INVESTIGATING QASSIM UNIVERSITY EFL INTENSIVE COURSE PROGRAM INSTRUCTORS' PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS UTILIZING BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE AS AN EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING TOOL DURING THE 2020–2021 COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

Purpose: The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic caused a sudden shift to online teaching and learning which resulted in confusion for higher education institutions not only in Saudi Arabia, but worldwide as well. Due to the broad availability of technology infrastructure in Saudi higher education institutions, Blackboard Collaborate is widely used in most Saudi universities. As positive perspectives were found to play an important impact in the adoption of new technology in earlier research, this paper aims to investigate Qassim University EFL Intensive Course Program (ICP) instructors' perspectives towards utilizing the Blackboard Collaborate as an emergency remote teaching tool during COVID-19 pandemic.

Design/methodology/approach: To collect data from the participants, the study employed a qualitative research method, namely, semi-structured interviews with 15 ICP EFL instructors. The interviews were face to face and included predetermined questions that focused on the pros and cons of utilizing Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during Covid-19 pandemic.

Findings: The study revealed the pros and cons of using the Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during COVID-19 pandemic as perceived by ICP EFL instructors. While the pros included novel teaching methods in Blackboard Collaborate, offering interactive lessons via using Blackboard Collaborate, and a great deal of motivation resulted from using Blackboard Collaborate, the cons comprised ICP EFL instructors' lack of competency in using Blackboard Collaborate, students' lack of competency in using Blackboard Collaborate, and technical problems.

Originality/value: Most literature published on using Blackboard Collaborate in the Saudi higher education context focused on using it in teaching EFL advanced learners with prior experience with Blackboard Collaborate. To my knowledge, this is the first paper to investigate the participants' perspectives towards using the Blackboard Collaborate in teaching secondary school leavers without prior experience with Blackboard Collaborate like ICP EFL students.

Keywords: EFL Intensive Course Program, instructors' perspectives**,** Blackboard Collaborate, COVID-19 pandemic

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Many countries all over the world had to take preventive measures because of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures have resulted in numerous changes at all levels, social interaction, and organization, including the education sector (Murphy, 2020). In a short time, face-to-face traditional classes were ceased, and emergency online learning came to be the ideal and, in many cases, the only available substitute. Accordingly, this procedure has demonstrated to be one of the most highly successful non-

pharmaceutical interventions imposed by governments in controlling the spread of the disease (Flaxman, 2020; Moosa, 2020). Due to the disrupted circumstances associated with the sudden school closure, all parties involved in the educational process, government officials, educational institutions, educators, parents and students were put under tremendous pressure to ensure the continuity of learning process. Given the urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, as well as the complexity and ambiguity of the scenario of facing crises resulted from it, it is logical that all parties involved in the educational process would be tolerant and accepting of a less-than-perfect performance, especially during the pandemic's first wave. Still, given the virus and its variants thus far uncontrollable spread, it will be impossible to estimate how long these disruptions will last. What is predictable is that education, like all other sectors of life, will never be the same, and that the crisis will have a long-term impact on learning innovation and digitization (Hodges et al., 2020). As a result, flexible and mature long-term plans to address the effects of the current crisis, as well as other potential disruptions to education, must be considered. Equally essential, these plans must take into account instructors' and learners' attitudes, suggestions, and concerns based on their experiences during the first wave of crises (Hodges et al., 2020).

To ensure learning continuity during the suspension period, the Saudi Ministry of Education called for virtual classes and distant education on March 8, 2020 (Desk, 2020). As a result, numerous e-learning platforms have been used, including the Blackboard Collaborate, which is one of the most widely used by higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic spreads all over the world, these online educational platforms are being used to substitute face-to-face classes in order to protect communities, students, instructors, and professors from the pandemic while also ensuring the continuation of education (Sobaih et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated online learning in the education setting after a sudden closure of schools, colleges and universities throughout the world. It expedited the adoption of online learning as a medium of instruction. In order to guarantee continuity of quality education during COVID-19 pandemic online delivery of courses has been initiated immediately at all academic levels of higher education institutions. All public universities in Saudi Arabia have adopted Blackboard as their major learning management system (Al Shammari, 2021).

