

Students' perceptions of the use of Moodle in English language teaching and learning at the Namibia University of Science and Technology

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Abstract

Competency in the English language is a challenge in the Namibian education sector at large and at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. Moodle could be used to enhance students' English language proficiency, but some researchers in the field argue that the use of Moodle remained undesirable across the disciplines at the institution under study. It was thus essential to investigate and establish students' views regarding the use of Moodle for improved educational practice in English as a Second Language. The main objective of the study was to investigate and establish how students involved in English language service courses at the institution under study used Moodle as an e-learning tool to enhance ESL teaching and learning. The sub-objectives arising from this main objective were to investigate how students involved in English language service courses used Moodle features for enhanced English as a Second Language teaching and learning, to establish successes students have experienced in the process of using Moodle, and to identify challenges that students experienced in the process of using Moodle.

The study adopted a social-constructivist approach as a lens to investigate and understand how students' interaction with Moodle as a mediating tool impacted the development of their English language skills. The research employed a case study design that involved classroom observations and focus group interviews with eighteen students who were purposely selected. The students who participated in the research were students doing one of the three English language courses offered in the Department of Education and Languages, and they had to be students using Moodle for English language teaching and learning during the period of data collection. Four key themes emerged from the analysis of data: the uses of Moodle and its mediating tools, impact of Moodle on the English language skills, the challenges constraining the use of Moodle in English language teaching and learning, as well as suggestions for improved educational practice. The research revealed that although efforts had been made to use Moodle in English language teaching and learning at the research site, there was still a need for enhanced interaction with Moodle and its sub-tools to create better opportunities for both comprehensible input and comprehensible output to develop students' English language skills.

Keywords: *students' perceptions, Moodle, English as a Second Language, teaching and learning, social constructivism, tertiary education*

Introduction

The use of technology in teaching and learning has become imperative globally. For example, Toland, White and Bolliger (2014) explain how Learning Management Systems (LMS) have become important tools for English Language Teaching (ELT) in higher education, while Penãfiel, Navarrete, Vásquez and Luján-Mora (2016) acknowledge how the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) adds quality to educational programmes in higher education. Likewise, it was mandatory for lecturers at the research site to incorporate technology into their teaching and learning. The Namibia University of Science and Technology e-learning policy (Polytechnic of Namibia, 2010) clearly stipulates how Moodle had been identified as a suitable tool to

supplement face-to-face teaching, as well as how it was mandatory to use technology in all the courses that were offered at the institution. Moodle was the Learning Management System in use at the research site by the time the study was conducted.

Literature in the field points to the need of studies investigating the use of Moodle in English Language Teaching and Learning (ELTL) globally and in the country (Jose, 2015; Mässing, 2017; Ramanair, 2014; Şahin-Kizil, 2014). Also, the reviewed literature at the inception of this study indicated how research on perceptions of students on the use of Information and Communication Technologies in general is abundant, but there is inadequate research on the perceptions of

students on the use of Moodle in English as a Second Language (ESL) explicitly (Carvalho, Areal, & Silva, 2011; Muñoz-Repiso & Tejedor, 2012). Also, Suppasetsee and Dennis (2010) acknowledge the importance of exploring views regarding the use of Moodle for ELT from both students' and lecturers' perspectives. The current study fills this gap by exploring students' viewpoints regarding the use of Moodle in ELTL. The research idea originated from anecdotal observation of the phenomenon of using Moodle for ELTL at the research site, where apparent uncertainties had been observed. Overall, the research aimed to investigate and establish how Moodle was used at the institution under study to enhance ELTL, based on students' perspectives.

Statement of the problem

As echoed by researchers in the field (Iiping, 2013; Ola-Busari, 2016), competency in the English language is a key challenge in the Namibian education sector at large, as well as at the institution under study (Frans, 2016; Namibia University of Science and Technology's Institutional Planning, 2019; Mungungu-Shipale, 2016). Although the ICT tools that are available on the institutional LMS, Moodle, could be used effectively to enhance the English language skills of the students, Albee, Haggard, Paula, and Perez-Rogers (2012) argue that the use of e-learning, and Moodle specifically, remained undesirable across the disciplines at the institution under study. Albee et al. (2012) further recommended investigation of the tools used on Moodle, and the students' and lecturers' proficiency regarding Moodle usage. It is on this basis that this study aimed to investigate students' views with respect to the use of Moodle at the research site, for improved educational practice in ESL.

