك التكنولوجيا الرقمية كعامل رئيسي في تقاسم المسؤولية عن هذا الموقف الصعب. أخيراً ، نقترح بعض الحلول التي يمكن أن تكون مفيدة لمتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية أو أي طلاب آخرين من أقسام اللغات الأخرى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعليم / تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية ، منصة التعلم الإلكتروني (موودل) ، أدوات التواصل الاجتماعي (فيسبوك)

## 1- Introduction:

More than any time before, the use of e-learning platforms has been a life buoy that all teachers and educators have resorted to at a time of unprecedented pandemics. However, our learners are most of the time keen on using social networking tools that are connected to on a daily basis.

The present paper attempt to show the impact of the social networking tools use vs. the e-learning platform use, on learners' learning achievement in the module of ESP at the English language department of Djilali Liabes University. By e-learning platform we mean learning through Moodle and by the social networking tools we refer to just one of them; commonly used by students on the internet i.e., Facebook. The module of ESP learning and teaching is challenging and time-consuming for both learners and teachers. By using social networking tools or/and the e-learning platform we can reduce time and increase the students learning process. In this paper, we first present some teaching methodologies variants of a foreign language especially in teaching the module of ESP then a brief comparison between e-learning and social networking tools for teaching English will be made. Finally, we will attempt to answer the following questions related to the research: (1) Do our students integrate technology in their learning process? (2) Is the e-learning platform an appropriate substitute for social networking tools in the module of ESP? (3) Do our students develop the skills needed to use technology?

## 2- Review of Literature.

The development of information and communication technology has a noticeable influence on General English and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching and learning. English for Specific Purposes is not a specific language variation, it is a second or a foreign language teaching whose crucial goal is to be adapted to specific

learners' needs and their reasons for learning (Hutchinson, 1989). This means that the use of technologies in teaching or learning the module of ESP does not differ from their use in General English. Due to the fast spread use of technologies, especially computers and the Internet, and, more recently, mobile telephony, the ways they are used have also changed. During the early phase of ESP development, research focused on English for Science and Technology (EST) in academic settings and involved statistical grammatical counts within written discourse (Johns, 2013). By the 1980s, new technologies have found their application in ESP pedagogy. Likewise, Learners' needs have been significantly influenced by the use of technology which changed in parallel with the technological development where communication and interaction are in focus. Sykes, Oskoz & Thorne *in* (Laakkonen, 2011(pp. 10-28). ) consider that internet changes the position of students from consumers to producers and creators. Today, teachers and students are at the forefront of technology especially to select the adequate materials and contribute to develop their skills in learning. Therefore, using modern technologies becomes vital. In addition, (Wang, (2012))claims that the research in Second Language Acquisition has moved from cognitive to social orientation, underlining that this alteration coincides with the most important characteristics of technologies, such as accessibility, communication, sharing of information, and collaboration.

Regardless of whether the technologies are well integrated or not, teachers have to rethink their roles and students have to know that the use of technology is not different from a drill in the classroom. As a teacher is usually responsible for the selection of suitable technology in teaching, depending on the skill(s) they want to focus on, it is necessary to achieve the following objectives in technology-assisted learning: to identify the needs of students, to choose the appropriate technology, and to learn how this technology is used.

There are many existing tools available on the web, among which the most widely held and known by our students are Moodle and Facebook as productive online tools for teaching and learning. Both of them are free tools. Moodle, an acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment, is a formal e-learning platform while Facebook (FB) is an informal social network, but they play an

important role in the student's academic life as well as their social life. Our Comparisons were drawn from students' course preferences and attitudes toward English as a foreign language online course delivered through Moodle, and the same course delivered with the addition of FB as an online tool to support communication and interaction among the members of the learning community.

### **3- Methodology**

A mixed research method was used in this study since our online questionnaire, as a quantitative research tool, was formulated based on the observation, as a qualitative research tool, in order to gather data subjectively from students during their on-sit lectures.

#### **3.1 Setting and Participants**

The research was carried out among students at the English Department (ED) of Djillali Liabes University, Sidi Bel Abbes during the academic year 2019-20. We anticipated that the students in the (ED) used different technologies; we were keen to find out about the students attitudes towards the use of e-learning platform Moodle and / or social network Facebook for learning. Our objective was to seek for their preferable form and way of learning.

