The Role of the Blackboard LMS in EFL Course Delivery During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Investigating Attitudes and Perceptions of Faculty and Students

Abdullah M. Almelhi[1]

[1] College of Languages & Translation, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia

Correspondence: Dr. Abdullah M. Almelhi, Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics, College of Languages & Translation, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia. E-mail: abdullah.almelhi@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper aimed to identify faculty perceptions of VLEs and their students' attitudes towards e-learning in the time of the pandemic. Towards this aim, the researcher used two surveys in a descriptive study to collect data from 47 EFL instructors and 103 students regarding a variety of constructs about e-learning effectiveness and attitudes, especially in the Corona virus time. Results indicated that the instructors' perceptions of the Blackboard LMS were greatly positive as to establishing efficient teacher-students' communication, facilitating students' comprehension, boosting up their instrumental motivation, engaging them in active, interactive learning, and creating instructor-students' rapport. The students' attitudes survey revealed that, overall, students had positive attitudes towards using Blackboard LMS during the pandemic due to convenience of use, platform availability, system quality and quality of e-learning over Blackboard. Other reasons include users' personal factors such as their satisfaction tendency, their self-confidence initiated by the VLE of Blackboard, their enjoyment of learning in this medium, the interesting and useful learning activities and tools as well as their staying safe in this mode of learning in the pandemic time. Other factors identified include the learners' willingness to continue learning via Blackboard and their expectation that full-time learning online would replace traditional face-to-face learning. The study concludes that teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes towards VLEs, with particular reference to Blackboard, could be valuable to faculty and institutions in their quality assurance efforts and the development of promising online courses and programs in EFL to satisfy the needs of students. Eventually, the study discusses suggested improvements and implications for e-learning on the Blackboard Lean platform as perceived by students and teachers alike to protect students through online education as an alternative to traditional education during the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in present and future waves of the pandemic.

Keywords: e-learning platform, blackboard, COVID-19 pandemic, EFL instructors' perceptions, EFL college students' attitudes

1. Introduction

By the time the COVID-19 Pandemic broke out in several countries, including Saudi Arabia, educational departments and universities started to transfer to blended learning partially and then finally to full online education via various education platforms. Total transfer to full online education may have a tangible influence on the quality of education provided at different levels of formal learning institutions.

EFL language instructors and their students in almost all schools in Saudi higher learning institutions are now using blended learning (BL) and virtual learning environments (VLEs) to deliver and teach e-courses over e-learning platforms to help promote teaching and learning, especially in foreign language education. Using these e-learning technologies has become widespread not only locally, but globally as well due to the rampant spread of COVID-19 pandemic (Al Thaqafi, 2020; Al-Qahtani, 2019; Altobaiti, 2020; Obaid, 2020; Alsowayegh, Bardesi, Garba, & Sipra, 2019; Bukhari & Basaffar, 2019; Gulnaz, Althomali, & Alzeer, 2020; Ja'ashan, 2020; Obaid, 2020). More specifically, BL and VLEs have been utilized in language learning and teaching environments over the past few decades. A dire need thus arises to investigate into the effectiveness of these electronic mediums of instruction and to tap into the opinions of individuals involved in learning and teaching

across these e-learning platforms in order to recognize their perceptions, views, concerns and the challenges likely to be encountered in these new milieus (Dayag, 2018; Sorbie, 2015; Vo, Zhu, & Diep, 2017; Webb, 2020; Weerasinghe, 2018).

As e-learning platforms and other assistive educational technology continue to expand and develop by leaps and bounds, higher education institutions race to adopt and adapt such technologies to harness them in the delivery and teaching of their courses online to help learners get connected, personalized and pro-learning styles, incentivized, and individualized approaches to learning and teaching (Bannister, 2016; Beard, 2017; Boulton, Kent, & Williams, 2018; Bower, Lee, & Dalgarno, 2017; Sorbie, 2015).

Many a researcher observed that university faculty often find difficulty in finding sources of authentic speech, written or oral, produced by professional native speakers but over YouTube and the like (See for instance, Gulbinskienė, Masoodi, & Šliogerienė, 2017; Han & Ellis, 2019; Vo, Mozelius, Jaldemark, Håkansson, & Lindqvist, 2018; Weerasinghe, 2018; Vo, Zhu, & Diep, 2017; Zeichner & Zilka, 2016). Online apps like YouTube can even be mashed up in the tools of e-learning platforms such as Blackboard®, thereby providing professional teaching materials or videos by expert native speakers. With such incremental hikes in technology use *in* and *for* education, faculty are transforming their courses to be delivered in a more personal, incentivized and individualized mode that caters to the needs of students in such a digital age (Beard, 2017; Bower, Lee, & Dalgarno, 2017; Sorbie, 2015).

In addition, to make foreign language teaching effective and convenient, educators need to form a natural and entertaining educational environment capable of promoting learners' motivation, arousing their interestedness, and encouraging them to learn the target language continually in class and at home (Gundogmus et al., 2016). The use of technology in virtual learning settings, before COVID-19, used to be voluntary and supplementary in many BL/VLEs, but with natural calamities and pandemics, face-to-face interactions become incredibly inaccessible and the use of alternative virtual education becomes necessarily inevitable.

This study, therefore, aims to introspect teachers' perceptions about the usefulness of the Blackboard LMS during the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of creating instructor-student rapport, engagement in active, interactive learning, facilitating students' comprehension, boosting up learners' instrumental motivation, and establishing efficient teacher-students' communication. It also aims to investigate the students' attitudes towards using Blackboard LMS during the pandemic as a technology solution to forced absence due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

2. Statement of the Problem

By the time the new Corona pandemic (Covid-19) hit the world since late 2019 up till now, human activities in the different walks of life have practically come to a halt when governments started to impose partial or complete lockdowns. In addition, the perils posed by the rife new Corona virus led to imposing social distancing controls in all countries, including KSA, now that schools and universities are highly vulnerable to the virus. With such a situation, Saudi authorities concerned with educational provisioning had to take precautionary measures to preclude the virus from diffusion among learner communities, while distance-learning was elect to be an unavoidable alternative. Switching to learning at a distance necessitated educational service providers to utilize all technical and educational methods and materials, including e-learning platforms and augmented reality technology. This alternative has also necessitated the development of awareness of digital skills among students and teachers. Therefore, assessing the perceptions and attitudes of teachers and students towards virtual education is significant for assessing the quality of the educational process as practiced at distance. The study, therefore, seeks to analyze the participants' perceptions and attitudes and discuss them against the extant literature in a quantitative analysis that relates both instructors' perceptions to students' attitudes.

3. Review of the Literature

There has been a growing demand for the integration of e-learning and e-teaching technology in teaching and learning foreign languages (Dayag, 2018; Fabbian, Carney, & Grgurovic, 2017; Gulbinskienė, Masoodi, & Šliogerienė, 2017; Maduabuchi, 2016; Pinto-Llorente, Sánchez-Gómez, García-Peñalvo, & Casillas-Martin, 2017; Saldaña, 2015). In this respect, Marzban (2010) proclaims that teachers at all levels of education increasingly need to integrate e-learning in their course delivery systems and their perceptions need to be assessed regularly to ascertain to the effectiveness of virtual education in learning and teaching foreign languages and to report on difficulties that potentially arise in such new environments.

The growing integration of learning management technology such known as Computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) has gained popularity as both an online and an on-site teaching platform of an academically

significant value for creating educational equity for different student populations (Al-Shehri, 2010; Al-Asmari & Rabb, 2014; Bullen, 2014; Clark, 2014; Strijbos, Kirschner, & Martens, 2004). Using such media in what is called the flipped classroom is being used in language classrooms extensively to blend face-to-face interactions with independent study while viewing content videos to the full in order motivate, involve and encourage active, interactive learning (Ekmekçi, 2017; Huang & Hong Zuway, 2016; Khadragy, 2016).