Qassim University has been one of the leading higher education institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to adopt new and improved online learning innovations. Under its umbrella is the College of Science and Arts in Unaizah which is the focus of this study which aims to investigate the perspectives of EFL ICP instructors towards utilizing Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during the COVID-19 pandemic. This will define which factors have an effect on the attitudes of ICP instructors towards adopting online teaching. It is worth noting that most ICP instructors at the College of Science and Arts in Unaizah were anxious and uncertain when they were suddenly compelled to use online platforms for their teaching sessions instead of traditional face to face lecturing. This has been the first real glitch they have encountered in their teaching career, however, even the most traditional instructors have adapted to online teaching for their lectures! This adaptation has become the urgent need of the hour while dealing with barriers to teaching and learning caused by Covid-19 pandemic. The importance of online education has been illustrated by this rapid shift towards online learning and is highly likely to become more incorporated into routine education and to be considered central in the new academic world. However, there is a gap in the literature in the Saudi higher education context toward studying the attitudes that ICP instructors exert towards implementing online teaching in general and using Blackboard Collaborate in particular.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Using Blackboard in Higher Education Context Prior to COVID-19 Pandemic

The investigation of participants' perspectives regarding emergency online learning, the key challenges they face, and ideas for overcoming them is among the many significant topics addressed by this flow of research. Numerous studies have emphasized the importance of integrating the Blackboard into the teaching system. Within this context, Alokluk (2018) pointed out that utilizing Blackboard revolutionized the traditional system of the learning/teaching process and resulted in effective education. Many universities have started using the Blackboard as part of their Learning Management System because of its easiness, universality, and accessibility (Mohsen & Shafeeq, 2014). During the last few years, the Blackboard has rapidly become popular among colleges and universities students and instructors worldwide (Al-Meajel & Sharadgah, 2018). In a similar vein, Blackboard was defined as a software package that teachers can use to create high-quality online courses (Choy et al., 2005). Accordingly, the Blackboard system is intended to support teaching and learning: promoting not only teacher-learner interaction but also interaction among students (Al-Naibi et al., 2015). The Blackboard system is also supplied with features and tools that enable the students to be involved in learning outside the classroom anywhere and anytime (D'Silva & Reeder, 2005). Previous studies discovered that the employment of technological applications can be impacted by the users' views and

perspectives towards the systems and their use. Consequently, the users' readiness and acceptance to use the system are vital for successful implementation (Almarabeh, 2014). According to Al-Drees et al. (2015), the "effective utilization of the Blackboard learning system mainly depends on students and faculty members' background, readiness and acceptance of such system" (p.17). Sheerah (2020) highlighted the issue that practitioners' use of modern technology is not only a tool for enhancing the learning/teaching process, but also for improving classroom activities and ensuring better delivery of the curriculum. Additionally, Banditvilai (2016) examined the effectiveness of blended learning in self-directed language learning and found that it has a positive advantage since the study's findings demonstrated that online materials are beneficial to improving language skills and autonomous learning. Similarly, in a case study, Nyabawa 2016 examined the effectiveness of using Blackboard. The findings of this study revealed that Blackboard had a positive impact on students' performance. In the same token, Uziak et al. (2018) found that students felt comfortable when using Blackboard; their performance developed, and communication with instructors was significantly improved.

There are some studies related to using the Blackboard system in the Saudi higher education context. For example, in their research at Al Jouf University in Saudi Arabia, Pusuluri et al. (2017) found that students are split on whether Blackboard provides a vibrant and stimulating environment. The findings of their study, however, suggested that the Blackboard could be a useful medium for providing instructions motivations. In the same way, Hamad (2017) investigated the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing Blackboard for Blended Learning and its impact on students learning outcomes. He concluded that there are more pros than cons, and students are pleased with using Blackboard. According to Al-qahtani (2019), students' attitudes and perspectives towards using virtual classes are both positively and negatively influenced. The study's findings also indicated some pros, such as ease of use, as well as drawbacks, such as the lack of a sensation of being in a real class. In a case study of students at University of Bisha in Saudi Arabia, Ja'ashan (2015) found out that students' perceptions and attitudes toward Blended Learning are positive because it aids in improving their learning, motivating teacher-student interaction and giving students enough time to complete their tasks. Though, the study also showed negative impressions such as easy cheating, a waste of time, and social isolation.