The subjects for our work consisted of 30 students chosen to respond to the online survey in order to know their perception of the e-learning platform and social networking tools for learning as the official tool used during the COVID19 period.

#### **3.2 Online survey:**

The survey was based on a questionnaire to collect data. It included two parts:

- General information on technologies used and usage by learners
- Technologies-faced problems in the learning process

The first part includes general information on technologies use by learners in learning English; with nine questions; closed- ended and open-ended questions. Regarding the correspondence between the asked questions and the research aspects that each one of them intended to answer, it must be mentioned that questions 1-3 were used to collect data concerning the use of technologies in the educational setting by the participants, which refer to the first research question. As far as the technologies resources are

concerned, namely Moodle or Facebook, that EFL students use, questions 4-9 attempt to provide an answer.

The second part sought to determine major problems for the use of technologies in the module of ESP. In this part, we wanted to find out the main problems faced by the students while integrating the new technologies in their learning process and it included 06 items. Here the questionnaire was designed as a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 equals *most serious* as a faced problem, 2 equals *very serious* as problem, 3 equals *serious*, 4 equals *less serious* and 5 equals *not serious*. The respondents were asked to rate their current problems when they use technologies tasks. The data derived from this section were analysed and presented in Table: 4.2.2 below. .

The information obtained through the e-questionnaire was processed, computed and analysed by using a software named Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22,0 demonstrative one. Regarding the interpretation of the qualitative variable into the quantitative variable value, the 5-point Likert-type scale has been employed. Theoretically the Likert-type rating scale is divided into five levels scales rating from 5 to 1 as follows:

Content analysis	Positive rating	Negative rating
• Most of the time	5	1
• A lot of time	4	2
• Somewhat	3	3
• A little of the time	2	4
• Least of the time	1	5

**Table 3.2.1:** Content analysis of a 5-point Likert scale

The interpretation of the qualitative value of each question adopted the Likert-type rating scale by employing the following formula (Islam, 2020).)

$$scoring = \frac{highest\ score - lowest\ score}{5}$$

While the output of SPSS calculation is a set of frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviations are used in adequacy with the needed section. The statistical measurements used in the data interpretation were distributed according to the following sections:

#### **4- Results and Discussion**

The data collection from the online questionnaire were analysed, and statistical measures like percentages and frequencies were derived. We combined two or more questions from the same section to discuss a certain aspect of the study.

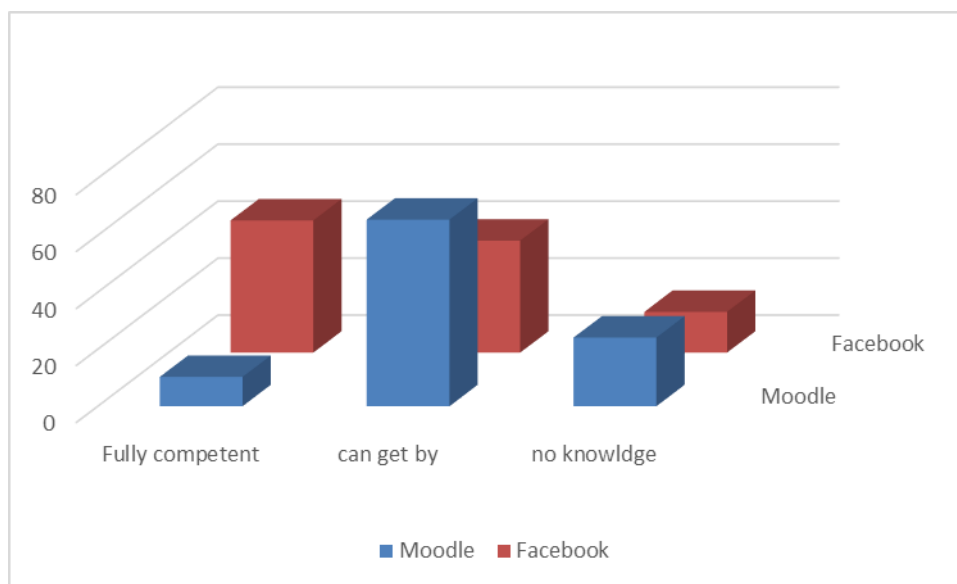
##### **4.1 Section One Results:**

Our questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first one consists of general information on technologies use and usage.