In this respect, some researchers noted that using learning management systems in Saudi universities has ushered in dramatic changes in reshaping the academic environments (Hussain, 2016), given the built-in features that allow learners quick access to course content, discussion boards and threads, forums, e-portfolios, YouTube mashups, instant announcements and online tasks as well as virtual classes, synchronous or asynchronous, and a variety of assessment tools for students, let alone academic email services, bulletin boards, PowerPoints and other templates with editing tools (Al-Otaibi, 2017; Al zahrani & Al jraiwi, 2017; Elsawy & Ahmed, 2019). All that said, Al-Otaibi (2017) has warranted the usefulness and efficiency of the Blackboard LMS in higher education institutions now that it provides educational tech-savvy tools that assist users in reciprocal interacting among learners and teachers so they all can do activities and implement tasks related to teaching and learning.

Blackboard is a popular e-learning platform in Saudi Arabia as elsewhere, considered as an effective learning (course) management system (LMS or CMS), and commonly seen in higher education institutions (Al-Khazeem, 2012; Al-Otaibi, 2017; Al-Zahrani & Al-Jraiwi, 2017; Hussain, 2016). According to El Zawaidy (2014),

> the Blackboard platform is one of the most effective educational systems used globally and specifically in Saudi University helping in Blended learning… it is a Web-based server software which features course management, customizable open architecture, and scalable design that allows integration with student information systems and authentication protocols (p. 142).

Educators in higher education institutions are now inclined to using technology-driven approaches to course delivery either by prioritizing blended learning in VLEs or fully implementing instruction in the medium of technology-based platforms instead of traditional classroom environments and their respective teaching methods (Al-Khazeem, 2012; Mohsen & Shafeeq, 2014; Sawafta & Al-Garewai, 2016; Hussain, 2016; Al-Ghamdi, 2018; Al-Zahrani & Al-Jraiwi, 2017; Althobaiti & Algethami, 2018; Vo et al., 2017).

In this regard, Furthermore, Vo et al. (2017) launched a meta-analysis on 122 articles published from 2001 onwards with an effect size of g = .327 whose findings led them to conclude that blended learning served as an effective alternative to traditional face-to-face instruction in terms of improving achievement levels and improving students' motivation and attitudes. Further quantitative and qualitative studies in various higher education disciplines indicated that BL and VLEs promoted student learning and potentially enhanced overall student success (Beard, 2017; Boda & Weiser, 2018; Cassidy, 2016; Han & Ellis, 2019; Smith, Chungh, Sadouq, & Kandiah, 2017; Weerasinghe, 2018). The integration of BL gives students access to using supplementary learning materials available for use at their convenience. It can also provide them with engaging activities such as online presentations, videos and audios that are amenable to interaction and conducive to engagement. Such multimodal formats of material presentation and delivery methods can help learners to reflect on what they are learning in e-classes with little distractions (Cassidy, 2016; Smith et al., 2017).

Other researchers noted that BL and VLEs are innovative education delivery methods potentially liable to creating collaboration and interaction in the curriculum activities and other teacher-students' communication (Bower et al., 2017; Han & Ellis, 2019; Weerasinghe, 2018). Researchers showed that BL and VLEs such as Blackboard are emerging technologies capable of creating learning opportunities that allow for exchange of ideas, promote engagement in learning and enable peer collaboration, communication and co-existence of large populations of students (Bower et al., 2017; Cassidy, 2016; Smith et al., 2017; Han & Ellis, 2019; Weerasinghe, 2018).

Furthermore, Umunnakwe (2016) stated that, in teaching and learning EFL, instructors may adopt a blended approach to classroom teaching by integrating learning models which combine traditional classroom practice with e-learning approaches. Pinto-Llorente et al. (2017) also noted in their quantitative research on students in an English education program that BL and VLEs were perceived to be of positive significance for learning experiences as well as for improving students' attitudes towards learning in these mediums. By the same token, Gulbinskienė et al. (2017) noted that ESP students entertained positive opinions and attitudes with regard to the use of BL and VLEs in promoting language learning. Gulbinskienė et al. (2017) specifically noted that VLEs increased the students' writing confidence (84%), reading comprehension (81%) and verbal communication (81%) as well as helped them to develop learning autonomy, enhance their learning skills and strategies and allow them to learn at their own pace.

3.1 Virtual Education in Foreign Language Education: Perceptions and Attitudes

Experts of ESL and EFL agree that virtual education synchronously or asynchronously practiced, can increase developing foreign language skills (Alfaleh, 2015). Researchers agree that VLEs help develop foreign language skills (Alfaleh, 2015). VLEs offer a real-world, multi-dimensional, multi-sensorial digital medium for communication (Yunus et al., 2013). Similarly, Ahmadi (2018) showed that VLEs can play a key role in language learning being adaptable to the learner's own pace, and create high motivation in learners for effective learning of language skills, and boost up learning motivation, planning, self-monitoring and self-assessment (Bilyalova, 2017). Additionally, other studies show that VLEs with online video and audio tools (e.g., YouTube, Skype), also available via smartphone and tablet applications, have all a positive effect on learning English (Alsulami, 2016; Shafiee, Akbari, & Hajijalili, 2019). These studies and others (Al Bataineh, Banikalef, & Albashtawi, 2019; Dahmash, 2020) found that the nature of individualized 'student-to-computer' interaction promotes self-directed learning and improve attitudes towards learning English in virtual or blended learning environments.

In addition, VLEs provide an augmented reality (AR) e-learning medium of instruction and learning by allowing real and virtual objects to coexist in the same space and be interacted with in real time (Arvanitis, 2012; Gundogmus et al., 2016). AR applications to English language teaching enhances learning outcomes, motivation and interest of learners, and can mostly improve the four language skills.

Further research tapping into the opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and reflections on learners' experiences with VLEs showed that VLEs have all a positive effect on learning the foreign language of English (Alsulami, 2016; Al-Washahy & Amaar, 2015; Cavanaugh & Song, 2014; Gulbinskienė et al., 2017). Additionally, more research was done proving that VLEs such as Blackboard Learn were perceived to be effective for creating mutual interactions between students and EFL teachers especially in the time of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Alowedi, 2020; Althobaiti, 2020; Dahmash, 2020; Han & Ellis, 2019). The VLE of Blackboard Learn enables students to use supplementary videos and myriads of other assistive tools that makes learning both fun and easy; it also enables teachers to provide instant or delayed feedback, ask comprehension questions, provide (delayed) written feedback and use multiple effective pedagogical strategies in delivering their lectures and other learning projects that can be posted in discussion boards or e-portfolios (Alowedi, 2020; Dahmash, 2020; Vo et al., 2017).

In this sense, too, Bilyalova (2017) stated that using Blackboard resources in teaching a foreign language gives the possibility of constant improvement of virtual education materials and adaptations of the curriculum, increases the level of motivation in learning a foreign language. For example, Gulnaz, Althoali and Alzeer (2020) concluded that virtual education programs proved to be effective for improving EFL college students' skills and perceptions, developing planning, self-monitoring and evaluation skills. It was found that the nature of individualized 'student-to-computer' interaction promotes self-directed learning, especially in times of pandemics (Obaid, 2020). When it comes to specific language skills, too, VLEs are also perceived to be effective. Shafiee, Akbari and Hajijalili (2019) proved that VLEs are capable of helping intermediate EFL learners in developing their reading skills.

In a similar vein, Javid, Farooq and Umer (2013) reported that Blackboard improved academic writing of students by providing instant oral feedback and correction of errors. Frazer, Sullivan, Weatherspoon, & Hussey (2017) also observed that using Blackboard for teaching and learning improved reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. In the same line, Hussain (2016) noted that the VLE of Blackboard improved listening and viewing comprehension skills as well. Padurean (2009) reviewed the advantages of using VLEs in EFL teaching and learning, noting that virtual education enhances 1) capacity to control presentations, 2) novelty and creativity, 3) oral and written feedback, and 4) adaptability.

However, despite the perceived advantages of virtual education and the inevitability of such electronic milieus during crises, their success hinges upon three main issues identified by Dayag (2018): interest of student and teachers, support of the administration, and time of the student and teacher.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework to inform this investigation is the theory of connectivism (Siemens, 2005; Downes, 2008) which is part of the theories of humanistic education and suggests that learning occurs inside the individuals but is facilitated by the organization of learning outside individuals. The connectivism theory suggests that blending technology with learning assists in facilitating transfer of learning and connecting knowledge and learning efficiently (Siemens, 2005). Connectivism is a theory that explains that learning can be bettered and boosted by technology use since when technology comes in use by humans, collaborated education occurs. According to Siemens (2005), connectivism assumes that connections between information in external

databases or repositories and learners develop in a way that induces learning to occur inside individuals from these outside digital resources.