In a recent study, Ja'ashan (2020) stated that students have a high positive attitude towards Blackboard and are aware of the benefits of using E-learning. Al-Maqtri (2014), on the other hand, carried out a case study at King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia. According to the findings, teachers believed that E-learning via Blackboard is effective; however students (both male and female) do not consider E-learning via Blackboard effective. In a similar way, Al Zumor et al. (2013) investigated the effectiveness of utilizing Blackboard in blended learning modules. According to the results of the study, the majorities of participants (160 male EFL undergraduates) were dissatisfied in general with the blended learning courses and thought that Blended learning was less effective than face-to-face learning. When Al Meajel & Sharadgah (2018) investigated the challenges and the difficulties for utilizing the Blackboard system in the teaching/learning process, they concluded that both technological barriers and institutional barriers were the most highly identified barriers. While the student barriers category came in the third level, the faculty barriers category ranked at the lower end. In terms of using the Blackboard system at Qassim University in general and in the College of Science and Arts in Unaizah in particular before the spread of COVID-19, it could be mentioned that it was mainly used for posting lectures, uploading study materials, projects, assignments, tests and quizzes and was not used as the only medium of instruction.

2.2 . Using Blackboard in Higher Education Context during COVID-19 Pandemic

In his article published in the New York Times, *"Will the Coronavirus Forever Alter the College Experience?"*, Marcus (2020) revealed the anxious and uncertain state of higher education due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak which disrupted how individuals go about their lives and accelerated impending change in the campus experience. He clarified this unexpected confusing situation by saying: *"Along with their students, faculty were "thrown into the deep end of the pool for digital learning and asked to swim…...Some will sink, some will crawl to the edge of the pool and climb out and they'll never go back in the pool ever again. But many will figure out what to do and how to kick and how to stay afloat."* (Marcus, 2020)

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, a debate erupted about whether the shift to online education would be a boon or bane. Experts had a debate if the pandemic would encourage students and faculty to embrace online learning or if it would turn a generation away from it (Lederman, 2020). In the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak, many countries all over the world ceased in-person classes and switched instruction to various sorts of virtual environments. This huge and obligatory shift has been associated with a universal flow of research production on various features of the emergency distant and online learning forced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Synchronous platforms like Zoom and Blackboard are

currently used in the Saudi higher education context. Nowadays all Saudi universities use Blackboard widely as one of their e-learning platforms. The Blackboard, among other online learning systems utilized during the COVID-19 pandemic, has been the theme of numerous investigations and research publications recently. For example, Chen et al. (2020) investigated the Open University Australia students' perceptions about using Blackboard in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of the study indicated that students' perspectives about the Blackboard as a tool for real-time engagement, knowledge sharing, and feedback exchange were positive.

In regard with the Saudi higher education context, there are some studies that examined using the Blackboard in different domains such as teaching, learning and electronic feedback. An example of these is the study carried out by Khafaga (2021) to examine how modern technologies contribute to the teaching/learning process in Saudi universities. According to the findings of this study, Blackboard was found to be beneficial for both synchronous and asynchronous learning. In a similar study, Elsamanoudy et al. (2020) stated that the Blackboard served as an effective substitute for traditional classrooms during the COVID-19 lockdown, with students being able to join sessions at any time, from any location, using any device. According to Almelhi (2021), students had positive attitudes towards using the Backboard due to its accessibility, quality and convenient use. By the same token, the instructor's electronic feedback practices during the COVID 19 pandemic were examined by AbuSa'aleek and Shariq (2021) in terms of the nature of the e-feedback content, formulation, difficulties, and multimodal nature of the instructor's e-feedback. The findings of the study revealed that the instructors used more screencasts to provide e-feedback, followed by written and audio modes. Additionally, the study indicated that instructors had positive impressions on providing e-feedback through these interactive modes, and a range of challenging issues such as EFL learners' preference, technical, timing, and financial and areal issues have emerged. Moreover, AbuSa'aleek and Alotaibi (2022) examined the patterns of English language instructors' e-feedback practices during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, EFL learners' response to instructors' e- feedback and the critical issues that emerged from e-feedback practices. The qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed some crucial issues such as the instructors' preferences to online learning, the appropriateness of online platform tools in providing e-feedback, ways and timing of providing e-feedback. In addition, instructors utilized more written and audio e-feedback than the screencast via various online platforms such as Blackboard collaborative tools, WhatsApp, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Email, and Zoom. On the contrary, Almekhlafy (2020) carried out a study to investigate students' perceptions towards the online learning through Blackboard. The study revealed the students' negative perceptions towards using the Blackboard.