Regarding the correspondence between the questionnaire and the researched questions that each one intended to answer, it must be mentioned that questions (1-4) and (5-9) refer to the first and second research questions respectfully. Consequently, as far as the questions 1-4 were concerned, the aim was to collect data on the use of technological tools by the participants. Out of the 30 participants, 87% of the students make use of technologies while learning the English language, whereas 13% of them do not. Although almost all students use computers and mobiles, not all of them are enthusiastic about using technologies in or outside the classroom for the educational purposes. This was the reason why they ranked technology use as so important. In fact, they consider it as the best means of communication (36%). The second position is given to the main material for learning English language with (33%), the third rank is for the source of knowledge with (23%), and the last position is for the use of the language for prestige, the use of the language to denote a high degree of esteem and social value position is just (08%). Using some technologies may seem an easy task for them but working with them on one's own on a daily basis can be quite hard and time consuming, especially for learning purposes. Students said that the most adequate tool for learning ESP is the use of social networking Facebook with 47% and. 37% for the E-learning platform –Moodle- as a tool needed to learn ESP. 17% did choose neither Moodle nor Facebook. Trying to explain their preferences for the non-use of Facebook or Moodle, they suggest other tools like Google meet or Zoom.

Questions 5-9 concern the acceptability of the use of e-learning platform vs. Facebook for ESP teaching and learning process. The answers show the high degree of the unawareness by students concerning the use of the platform Moodle in their university. In fact, (3% ) of respondents think that it is a very good means of teaching and

learning , while (47%) consider it as a poor tool for learning ; 27% of them find an average means and 23% of them think that it is a good one. As far as the second research question is concerned, we asked them about how competent they think they are in using Moodle and / or the social network Facebook for learning. The results are presented in the following graph:



**Figure 4.1.1:** Students' competency in Moodle /Social network use

The aim behind this question was to ask students to evaluate their competency in using Moodle for learning. The majority of them (65.5%) believe that they can get by which means that they are able to deal with it with difficulty. 24.2 % admitted that they have no knowledge; which means that they need a training and only (10.3%) consider that they are fully competent. whereas, in using social networks Facebook for learning, the majority of them (46.4%) admitted being fully competent; which means that they use it correctly and do not need learning it. (39.3%) believe that they have an average level. 14.3% consider that they have no knowledge.

These findings were consolidated by the fact that 80% of students do not benefit from any training; they were not introduced to these new technologies. Their use was a consequence to the circumstances of the pandemics. 20% of students admitted having training on their own charges since they liked such kind of studying.

The last question in this section is concerned with the evaluation of lacks and needs and the results show that 70% face problems while using Moodle. They spoke about a

lack of training in it and the frequent blackouts of internet. (30%) did not mention any problem.

#### **4.2 Section two Results:**

In this part, we describe the major problems for the integration of technologies in the module of ESP at DLU. The data derived from this part were analysed using SPSS 22.0 version and presented in Table 4.2.2. The interpretation of the quantitative variable values were illustrated as follows:

Scoring level		Meaning
1.00	1.79	Most serious
1.80	2.59	Very serious
2.60	3.39	Serious
3.40	4.19	Less serious
4.20	5.00	Not serious

**Table 4.2.1:** The scoring level of interpretation



<b>Problems in using E-learning and social network</b>	<b>Most serious</b>	<b>Very serious</b>	<b>Serious</b>	<b>Less serious</b>	<b>Not serious</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>
❖ Formatting and pattering paragraphs to response to teachers email's	03.3%(01)	20%(06)	20%(06)	43.3%(13)	13.3%(04)	3,43	1,073
❖ Accessing to the Moodle platform.	30%(09)	33.3%(10)	16.7%(05)	16.7%(05)	03.3%(01)	2,30	1,179
❖ Using FB without connection	06.7%(02)	03.3%(01)	26.7%(08)	30% (09)	33.3%(10)	3,80	1,157
❖ Lack of basic knowledge on Moodle	36.7%(11)	40%(12)	13.3%(04)	03.3%(01)	06.7%(02)	2,03	1,129
❖ Sending an attached document by mail		10% (03)	30% (09)	26.7%(08)	33.3%(10)	3,83	1,020
❖ Attaching documents using FB	03.3%(01)	10% (03)	20%(06)	30% (09)	40%(12)	3,90	1,155
<b>Total</b>						3.21	