3.3 The Need for Research on VLE

Therefore, there has been a growing demand for the inclusion of virtual education technology in teaching and learning over the past three decades (Maduabuchi, 2016). Marzban (2010) asserts that teachers at all levels of education increasingly need to serve as good models of using ICT and their perceptions need to be assessed regularly to ascertain to the effectiveness of virtual education. In a study by Reese (2014), connectivism applications to e-learning were studied in higher education settings to explore the use of VLEs. Findings showed that using VLEs can enable active learning and assessment. In this way, too, Reese (2014) and Siemens (2008) concurred that VLEs are potential interactive environments for both teachers and students to collaborate, communicate, share, and discuss their curriculum.

3.4 Augmented Reality in EFL Teaching and Learning

Augmented Reality (AR) helps allow real and virtual objects to coexist in the same space and be interacted with in real time (Gundogmus et al., 2016). AR gathers and overlays electronic or computer-generated content, pictures, audio, video, or touch sensations or haptic sensations in a real-time environment (Alsowat, 2017). AR applications to English language teaching enhances learning outcomes, motivation and interest of learners, and can mostly improve the four language skills.

4. Research Questions

To achieve the aims of the study, the following research questions were put forward:

1) What are the perceptions of King Khalid University EFL instructors about the role of effective Blackboard EFL courses delivery during COVID-19 Pandemic in terms of creating instructor-student rapport, engagement in active, interactive learning, facilitating students' comprehension, boosting up learners' instrumental motivation, and establishing efficient teacher-students' communication?

2) What are the attitudes of Saudi EFL freshmen in the Faculty of Languages & Translation, King Khalid University towards EFL virtual education via Blackboard LMS during COVID-19 Pandemic?

5. Methodology

To achieve the objectives of the research, a quantitative approach to data collection and analysis was followed to explore the perceptions of instructors and undergraduate male students in the Faculty of Languages & Translation, King Khalid University about EFL virtual education during COVID-19 Pandemic. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 25.0) was used for survey analyses. Accordingly, the researcher used this software to calculate the Cronbach alpha coefficient and the Pearson's correlation coefficient for data analysis, the former for measuring the internal reliability of research instruments while the latter was used for investigating the relationship between students' achievement and attitudes in the study sample groups.

5.1 Participants

Two samples were randomly selected from both language instructors and EFL freshmen in the English department at the Faculty of Languages & Translation, King Khalid University (KKU) (about 47 teachers and 103 students). The larger the sample is, the better the analysis of their perceptions will be.

5.2 Research Instruments

This study made use of two online surveys for data collection to inspect into the KKU EFL instructors' perceptions of the effectiveness of Blackboard in course delivery and the Saudi students' attitudes towards learning via the Blackboard Learn as a VLE, noted by the samples of the study in the distance teaching environment during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The first instrument is the EFL Instructors' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Blackboard LMS as a Course Delivery Medium is made up of five sections, each measuring a certain construct identified in the virtual learning environments literature as determinants of effective teaching and learning in VLEs: these are creating instructor-students rapport, engagement in active, interactive learning, facilitating students' comprehension, boosting up learners' instrumental motivation, and establishing efficient teacher-students' communication.

The instructors' survey is made up of five sections with five cyclical statements that measure the perceptions of instructors with regard to their appreciation of the Blackboard applications they might believe instrumental for making Blackboard an effective medium of instruction in the Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University. The total number of survey items is 25 per the five divisions of the survey, with the five recurring

questions.

The second instrument is the Saudi students' survey of attitudes towards learning via VLEs. This is an attitudes survey made up of 25 statements about students' attitudes towards learning EFL via the medium of Blackboard, the statements of which were developed in the light of an exhaustive review of pertinent literature. The survey statements were sent out to eleven instructors in the department to assess its face validity to check the concepts this survey purports to measure. The first version of the survey came back with edits at the wording level as well as other edits regarding the content and number of items. These suggested edits were taken into consideration in revising the students' attitudes survey.

5.3 Validation of the Study Tools

Survey Reliability and validity

The Cronbach's alpha is a widely accepted test of the reliability and internal consistency of opinion surveys (Kane, 2013; Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). Statistically, the higher the Cronbach alpha coefficient is, the higher the internal consistency among the items becomes (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). A value of .6 or more is considered the best for a survey reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Pallant, 2013). Table 1 below shows the Cronbach alpha values for each construct.

Table 1. Validity and reliability of the instructor's survey

	Creating rapport	Interactive learning	Facilitating comprehension	Boosting motivation	Efficient communication	α value
Creating rapport	1					0.908
Interactive learning	.967**	1				0.909
Facilitating comprehension	.950**	.955**	1			0.873
Boosting motivation	.918**	.933**	.950**	1		.983
Efficient communication	.967**	.980**	.979**	.982**	.979**	.925

Table 2 below shows frequencies, means, standard deviations, and general attitudes of instructor' responses. The mean responses to the five factors that build up the perceptions of Blackboard Learn as an effective VLE in the time of the pandemic were calculated and analyzed, noting that the following ranges correspond to the Likert scale adopted for the survey:

1) From 1 to 1.80 represents (strongly disagree).

2) From 1.81 until 2.60 represents (do not agree).

3) From 2.61 until 3.40 represents (true to some extent).

4) From 3:41 until 4:20 represents (agree).

5) From 4:21 until 5:00 represents (strongly agree).

Table 2. Instructors' reflection survey: Descriptive analysis of the characteristics of instructor reflection survey

Instructors' Perceptions	Survey Statements	Freq. Percent	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD	General Attitude	Order
Creating rapport	1	F	4	1	0	12	30	4.34	1.185	3.63	5
		%	8.5	2.1	0.0	25.5	63.8				
	2	F	1	3	1	15	27	4.36	0.965		
		%	2.1	6.4	2.1	31.9	57.4				
	3	F	1	1	0.0	20	25	4.43	0.801		
		%	2.1	2.1	0.0	42.6	53.2				
	4	F	31	13	1	1	1	1.47	0.830		
		%	66.0	27.7	2.1	2.1	2.1				
	5	F	31	13	1	1	1	4.28	0.852		
		%	66.0	27.7	2.1	2.1	2.1				
Interactive learning	1	F	3	7	1	15	21	3.94	1.292	3.76	4
		%	6.4	14.9	2.1	31.9	44.7				
	2	F	0.0	2	0.0	14	31	4.57	0.715		
		%	0.0	4.3	0.0	29.8	66.0				
	3	F	1	1	1	24	20	4.30	0.805		
		%	2.1	2.1	2.1	51.1	42.6				
	4	F	1	2	4	19	21	4.21	0.931		
		%	2.1	4.3	8.5	40.4	44.7				
	5	F	31	13	1	1	1	1.47	0.830		
		%	66.0	27.7	2.1	2.1	2.1				
Facilitating comprehension	1	F	0.0	0.0	0.0	14	33	4.70	0.462	3.90	2
		%	0.0	0.0	0.0	29.8	70.2				
	2	F	2	3	2	12	28	4.30	1.102		
		%	4.3	6.4	4.3	25.5	59.6				
	3	F	30	15	0.0	1	1	1.47	0.804		
		%	63.8	31.9	0.0	2.1	2.1				
	4	F	0.0	1	1	11	34	4.66	0.635		
		%	0.0	2.1	2.1	23.4	72.3				
	5	F	1	1	0.0	12	33	4.60	0.798		
		%	2.1	2.1	0.0	25.5	70.2				
Boosting motivation	1	F	1	2	11	22	11	3.85	0.908	3.81	3
		%	2.1	4.3	23.4	46.8	23.4				
	2	F	2	5	5	18	17	3.91	1.139		
		%	4.3	10.6	10.6	38.3	36.2				
	3	F	4	6	3	23	11	3.66	1.221		
		%	8.5	12.8	6.4	48.9	23.4				
	4	F	4	5	3	18	17	3.83	1.274		
		%	8.5	10.6	6.4	38.3	36.2				
	5	F	4	7	1	17	18	3.81	1.329		
		%	8.5	14.9	2.1	36.2	38.3				
Efficient communication	1	F	6	4	2	16	19	3.81	1.329	4.21	1
		%	12.8	8.5	4.3	34.0	40.4				
	2	F	30	15	0.0	1	1	3.81	1.393		
		%	63.8	31.9	0.0	2.1	2.1				
	3	F	0	0	0	10	37	4.79	0.414		
		%	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.3	78.7				
	4	F	0	0	1	15	31	4.64	0.529		
		%	0.0	0.0	2.1	31.9	66.0				
	5	F	2	3	2	13	27	4.28	1.097		
		%	4.3	6.4	4.3	27.7	57.4				