After the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and due to the quarantine, the Blackboard Collaborate has been broadly used as the only medium of instruction by all faculty members of Qassim University. That is, it has been shifted from a supplementary instructional tool to a primary one that can be used for virtual classes, discussion, blogs, electronic exams, assignments, course messages, and other online synchronous and asynchronous activities in addition to uploading and downloading lectures, course syllabi, study materials, assignments, homework, and quizzes. The COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened the significance of technology and virtual learning in education. Despite the fact that online learning offered both teachers and learners various benefits, the unexpected shift to a virtual environment due to the pandemic has resulted in different perceptions in using the Blackboard Collaborate as an emergency remote teaching tool. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to understand the perceptions and concerns of Qassim University EFL ICP instructors towards using Blackboard Collaborate as an emergency remote teaching tool during COVID-19 pandemic.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to identify the pros and cons of using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during Covid-19 pandemic as perceived by ICP instructors. More specifically, the study seeks to respond to the following questions in relation to ICP instructors' experience with using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during the first few weeks of the shift from face-to-face learning to online learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic:

RQ1: What are the pros of using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during Covid-19 pandemic as perceived by ICP instructors?

RQ2: What are the cons of using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during Covid-19 pandemic as perceived by ICP instructors?

4. AIMS OF THE STUDY

This paper aims to meet two research objectives:

1. To explore the pros of using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during Covid-19 pandemic as perceived by ICP instructors.

2. To explore the cons of using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during Covid-19 pandemic as perceived by ICP instructors.

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This paper is in support of the adoption of online teaching in Qassim University and specifically at College of Science and Arts in Unaizah. To my knowledge, it is the first research to explore the perceptions of ICP instructors at Qassim University towards the adoption of Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool in the Saudi higher education setting. Exploring instructors' perceptions towards adopting online teaching is an essential element to define factors that are inhibiting the adoption of online teaching. This could help in predicting how the online educational system will change across Saudi universities in the near future.

Basically, new online teaching methods should not be employed without completely understanding their effect on the instructors' teaching. A more successful and effective transition from traditional instruction to online teaching can be assured by a thorough investigation of the issues that improve or challenge the expertise of the instructors. This paper contributes to the knowledge of online teaching theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, changing the traditional mode of delivering education to online one in Saudi Arabia due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, particularly in a higher education institution, like Qassim University, is still in its very early stages. This research will assist in providing insight into the perceptions of instructors towards delivering their courses in online teaching mode.

According to Brooks (2015), "faculty members have a lot of experience teaching with technology but would like more evidence of its efficacy and more training on how to better incorporate technology into their classrooms". Practically, this research can help higher education institutions identify areas where their faculty members need professional development and training on how to deal with electronic platforms and develop their knowledge about the different platforms and systems used in online teaching.

6. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was conducted in the first semester of 2021, after ICP instructors completed teaching their online courses. This study applied a qualitative method in which focus group interviews were utilized to explore the pros and cons of using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during Covid-19 Pandemic at College of Science and Arts in Unaizah, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia. Focus group interviews, according to Jackson (1998), are flexible and relatively easy to conduct. A wide range of themes can be attained via focus group interviews as comments from one participant may generate responses from others (McLafferty, 2004; Jackson, 1998).