Research objectives

The main objective of this study was to investigate and establish how students involved in English language service courses use Moodle as an e-learning tool to enhance ESL teaching and learning. The sub-objectives emanating from this main objective were:

1. To investigate how students involved in English language service courses use Moodle features for enhanced English as a Second Language teaching and learning.
2. To establish successes students involved in English language service courses have

experienced in the process of using Moodle.

3. To identify challenges students involved in English language service courses experience in the process of using Moodle for enhance ESL teaching and learning.
4. To formulate guidelines that can be used for the effective use of Moodle to enhance ESL teaching and learning at tertiary level.

Literature review

Students' experiences of using Moodle for English language teaching and learning

Muñoz-Repiso and Tejedor (2012) argue that it is of utmost importance to know the views of instructors and students regarding the use of technological tools in institutions of higher education, to determine the willingness and ability to use the tools and to discover the challenges the instructors and students are facing. Among studies involving the viewpoints of the students, Liu (2013) interviewed ESL students who were doing grammar and reading courses and had experience of using the LMS, to find out their experiences of using it. The students revealed how they found it interesting to use the LMS for learning (Liu, 2013). They found Moodle to be an indispensable tool that enabled them to develop English grammar and reading skills, as well as to acquire knowledge of other aspects of the English language (Liu, 2013).

In a similar vein, Alhothli (2015) conducted a study on the impact of using Moodle as an e-learning tool for students in an English language institute. The findings of the study revealed that most of the students liked the overall experience of using Moodle for their English language course. However, there was a limitation in the sense that Moodle was found to be an unconventional way of learning as students had been accustomed to what they perceived to be a more convenient way of learning in a face-to-face learning environment. The student participants in Alhothli's (2015) study suggested improvements they wanted to be made to their Moodle platform, as explained in the following subsection. The necessity for improvements seems to indicate indirectly some degree of dissatisfaction regarding the use of Moodle, a situation that prompts further analysis of Virtual Learning Environments. Similarly, although the student participants in the study of Suppasetsee and Dennis (2010) indicated how they found Moodle interesting to use, they revealed that they preferred face-to-face

interaction over Moodle. These findings point to the key role human touch plays in a face-to-face learning environment as opposed to an online learning environment.

Impact of Moodle on English language teaching and learning

Al Zumor, Al Refaai, Eddin and Al-Rahman's (2013) study on students' perceptions of blended learning in a language course addressed the impact of blended learning on the development of a variety of English language skills. Although students acknowledged that blended learning was beneficial compared to the face-to-face instruction, it is worrisome to note that the students found the LMS only beneficial in the development of reading and vocabulary, amongst a total of eight language skills that were investigated, others being writing, listening, speaking, spelling, grammar, and pronunciation (Al Zumor et al., 2013). There was inconsistency regarding these other language skills as students were uncertain of the development of these skills, a situation that points to the need for more research. Al Zumor et al. (2013) further reported that some students suggested the eradication of the LMS as, in their opinion, it was useless. However, it should be noted that the LMS that was used in this study was *Blackboard*. Yet, this scenario serves as evidence that not all is positive with blended learning, thus calling for more investigation into the matter.

Nevertheless, Al Zumor et al. (2013) mention that the students had misconceptions of what reading was as they were not referring to reading skills such as scanning or skimming, but rather to reading a variety of texts on the LMS, including instructions for assignment tasks. Also, the researchers attributed this ambiguity of the development of other language skills to English language instructors' inadequacy of skills to integrate technology. It is thus worth noting how the challenge of inadequate knowledge and skills to use the LMSs spill over to the undesirable performance of students. Also, the researchers found that the results contradicted what other studies in the field had already established, that LMSs had the potential to improve some English language skills, such as listening and speaking (Liu, 2013; Shahrokni & Talaeizadeh, 2013). Irrespective of these explanations, this scenario points to the need for more research in to arrive at a more convincing conclusion.

On a more positive note, students who participated in Zyad's (2016) study indicated that they found Moodle collaborative writing activities useful, and their participation in the forums had a positive impact on their learning. Multi-media files that had been uploaded onto the Moodle platform were also found beneficial, for example videos, book chapters and PowerPoint presentations (Zyad, 2016). However, it is worth noting that not all the participants considered Moodle beneficial to improve their writing skills. In a similar vein, the discussion and chat forums emerged as the favourite tools that students used in Suppasetserree and Dennis's (2010) study, in which discussions were linked to previous lessons. Likewise, student participants in Hirschel's (2012) study found the discussion forum to be the favourite among other Moodle tools.

Overall, the reviewed literature in this section regarding students' perceptions of blended learning and the use of Moodle for ELTL reveals that the use of Moodle has some benefits, but that it is a fluid situation that needs to be investigated further. The student participants in numerous studies have not only shared their experiences but have also suggested recommendations for successful second language blended learning. These are presented in the next section.