**Table 4.2.2:** Ranking of the problem areas in the use of technologies

It can be seen from the previous table that the total mean of problems in the use of technologies such as E-learning and social network was (mean= 3.21), at a “serious” level. When each area of the problem was ranked, accessing to the Moodle platform and formatting and patterning paragraphs to response to teachers emails were the first (mean= 3.43) and (mean=2.30) at “Very serious” level, followed by the lack of basic knowledge on Moodle (mean = 2.03) at “serious” level and Sending an attached document by mail ranked third (mean= 3.80) at a “serious” level.

Regarding Attaching documents using FB, the respondents ranked it the fourth with (mean=3.83) at a “Less serious” level. Finally, the problem least occurring was Using FB without connection (mean= 3.90) at a “Less serious” level too.

### **5- Data Analysis**

The data obtained from the two first sections of the e-questionnaire, with the focus on the answers to our questions (1) Do our students integrate technology in their learning process? (2) Is e-learning platform an appropriate substitute for social networking tools in ESP learning? (3) Do our students develop the skills needed to use technology?

We confirmed that students prefer using social networking for studying rather than Moodle. While combining the last question of the first section with the section two of the same e- questionnaire to verify the most common problem and its rate, it shows that the mis-integration and non-training of students to the new technology is the real problem that made them fear to use Moodle.

#### **5.1 The Students’ Wants and Expectations**

The students in DLU-ED are aware that they have to ameliorate their level in using new technologies because it became a real threat since they have to use it during the COVID19 context. They also distinguish between the use of E-learning platforms and social network advantages and drawbacks as they name it Facebook, which is more used because it doesn’t cost them money as it is for free but they admit that it is time wasting for learning. They are easily disturbed when using it for getting their lectures since they face themselves doing something else. For students, using FB as a learning tool may strengthen their motivation and engagement. Learners described their

satisfaction with learning through interaction and sharing with friends on FB. The findings demonstrate that students were comfortable with the social network rather than e-learning environment because they felt motivated by FB, as it is well-structured and easy to use.

## **6- Conclusion**

The use of technologies in teaching is the new reality imposing itself to teachers and learners today. These technologies are evolving at an accelerated pace. Their rapid growth requires constant updating of knowledge and know-how. Adapting them for integrating them correctly would be possible only if one had a good knowledge of the principles and concepts in this field. Technology can enhance the learning process. It is a decisive force for more growth and innovation. For this, our students must be trained in appropriately and effectively using it. Technological changes are inevitably leading to changes in education in general and in teaching languages in particular. So, they are becoming increasingly important and will be the new norm educators and learners would not do without. Therefore, rethinking our teaching methods, our contents, our evaluation means and our teaching and training objectives is a necessary step that requires the investment of doubled efforts to reach the required levels of competency in the use of technology in language teaching and learning.

To conclude, we suggest training for both teachers and students in order to get a profit from these currently free tools. Training could take into consideration some key aspects; on one hand; students' preferred tool. It is never too late to start developing and investigating their capacities in using Facebook, by creating a group in which they may learn how to use Moodle and by presenting its basic operations; it could motivate and empower them to get engaged in the subject. Students have to be aware about the benefits of the use of e-learning Moodle tool for language learning. On the other hand, Internet must be available for teaching, and consolidating the use of institutional e-mail as a medium for communication and collaboration between students and their teachers also.

We can deduce that the incorporation of ICT tools, Moodle or Facebook into teaching and learning English language encourage interaction and boost students' motivation. This fact may help them learn faster in a diverse way. In the end, what is worth noting was that students in UDL-FL found using Moodle or Facebook for learning as a valuable experience.

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