All the constructs have satisfied the requirement of the reliability test with a higher Cronbach alpha value of more than .8. However, among all the constructs, the survey section tapping into the instructors' perceptions of Blackboard as an assistive tool for creating instructor-student rapport yielded an alpha value of 0.908, followed by the survey section tapping into their opinions about the role of Blackboard in inducing engagement in active, interactive learning which produced an alpha value of 0.909, with both sections having higher internal consistency levels. Then, follows the survey section tapping into the role of Blackboard in facilitating students'

comprehension which yielded an alpha value of 0.873. Then in fourth rank, there comes the survey section on Blackboard's role in boosting up learners' instrumental motivation which yielded a value of .983. Finally, in rank comes the construct that Blackboard helps in establishing efficient teacher-students' communication which produced an alpha value of .925. These alpha values, in all, indicates that the instructors' survey is highly reliable and can be used for data collection needed in the present study.

The validity of the survey refers to the degree to which it truly measures the constructs that it is intended to measure (Thompson, 2003). The validity of the overall survey has been tested correlation. In addition to that convergent and discriminant validity has been tested in order evaluate the questionnaire completely.

6. Results

6.1 Instructors' Survey Results

To answer the questions of the study, quantitative data were obtained from the instructor's and students. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS to identify what perceptions about the role of effective Blackboard EFL courses delivery EFL instructors had during COVID-19 Pandemic in terms of creating instructor-student rapport, engagement in active, interactive learning, facilitating students' comprehension, boosting up learners' instrumental motivation, and establishing efficient teacher-students' communication.

Figure 1 below shows the means of the instructors' responses regarding the construct of creating instructor-student rapport in terms of the instructional design delivery items; these means imply a general agreement attitude of instructors that Blackboard instructional tools help them create rapport with their students. The construct of instructor-student rapport refers to the role played in building positive interpersonal relationships in an overall positive environment (Dobransky & Frymier, 2004; Frisby & Martin, 2010). Rapport also refers to the overall feelings shared between instructors and students that express the mutual, trusting and prosocial bonds essential of effective teaching (Catt, Miller, & Schallenkamp, 2007; Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Frisby & Martin, 2010).
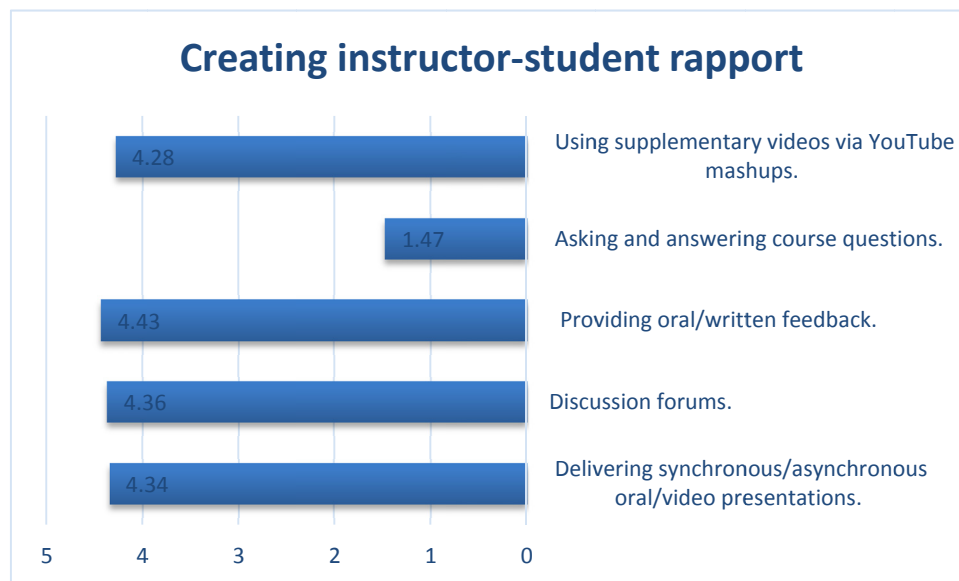

Figure 1. Creating instructor-student rapport

As Figure 1 shows, providing oral/written feedback over the medium of Blackboard was rated as the most useful application of Blackboard Learn with a mean response of 4.43, followed by the use of discussion forums (M = 4.36), delivering synchronous and asynchronous oral/video presentations (M = 4.34), and using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups (M = 4.28). The least useful application of Blackboard as perceived by EFL instructors was asking and answering course questions (M = 1.47).

Figure 2 below shows the means of responses regarding the second section of the survey tapping into the instructor's perceptions about Blackboard's ability to engage students in active, interactive learning, the total responses of which imply the general agreement attitude of instructors. According to Morris (2019), active, interactive learning involves learners in active inquiry into specific real-world problems, situates knowledge in

place and time, exposes learners to novel experiences and mediates meaningful learning through critical reflection.

Engagement in active, interactive learning

Using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups — 1.46
Asking and answering course questions — 4.21
Providing oral/written feedback — 4.30
Discussion forums — 4.57
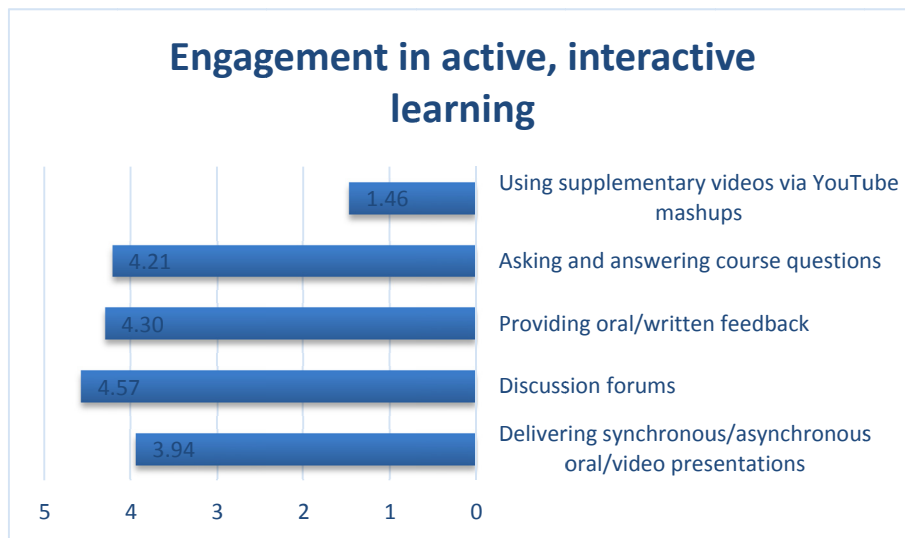Delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations — 3.94

Figure 2. Engagement in active, interactive learning

As Figure 2 shows, the tools and applications of Blackboard that helped EFL instructors engage students in active, interactive activities during the pandemic were in the order of response ratings discussion forums (M = 4.57), providing oral/written feedback (M = 4.30), then asking and answering course questions (M = 4.21), while using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups came last with a mean response of 1.46.

Figure 3 shows the means of the facilitating students' comprehension' responses to instructional design delivery items which imply the general agreement attitude of instructors.