6.1. Participants

The purposive sample of this study included 15 ICP instructors at the English language Department in College of Science and Arts in Unaizah, Qssim University, Saudi Arabia. In general, 15 participants are sufficient for focus group interviews (Goss & Leinbach, 1996).The participants' ages range from 35 to 45. They have been teaching English as a Foreign Language for more than 7 years. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 Pandemic and the shift from traditional teaching to online teaching, the participants have been implementing the Blackboard as a teaching tool for two academic semesters. Most of them had received some training sessions in Blackboard Collaboarte by Qassim University Deanship of E-Learning and Distance Learning. The data was collected by the author of this study who is the coordinator of the ICP and the main tutor of ICP students. Based on the ICP instructors' interest to participate in the study, the 15 participants were interviewed to express their perceptions verbally. All participants participated voluntarily, and the college's institutional review board approved all research procedures.

6.2. Instrument of the Study

According to Sewell (2008), semi-structured interviews reduce bias when different responses are compared. Similarly, Creswell (2012) explained that semi-structured interviews generate information that might not be expected by the researchers. To collect data from the participants, semi-structured interviews were used. The interviews included predetermined questions that focus on the pros and cons of utilizing Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during Covid-19 pandemic. The interviews were carried out face-to-face with the 15 participants. According to O'Reilly (2005), interviews are considered powerful tools for information gathering as participants are allowed to express their views freely on a specific topic (O'Reilly,

2005). Fifteen ICP instructors were offered the opportunity to express their opinions, perceptions and attitudes frankly and orally. The semi-structured interview questions concentrated on instructors' perceptions of utilizing Blackboard Collaborate as teaching tool during COVID-19 pandemic. Participants expressed their perspectives on the pros and cons of utilizing Blackboard Collaborate as a teaching tool during the pandemic, its contributions to developing students' language skills, and practical difficulties to effective Blackboard Collaborate integration in learning English language courses during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

7. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The interview data were analyzed qualitatively using grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 2015), and based on the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin and Strauss 1990). Instead of grouping data based on an existing theory or a priori classifications, this established methodology for coding qualitative data encourages analysts to create or adapt concepts from data. The interview data were initially analyzed as a single pool. To categorize participants' responses, all data were reviewed and reread again. Participants' similarities, differences, and complementarities were examined between and within groups. The constant comparative approach was used to code, conceptualize, and categorize any words or sentences relating to the EFL faculty members' perspectives towards the pros and cons of utilizing Blackboard Collaborate as a teaching tool during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were two stages of analysis in order for obtaining trustworthiness. The first stage included abstracting the preliminary categories; then, comparing notes and agreeing on list of categories. The second stage included bringing examples from the data to support the categories, refining the categories and supporting their final structure.

Research Question 1: What are the pros of using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during COVID-19 pandemic as perceived by ICP instructors?

From the perspectives of ICP instructors, three categories emerged from the collected data regarding the pros of using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during the Covid-19 pandemic: novel teaching methods in Blackboard Collaborate, using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool offers interactive lessons, and using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool has a great deal of motivation.

In regard with the novel teaching methods in Blackboard Collaborate, the ICP instructors frequently remarked during the interviews that Blackboard Collaborate has come up with several novel teaching methods which aid in making EFL ICP education more engaging. Using Blackboard Collaborate in teaching English language skills allows ICP students to receive instant feedback from their instructors. Additionally, using online materials (audio/video/text) helps in making the online education experience much livelier and richer. Moreover, online exercises, practice tests and quizzes help ICP instructors to check, monitor and track their students' progress of language skills acquisition. According to some ICP instructors, language skills were also boosted by using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool. One instructor stated that using Blackboard Collaborate was a good venue for his students to practice writing while receiving feedback from their instructor.

Using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool offers interactive lessons. Almost all participants agreed that using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool facilitates interactive lessons by allowing students to communicate with their instructors at any time and from anywhere. One of the participants believed that using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool could create instructor-student relationship through online assignments.

Using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool has a great deal of motivation. Instructors frequently supposed that Blackboard Collaborate's motivational aspect was quite strong. Its interactive aspects such as discussion sessions and chatting enabled a great deal of peer learning. One of the participants claimed that because there were no time limits for students to access the information on Blackboard Collaborate, it aided them in making up for missed classes. Other participants believed that the fear-free atmosphere, in comparison with face to face traditional classrooms, was additional motivator for students to participate. As one of the participants pointed out, offering autonomy is one of the main features in justifying using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool in the English language teaching-learning environment. Another participant commented, "By using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool there will not be any traditional face to face classroom monotony." Another participant added that Blackboard Collaborate was an urgent alternative for traditional face to face classrooms.