Facilitating students' comprehension

Using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups — 4.60
Asking and answering course questions — 4.66
Providing oral/written feedback — 1.47
Discussion forums — 4.30
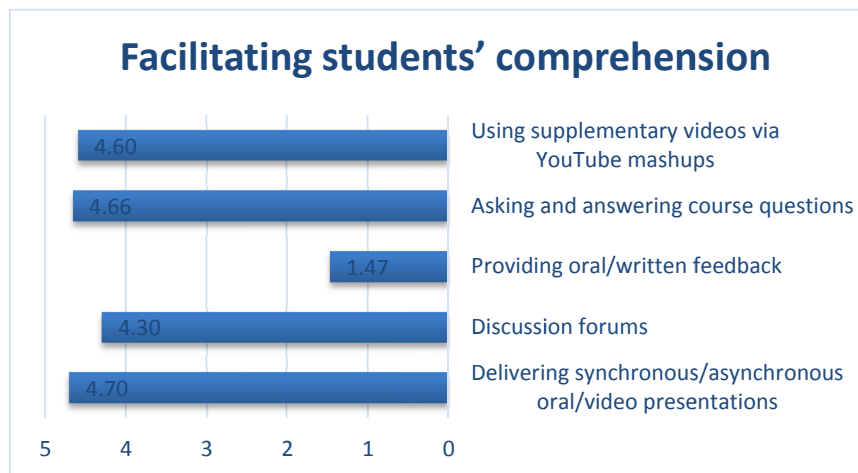Delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations — 4.70

Figure 3. Facilitating students' comprehension

For facilitating students' comprehension, the apps and tools of Blackboard that were perceived by EFL teachers as the most assistive in facilitation comprehension were delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations (M = 4.70), followed by asking and answering course questions (M = 4.66), then using supplementary video via YouTube mashups (M = 4.60), while providing oral/written feedback were perceived as the least helpful in facilitating students' comprehension.

Instrumental motivation is a construct that refers to a practical or pragmatic reason for learning a foreign

language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972); college students may have clearly-set instrumental motivation for learning English as they need to fulfil their college degree requirements. In the case of EFL college students, they not only learn English as a communicative medium but also for learning literature and linguistics in the medium of English.
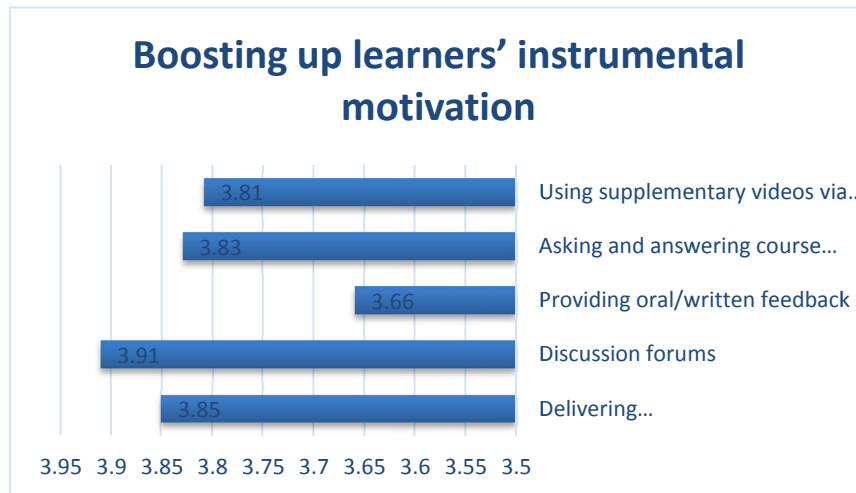

Figure 4. Boosting up learners' instrumental motivation

Figure 4 shows the means of responses with regard to boosting up learners' instrumental motivation as an influence on the instructional design delivery items which imply the general agreement attitude of EFL instructors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The informants perceived that the Blackboard virtual environment influenced the boosting of instrumental motivation most by discussion forums (M = 3.91), then by delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations (M = 3.85), then by asking and answering course questions (M = 3.83), then by using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups (M = 3.81). Whereas the mean responses of EFL instructors regarding the application of providing oral/written feedback was (3.66).

As for efficient communication, this construct refers to the instructors' ability to deliver their educational messages, explanations and instructions clearly to their students in the shortest amount of time. Figure 5 below shows the means of the instructors' mean responses to the last section of the survey. Survey questions tapped into the EFL instructors' perceptions of Blackboard's virtual environment in establishing efficient communication with their students to pinpoint their general attitudes towards the use of Blackboard Learn during the time of the pandemic.
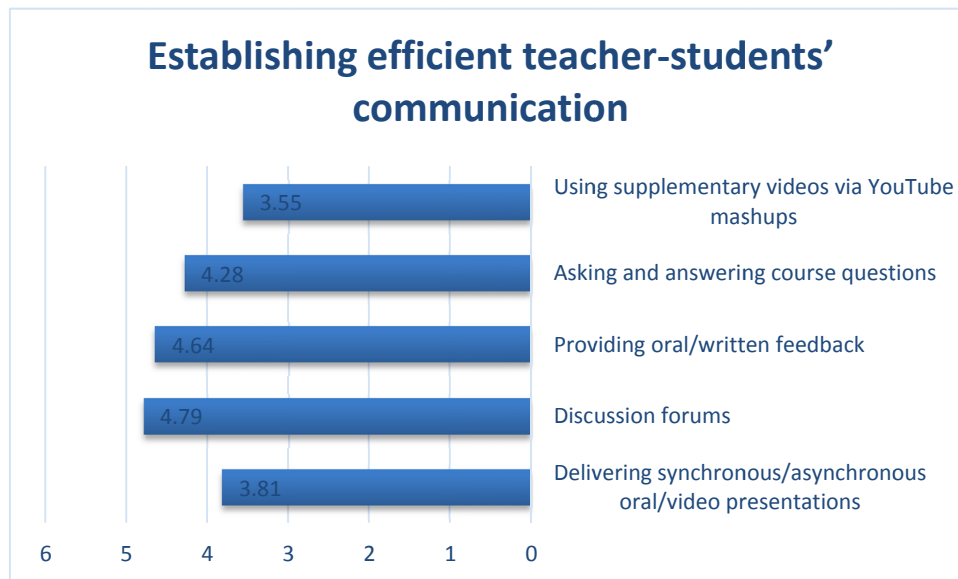
Figure 5. Establishing efficient teacher-students' communication

EFL instructors believed that the apps of discussion forums were the most helpful (M = 4.79), followed by Blackboard apps whereby they could provide oral/written feedback (M = 4.64), followed by applications of asking and answering course questions (M = 4.28), and then delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations (M = 3.81), whereas using supplementary videos over the YouTube mashups app came last in order with a mean of 3.55. This is in five order within five factors of EFL instructors.

Generally considering the participants' reflections, Table 2 above shows the responses of the EFL instructors at the Faculty of Languages & Translation, KKU, had yielded five factors in the following order:

1) *Establishing efficient teacher-students' communication* received the strongest agreement (M = 4.21). The instructors' sample perceived 'Discussion forums' to be the most influential application with regard to teachers-students' communication efficiency, with a mean response of 4.79 in the 'Strongly Agree' category. The second most influential application came to be 'providing oral/written feedback', with a mean score of 4.64 in the 'Strongly Agree' category. The third most influential application had been 'Asking and answering course questions', with a mean response of 4.28 in the 'Strongly Agree' category. In the fourth order, the informants' perceptions about 'Delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations', had a mean score of 3.81 in the 'Agree' category. However, the informants' perceptions about 'Using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups' had a mean response of 3.55 in the 'strongly disagree' category, thus rejected as an element of significance in inducing efficient teacher-student communication.

2) *Facilitating students' comprehension* received a mean response of 3.9 in the Agree category. The applications or elements thought to be of significance to this factor were first 'Delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations' with a mean response of 4.7 in the 'Strongly Agree' category, followed by 'Asking and answering course questions', with a mean score of 4.66 in the 'Strongly Agree' category, followed by 'Using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups', with a mean score of 4.6 in the 'Strongly Agree' category, and eventually 'Delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations', with a mean score of 3.94 in the 'Agree' category. However, the application of 'Using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups' had a mean response of 1.47 in the 'strongly disagree' category, which disqualifies YouTube mashups application to be of significance to facilitating students' comprehension.

3) *Boosting up learners' instrumental motivation* received a mean response of 3.81 in the 'Agree' category, making this factor the third in the order of Blackboard effectiveness. The elements perceived to be of significance to this factor in their order included Discussion forums (M = 3.91 in the 'Agree' category), 'Delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations' (M = 3.85 in the 'Agree' category), 'Asking and answering course questions' (3.83 in the 'Agree' category), and 'Using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups' (M = 3.81 in the 'Agree' category). Albeit, the element of 'Providing oral/written feedback' had a mean response of 3.66 in the 'strongly disagree' category, rendering it insignificant to the factor of increasing instrumental motivation.

4) *Engagement in active, interactive learning* received a mean response of 3.76 in the 'Agree' category; the respondents agreed with engagement in active, interactive learning to be the factor number four in making Blackboard an effective VLE. The applications perceived to be of significance to this factor were 'Discussion forums' (M = 4.57 in the 'Strongly Agree' category), 'Providing oral/written feedback' (M = 4.3 in the 'Strongly Agree' category), 'Asking and answering course questions' (M = 4.21 in the 'Strongly Agree' category) and 'Delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations', (M = 3.94 in the 'Agree' category). However, the element of 'Using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups' had a mean score of 1.47 in the 'strongly disagree' category, rendering this application insignificant to the factor of engaging students in active, interactive learning.

5) *Creating instructor-students rapport* came last in the order of effectiveness perceived by instructors about the medium of Blackboard in the time of the pandemic, with a mean response of 3.63 in the agree category. Elements thought to be of significance to this factor were providing oral/written feedback (M = .43 in the 'Strongly Agree' category), Discussion forums (M = 4.43 in the 'Strongly Agree' category), Delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations (4.34 in the 'Strongly Agree' category), and Using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups (4.28 in the 'Strongly Agree' category). Whereas the element of Asking and answering course questions had a mean score of 1.47 in the 'strongly disagree' category, thus denying it any role in creating rapport between instructors and students.

6.2 Students' Attitudes Survey Results

The students' survey (formatted after a 5-Likert scale) gleaned data on their attitudes towards the use of Blackboard Learn as a VLE during the pandemic. These data were statistically analyzed to identify factors affecting students' attitudes towards learning EFL via Blackboard.

Table 3. Descriptive analysis of students' attitudes towards learning EFL via Blackboard during the COVID-19 Pandemic

N	Statements	Fr.	SD	D	N/S	A	SA	M	SD	Order
1	I like to study at home using Blackboard than to take the hassle of coming to campus and waiting for classes.	F	4	1	0	12	30	4.34	1.185	10
		%	8.5	2.1	0	25.5	63.8			
2	I would prefer to attend my e-classes on the spot more than to watch them later in recorded videos.	F	1	3	1	15	27	4.36	0.965	9
		%	2.1	6.4	2.1	31.9	57.4			
3	Learning English through virtual learning technology is one of my favorite learning activities.	F	1	1	0	20	25	4.43	0.801	7
		%	2.1	2.1	0	42.6	53.2			
4	Blackboard is more difficult for me to learn through than real-life attendance on campus.	F	31	13	1	1	1	1.47	0.830	23
		%	66.0	27.7	2.1	2.1	2.1			
5	I usually do well in learning my EFL courses on Blackboard.	F	1	2	0	24	20	4.28	0.852	12
		%	2.1	4.3	0	51.1	42.6			
6	I think Blackboard provides me with extra opportunity to learn, revise and get ready for quizzes and tests.	F	3	7	1	15	21	3.94	1.292	15
		%	6.4	14.9	2.1	31.9	44.7			
7	I need Blackboard to learn other EFL subjects to avoid the perils of face-to-face contact with teachers and mates in the pandemic time.	F	0	2	0	14	31	4.57	0.715	6
		%	0	4.3	0	29.8	66.0			
8	I need to do well in my online courses to catch up with my e-classes, better done over Blackboard.	F	1	1	1	20	24	4.30	0.805	8
		%	2.1	2.1	2.1	42.6	51.1			
9	The Blackboard is an efficient virtual learning environment that saves me cost, effort and time	F	1	2	4	19	21	4.21	0.931	14
		%	2.1	4.3	8.5	40.4	44.7			
10	Learning my classes via Blackboard are a waste of time and effort.	F	31	13	1	1	1	1.47	0.830	24
		%	66.0	27.7	2.1	2.1	2.1			
11	I like learning through Blackboard video mashups, discussion boards and forums and e-quizzes.	F	0	0	0	14	33	4.70	0.462	2
		%	0	0	0	29.8	70.2			
12	I would like to take more online courses in the summer.	F	2	3	2	12	28	4.30	1.102	11
		%	4.3	6.4	4.3	25.5	59.6			
13	When I hear the word "Blackboard", I have a feeling of dislike and fear.	F	1	29	15	1	1	1.47	0.804	25
		%	2.1	61.7	31.9	2.1	2.1			
14	Learning English online is one of the most interesting, useful and fruitful activities.	F	0	1	1	11	34	4.66	0.635	3
		%	0	2.1	2.1	23.4	72.3			
15	The material covered in EFL courses over Blackboard textbook is typically completed online than was the case with face-to-face classes.	F	1	1	0	12	33	4.60	0.798	5
		%	2.1	2.1	0	25.5	70.2			
16	Learning English online is fun and keeps me stay safe in the pandemic time.	F	1	2	11	22	11	3.85	0.908	17
		%	2.1	4.3	23.4	46.8	23.4			
17	I have great self-confidence in the paced learning activities available online in virtual Learning Environments.	F	2	5	5	18	17	3.91	1.139	16
		%	4.3	10.6	10.6	38.3	36.2			
18	I really enjoy learning online via Blackboard.	F	4	6	3	23	11	3.66	1.221	21
		%	8.5	12.8	6.4	48.9	23.4			
19	I would enjoy college study more if there were no face-to-face contact in classes these days.	F	4	5	3	18	17	3.83	1.274	18
		%	8.5	10.6	6.4	38.3	36.2			
20	I look forward to learning all my classes online next year.	F	4	7	1	17	18	3.81	1.329	19
		%	8.5	14.9	2.1	36.2	38.3			
21	I trust my instructors are good enough to provide active, interactive learning activities via Blackboard.	F	6	4	2	16	19	3.81	1.393	20
		%	12.8	8.5	4.3	34.0	40.4			
22	I am sure I can learn online as much as I do in real world, face-to-face learning situations.	F	0	0	0	10	37	4.79	0.414	1
		%	0	0	0	21.3	78.7			
23	I believe that online learning is a good alternative to education in the time of the pandemic.	F	0	0	1	15	31	4.64	0.529	4
		%	0	0	2.1	31.9	66.0			
24	I appreciate learning via Blackboard as a motivating, self-paced learning and interesting platform of controlled learning.	F	2	3	2	13	27	4.28	1.097	13
		%	4.3	6.4	4.3	27.7	57.4			
25	If it were not for virtual learning environments like Blackboard, education would have come to a stop during the pandemic.	F	5	5	7	19	11	3.55	1.265	22
		%	10.6	10.6	14.9	40.4	23.4			

Table 3 above summarizes the results from the students' attitudes survey. Students agreed that they can learn as much as they do in real world, face-to-face learning situations, with a weight of about 78.7 % of the respondents' reported strong agreement, and 21.27 % agreement. The overall mean of this statement is 4.79, indicating that most students (about 80.5%) have positive attitudes towards learning online. They also reported in the second

place that they like learning through Blackboard video mashups, discussion boards and forums and e-quizzes with 70.2% of the respondents' reported strong agreement, and 29.78% of agreement. The mean responses of this statement is 4.70, indicating that most students have positive attitudes towards learning through Blackboard during the pandemic.

Approximately 72.34% of the respondents reported strong agreement and 23.40% of agreement with the statement that learning English online is one of the most interesting, useful and fruitful activities, with a mean of 4.66, which indicates that most students have positive attitudes towards learning English in the VLE of Blackboard Learn. In addition, 65.95% of the respondents strongly agreed and 31.91% agreed that they believe online learning is a good alternative to education in the time of the pandemic, with a mean of 4.64, also indicating positive attitudes online learning during the crisis. This finding is consistent with Vo et al. (2017) who, in a meta-analysis of 122 research articles, concluded that VLEs and e-learning platforms provide effective alternative to traditional face-to-face instruction in terms of improving achievement levels and improving students' motivation and attitudes. This finding is also commensurate with prior research findings (e.g., Pinto-Llorente et al., 2017; Gulbinskienė et al., 2017; Umunnakwe, 2016).