Research Question 2: What are the cons of using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during COVID-19 pandemic as perceived by ICP instructors?

Despite the many pros of using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool during COVID-19

pandemic mentioned by the majority of ICP instructors, they do point out various cons that prevent effective Blackboard Collaborate integration in the EFL education context. These cons can be classified into three: ICP instructors' lack of competency in using Blackboard Collaborate, students' lack of competency in using Blackboard Collaborate, and Technical Problems.

In regard to the ICP instructors' lack of competency in using Blackboard Collaborate, some ICP instructors who were new to using Blackboard Collaborate, as stated by one of the participants, could find it challenging to shift from a traditional face-to-face instruction to online learning setting. This challenge stems, in part, from their inexperience with using Blackboard Collaborate. The lack of technical staff added to the challenge, as many ICP instructors pointed out.

Pertaining to the students' lack of competency in using Blackboard Collaborate, some ICP instructors expressed their concern about the low student response to the Blackboard Collaborate assignments. The causes for this differ. "Some of the ICP students are not well-prepared or properly informed of how to use the Blackboard Collaborate," one of the instructors remarked. This is due to the fact that not all students, particularly those from remote rural areas, have access to the Internet. Another challenge faced by ICP new coming students is the language barrier as Blackboard Collaborate instructions are all written in English and students without proper training may find it difficult to deal with it. One of the instructors, amusingly, added that some students were attracted to other internet activities such as watching videos on YouTube, Instagram and other social networking such as twitter and Facebook.

Technical Problems is another cons mentioned by some of the ICP instructors. According to some instructors, Blackboard Collaborate wasn't always reliable. One of the instructors pointed out that the complexity of some applications like Blackboard Collaborate may deter some students from using them. Despite the fact that most ICP instructors emphasized the pros of using Blackboard Collaborate, others noted that it may not be valid to be applied to teaching some language skills that require face to face instruction.

8. IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

According to the findings, ICP instructors have positive perspectives towards the use of the Blackboard Collaborate in ICP English language instruction. This indicates that most ICP instructors have positive perspectives towards integrating Blackboard Collaborate in language teaching. As earlier studies, (Albion & Ertmer, 2002; Ertmer, Gopala Krishnan, & Rosse, 2001), have shown, positive perspectives play an important impact in the adoption of new technology in teaching and learning process. Most ICP instructors see Blackboard Collaborate as an effective teaching platform that aids in the improvement of the instructor - student interaction in the ICP course and aids in the successful teaching of all English language skills. Instructors' technological and pedagogical understandings, as evidenced by earlier findings (Comas-Quinn, 2011; Hauck & Stickler, 2006), aid in the successful implementation of Blackboard-based teaching-learning activities. Because the majority of the participants said they could simply utilize the Blackboard Collaborate, the easiness of using Blackboard Collaborate by ICP instructors as a remote teaching tool has been proved. Though some ICP instructors have expressed some reservations about the practical aspects of utilizing Blackboard Collaborate, the majority of instructors have rejected the notions that it is difficult to use or that it lacks adaptability or customization. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of ICP instructors agree that Blackboard Collaborate encourages interaction between instructors and their students by allowing students to communicate with their instructors at any time and from anywhere is a positive aspect. Hence, through the participants' responses to the research questions proposed for this research, it could be concluded that the participants find that using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool is effective in enhancing the teaching learning process.

9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this research was conducted while the ICP instructors were already undergoing instruction for the different aspects of online learning. Because this qualitative study is limited in scope, it is necessary to conduct similar studies in different EFL higher education institutions and compare the results for match and mismatch of instructors' perspectives towards using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote teaching tool. In addition, separate research should be carried out to explore the attitudes of students towards the adoption of using Blackboard Collaborate as a remote online learning tool, along with assessing how the online courses should be performed and the level of satisfaction of the faculty.

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