The fifth item in the order of weight average is the statement # 15, which reads "The material covered in EFL courses over Blackboard textbook is typically completed online than was the case with face-to-face classes", yielding about 70.2% of the respondents reported strong agreement, and 29.79% of agreement. The mean is 4.60. Again, most students have positive attitudes towards the covered in EFL courses in the VLE of Blackboard. The sixth item in weight average came to be statement # 7, reading "I need Blackboard to learn other EFL subjects to avoid the perils of face-to-face contact with teachers and mates in the pandemic time". This statement yielded about 65.95% of the respondents' reported strong agreement and 25.53% agreement. The mean of responses to this item is 4.57. That means most students are inclined towards learning over Blackboard to avoid the perils of face-to-face contact with teachers and mates in the pandemic time. Learning online in Blackboard VLE is not only useful, but it was perceived as fun, too. Learning English through virtual learning technology was revealed to be one of the students' favorite learning activities", with this statement ranking #7 in the order of weight average, yielding about 53.19% of the respondents' reported agreement and 42.55% of agreement. The mean of responses, which is 4.43, indicates that most students still have positive attitudes towards learning English through virtual learning technology activities as one of their favorite learning times.

For the eighth item in weight average, statement # 8 which reads "I need to do well in my online courses to catch up with my e-classes, better done over Blackboard" yielded about 51.06% of the respondents' reported strong agreement, and 42.55% of agreement, with an overall mean of 4.38. This also indicates that students have positive attitudes towards learning online and Blackboard helps them catch up with classes in time. Therefore, students would prefer to attend their e-classes on the spot more than to watch them later in recorded videos. This statement #2 ranked the ninth item according to weight average, yielding about 51.06% of the respondents' reported strong agreement and 42.55% agreement. The mean is 4.36. That means most students still have positive attitudes e-classes online in real time. Therefore,

For the tenth item in the order of weight average, statement # 1which reads "I like to study at home using Blackboard than to take the hassle of coming to campus and waiting for classes" yielded about 63.82% strong agreement and 25.53% agreement, with an overall mean of 4.34. That means most students have positive attitudes towards study at home using Blackboard.

Respondents were also reported to have strongly agreed (70.2%) and agreed (29.8%) that they would like to take more online courses in the summer with a mean of 4.3, indicating Blackboard users' willingness to continue learning online. They believe they usually do well in learning their EFL courses via Blackboard (42.6% strong agreement and 51.1% agreement) with a mean of 4.28. That is why they appreciate learning via Blackboard as a motivating, self-paced learning and interesting platform of controlled education, equally weighting their agreement to continue these courses online (66% strong agreed, 31.9% agreed), with a mean of 4.28.

In this context, nearly 44.7% strongly agreed and 40.4% agreed that the Blackboard is an efficient virtual learning environment that saves them cost, effort and time, indicating the efficiency of the VLE in offering cost, effort and time-effective education, with a mean of 4.21. Approximately, 44.7% strongly agree and 31.9% agree that Blackboard, in their opinion, provide them with additional chances to learn, revise and get ready for quizzes and tests, with a mean of 3.94. Therefore, about 36.2% strongly agree and 38.3% agree that the paced learning activities available online in virtual Learning Environments instills in them great self-confidence with a mean of 3.91.

Over 70% also agree that learning English online is fun and keeps students stay safe in the pandemic time, with a

mean of 3.85. That is why they would enjoy college study more if there were no face-to-face contact in classes these days (M = 3.83), with approximately 72% of respondents concurring with this statement. And they would look forward to using Blackboard for their learning next year (M = 3.81), believing that their instructors are good enough to provide active, interactive learning activities via Blackboard (M = 3.81), which makes them really enjoy learning online via Blackboard (M = 3.66). This result concurs with a plethora of studies recently conducted during the time this study was in progress or a little before (e.g., Alowedi, 2020; Althobaiti, 2020; Alsulami, 2016; Al-Washahy & Amaar, 2015; Cavanaugh & Song, 2014; Dahmash, 2020; Han & Ellis, 2019; Gulbinskienė et al., 2017).

Respondents also perceived Blackboard to be an essential and instrumental medium of instruction which made education continue without a stop during the pandemic (M = 3.55), and that is why they did not agree with the statement that Blackboard is more difficult for me to learn through than real-life attendance on campus. They strongly disagreed (66%) or just disagreed (27.7%) that they found Blackboard difficult with a mean of 4.43. A similar weight average of strong disagreement (66%) or just disagreement (27.7%) that learning via Blackboard was a waste of time and effort, with a mean of 1.47. They also have positive attitudes towards Blackboard as a learning platform, disbelieving that the medium could be anathema to them. That is why the statement reading "When I hear the word "Blackboard", I have a feeling of dislike and fear" came last in order with a strong disagreement of 2.1% and just agreement of 61.7% of the respondents while 31.9 were not sure about their feelings in this regard.

For the present survey of students' attitudes towards using Blackboard during the pandemic, the most common reasons students liked the VLE of Blackboard could be convenience of use, platform availability, system quality and quality of e-learning over Blackboard. Other reasons include users' personal factors such as their satisfaction tendency, their self-confidence initiated by the VLE of Blackboard, their enjoyment of learning in this medium, the interesting and useful learning activities and tools as well as their staying safe in this mode of learning in the pandemic time. Other factors identified include the learners' willingness to continue learning via Blackboard and their expectation that full-time learning online would replace traditional face-to-face learning. These findings are congruent with prior research which observed an accelerating tendency to using e-learning platforms (Alfaleh, 2015; Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 2003; Bower et al., 2017; Han & Ellis, 2019; Weerasinghe, 2018; Beard, 2017; Boda & Weiser, 2018; Cassidy, 2016; Han & Ellis, 2019; Smith, Chungh, Sadouq, & Kandiah, 2017; Weerasinghe, 2018).

The resent study, as other prior research revealed, proclaims Blackboard as popular e-learning platform in Saudi Arabia which can provide efficient communication between instructors and students as well as effective teaching and learning (Al-Khazeem, 2012; Al-Otaibi, 2017; Al-Zahrani & Al-Jraiwi, 2017; El Zawaidy, 2014; Hussain, 2016).

The students' responses to the attitudes' survey statements are commensurate with the instructors' perceptions; for instance, teachers perceive Blackboard to be a medium that could establish efficient teacher-students communication. Students believe that their teachers are good enough to provide active, interactive learning activities via Blackboard and that the Blackboard is an efficient virtual learning environment that saves them cost, effort and time - the three pillars of efficient communication. As teachers also believe the VLE as providing active, interactive learning, so do students who believe that learning English through the VLE of Blackboard is one of their favorite, enjoyable, interesting, useful and fruitful activities, and that they can online as much as they do in real world, face-to-face learning situations. These findings are congruent with a plethora of prior research (Bower et al., 2017; Cassidy, 2016; Smith et al., 2017; Han & Ellis, 2019; Weerasinghe, 2018).

In addition, teachers and students alike believe that Blackboard e-learning tools and activities help them to improve their comprehension in a controlled educational environment with synchronous and asynchronous useful and fruitful e-learning activities, Blackboard video mashups, discussion boards and forums and e-quizzes. Students also concur with their teachers that the Blackboard VLE could initiate and sustain their intrinsic motivation as they need to do well with their online courses to catch up with their e-classes over Blackboard, thereby appreciating learning via Blackboard as a motivating, self-paced learning and interesting platform of controlled learning. Students showed that they wanted to continue using the VLE in summer and next year as an alternative to traditional face to face education. The medium for them is fun and joyful, concurring with their instructors that the medium creates and sustains students-teachers' rapport and trust so much that they believe their instructors are good enough to provide active, interactive learning activities via Blackboard and that this medium is also elect to be good alternative to education in the time of the pandemic. That is why students believed that if it not for virtual learning environments like Blackboard, education would have come to a stop during the pandemic.

The augmented reality functions of Blackboard Learn tools make the medium an interactive environment that enhances learning outcomes, perceptions about learning environments and motivation and interest in technology-driven e-learning—a result congruent with prior research (Alsowat, 2017; Gundogmus, et al., 2016).

7. Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

Findings from this study revealed the EFL instructors' perceptions of the Blackboard LMS being generally positive with both samples believing that the e-learning LMS helps in establishing efficient teacher-students' communication, facilitating students' comprehension, boosting up their instrumental motivation, engaging them in active, interactive learning, and creating instructor-students' rapport. The students' attitudes survey also divulged the overall positive attitudes towards using Blackboard LMS during the pandemic due to its convenience of use, platform availability, system quality and quality of e-learning over Blackboard. Other reasons included users' personal factors such as their satisfaction tendency, their self-confidence initiated by the VLE of Blackboard, their enjoyment of learning in this medium, the interesting and useful learning activities and tools as well as their staying safe in this mode of learning in the pandemic time. Other factors identified include the learners' willingness to continue learning via Blackboard and their expectation that full-time learning online would replace traditional face-to-face learning. The study concluded that teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes towards VLEs, with particular reference to Blackboard, could be valuable to faculty and institutions in their quality assurance efforts and the development of promising online courses and programs in EFL to satisfy the needs of students.

Results of the present study reveal that teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes towards VLEs, with particular reference to Blackboard, could be valuable to faculty and institutions in their quality assurance efforts and the development of promising online courses and programs in EFL to satisfy the needs of students.

In the future, the present researcher's goal will be to refine, further develop and mass-apply the research surveys as part of e-learning quality control efforts. The faculty perceptions survey was planned to detect faculty perceptions and expectations of Blackboard as a VLE, and the students' attitudes survey sought to explore students' attitudes towards e-learning in Blackboard during the pandemic. Results of both surveys overlapped, but more research to explore additional demographic factors such as age, education, experience and gender of the participants are needed to further explore the constructs of the study.

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Appendix A

EFL Instructors' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Blackboard LMS as a Course Delivery Medium

Name: ………………………………………… Rank: …………………………………………

Courses taught over Blackboard: ………………………………………………………………………

Dear EFL course instructors,

Below is a perceptions survey that taps into your perceptions of the Blackboard LMS for EFL course delivery during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This survey is made up of five sections that correspond to five aspects of the teaching and learning through Blackboard. Your responses are for academic research purposes, will be kept confidential, and will not be used for faculty professional evaluation. Therefore, your truthful, reality-reflecting and consistent answers will help in assessing the effectiveness of Blackboard as a medium of instruction in the Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University. Please read the statements below carefully and respond on a Likert scale from 1 to 5. Five (5) stands for strongly agree and one (1) stands for strongly disagree on the Likert-scale. The numbers 4 and 2 stand for Agree and Disagree, respectively, while 3 stands for Neutral.

Aspects	Response type				
Statements	5	4	3	2	1
I. *I think that Blackboard helps me in* **creating instructor-student rapport** *most by* …					
1. Delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations.	30	10	2	3	2
2. Discussion forums.	32	11	2	1	1
3. Providing oral/written feedback.	29	13	1	2	2
4. Asking and answering course questions.	33	11	1	1	1
5. Using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups.	37	9	1	0	0
II. *I think that Blackboard helps me in* **engagement in active, interactive learning** *most by* …					
1. Delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations.	33	12	1	1	0
2. Discussion forums.	32	13	0	1	1
3. Providing oral/written feedback.	33	14	1	0	0
4. Asking and answering course questions.	29	11	2	2	3
5. Using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups.	32	12	1	1	1
III. *I think that Blackboard helps me in* **facilitating students' comprehension** *most by* …					
1. Delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations.	34	11	0	1	1
2. Discussion forums.	33	10	2	1	1
3. Providing oral/written feedback.	31	14	1	1	0
4. Asking and answering course questions.	28	12	3	2	2
5. Using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups.	33	9	3	1	1
IV. *I think that Blackboard helps me in* **boosting up learners' instrumental motivation** *most by* …					
1. Delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations.	17	18	7	3	2
2. Discussion forums.	13	17	7	5	5
3. Providing oral/written feedback.	27	17	1	1	1
4. Asking and answering course questions.	33	8	2	2	2
5. Using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups.	25	17	0	3	2
V. *I think that Blackboard helps me in* **establishing efficient teacher-students' communication** *most by* …					
1. Delivering synchronous/asynchronous oral/video presentations.	33	12	1	1	0
2. Discussion forums.	34	13	0	0	0
3. Providing oral/written feedback.	30	11	1	3	2
4. Asking and answering course questions.	33	11	1	1	1
5. Using supplementary videos via YouTube mashups.	17	19	1	4	6

Thank you for your cooperation in anticipation!

Appendix B

Students' Survey of Attitudes Towards Learning via VLEs

Students Questionnaire

This is not a test. This questionnaire asks you to describe the attitudes of you towards learning your English courses via Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs).

This questionnaire contains 25 of statements about your attitude towards learning EFL via the medium of Blackboard. Your opinion has 25 statements about your Confidence to learn in VLEs, Valuing VLEs, Liking learning EFL via VLEs and Enjoying learning EFL through VLEs. For each sentence, circle the letter corresponding to your response. There are no "Right" or "wrong" answers. Read each item carefully. Please think about how you feel about each item. Enter the letter that most closely corresponds to how each statement best describes your feelings. For Example:

	5	4	3	2	1
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Blackboard tutorials are fun.	(SA)	(A)	(NS)	(D)	(SD)

If you think learning online is fun for you, circle the letter A. If you think you not sure about whether your online courses are fun or not, circle the letter NS. If you think online classes are not fun, circle the letter D. if you want to change your answer, cross it out and circle a new letter. Please respond to all the statements on the survey.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Student ID: Class: Date:

	Questions	5	4	3	2	1
1	I like to study at home using Blackboard than to take the hassle of coming to campus and waiting for classes.	30	12	0	1	4
2	I would prefer to attend my e-classes on the spot more than to watch them later in recorded videos.	27	15	1	3	1
3	Learning English through virtual learning technology is one of my favorite learning activities.	25	20	0	1	1
4	Blackboard is more difficult for me to learn through than real-life attendance on campus.	1	1	1	13	31
5	I usually do well in learning my EFL courses on Blackboard.	20	24	0	2	1
6	I think Blackboard provides me with extra opportunity to learn, revise and get ready for quizzes and tests.	21	15	1	7	3
7	I need Blackboard to learn other EFL subjects to avoid the perils of face-to-face contact with teachers and mates in the pandemic time.	31	14	0	2	0
8	I need to do well in my online courses to catch up with my e-classes, better done over Blackboard.	24	20	1	1	1
9	The Blackboard is an efficient virtual learning environment that saves me cost, effort and time.	21	19	4	2	1
10	Learning my classes via Blackboard are a waste of time and effort.	1	1	1	13	31
11	I like learning through Blackboard video mashups, discussion boards and forums and e-quizzes.	33	14	0	0	0
12	I would like to take more online courses in the summer.	28	12	2	3	2
13	When I hear the word "Blackboard", I have a feeling of dislike and fear.	1	1	0	15	30
14	Learning English online is one of the most interesting, useful and fruitful activities.	34	11	1	1	0
15	The material covered in EFL courses over Blackboard textbook is typically completed online than was the case with face-to-face classes.	33	12	0	1	1
16	Learning English online is fun and keeps me stay safe in the pandemic time.	11	22	11	2	1
17	I have great self-confidence in the paced learning activities available online in virtual Learning Environments.	17	18	5	5	2
18	I really enjoy learning online via Blackboard.	11	23	3	6	4
19	I would enjoy college study more if there were no face-to-face contact in classes these days.	17	18	3	5	4
20	I look forward to learning all my classes online next year.	18	17	1	7	4
21	I trust my instructors are good enough to provide active, interactive learning activities via Blackboard.	19	16	2	4	6
22	I am sure I can learn online as much as I do in real world, face-to-face learning situations.	37	10	0	0	0
23	I believe that online learning is a good alternative to education in the time of the pandemic.	31	15	1	0	0
24	I appreciate learning via Blackboard as a motivating, self-paced learning and interesting platform of controlled learning.	27	13	2	3	2
25	If it were not for virtual learning environments like Blackboard, education would have come to a stop during the pandemic.	11	19	7	5	5

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