Students' recommendations for successful blended learning in English as a Second Language

The recommendations given by the students who had first-hand experience of the challenges encountered in the process of using an LMS could serve as a foundation for a favourable environment for Moodle or blended learning at large. Although some of the studies that have been conducted are qualitative and not thus generalizable by nature, there are valuable lessons that can be learned, resulting in improved educational practice in numerous educational settings.

Among the suggestions given by the student participants in Althothli's (2015) study are changes such as a variety of exercises and activities to be added to Moodle; more video exercises, especially on listening; improvement of the Moodle interface; and adding more to the course content. Moreover, Dias and Diniz (2014) investigated how Moodle could be improved in higher education from the students' perspectives. The student participants suggested training of faculty to enable them to

use a variety of Moodle tools, to make the overall use of Moodle mandatory, as well as to make discussion forums compulsory to enhance the use of the LMS (Dias & Diniz, 2014). These findings suggest the need for instructors to examine Moodle platforms in their own educational contexts to determine if these challenges serve as drawbacks to effective integration of technology in their own contexts and to find viable solutions.

Furthermore, Al Zumor et al.'s (2013) study resulted in a number of recommendations from the students pertaining to how an LMS could be improved. The student participants proposed three key recommendations: finding a solution to technical difficulties they had been experiencing, proper training of students to be able to use the LMS; and increasing the number of computer laboratories (Al Zumor et al., 2013). In addition, the students suggested awarding of distinguished performance in using the LMS to motivate the use of technology for ELT, providing students with personal computers, as well as encouraging instructors to use technology for ELTL (Al Zumor et al., 2013). However, no specific suggestions or guidelines were given on how instructors could be encouraged.

Theoretical underpinnings

The current study adopted a social-constructivist approach to learning. One of the key tenets of social constructivism is the fact that it facilitates collaboration which enables negotiation of meaning when students are working with one another to construct new knowledge. According to Beatty (2010), constructivists view learning as “a process by which learners (students) construct new ideas or concepts by making use of their own knowledge and experiences” (p. 99). When the students create their own knowledge, they become active participants in the learning process. Ally (2010) further explains that constructivism is based on the principle that, effective learning takes place when teachers and students communicate effectively by using tools and interacting with tools and the environment. These mediating tools facilitate interaction and collaboration in the process of constructing knowledge, and this is how Moodle was perceived to be a mediating tool in this study.

The importance of interaction, guidance and the use of tools in the learning process are some of the key tenets of Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural historical theory of learning,

which is also rooted in constructivism. Zhou and Brown (2015) note that, this theory is based on the assumption that “development depends on interaction with people and the tools that the culture provides to help form their own view of the world” (p. 30). Again, this line of thinking supports the use of Moodle as a mediating tool in this study, thus facilitating various forms of interaction in the learning process.

Design and methods

The study adopted a pragmatism philosophical position of viewing the world, a paradigm that can be used in social research regardless of the research being quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. Morgan (2014) notes that a pragmatism approach is suitable due to its emphasis on human experience that is made up of human beliefs and actions. As the nature of the problem to be studied defines the relevant research approach, a qualitative research approach of exploratory nature was found ideal due to its attribute of social construction of reality and focusing on the process rather than on the product like in quantitative research (Cooper & White, 2012). The study employed a case study design that involved collection of data by employing classroom observations and focus group interviews with selected students. The study was aimed at exploring, describing and understanding the meanings students at the institution under study attributed to the use of Moodle and its features.

In accordance with purposeful random sampling strategy, eighteen students were deliberately selected to participate in the study. This sample was selected in line with Harding (2013) who states that when a larger group is to be studied, the researcher decides which members of the population are to participate and selects them deliberately. The students were selected from a larger population of students who were doing English language service courses by the time the study was conducted. They were selected with the assistance of the class lecturers as they were the ones who were in a better position to identify students who were familiar with the use of Moodle for ELT and could provide insightful answers to the research questions. They also had to be using Moodle for ELTL during the period of data collection. The research took place in the Department of Education and Languages in the School of Human Sciences at a public university in Namibia.

As per Creswell (2013), the researcher adopted an inductive approach to data analysis that entailed vigorous analysis of the interview data, working back and forth to identify themes and categories. The findings that emanated from the literature review and the empirical data are presented next, whereby discrepancies and similarities between the present study and the existing literature are highlighted in terms of the themes that emanated from the empirical study.

Findings

The findings of the current study were grouped in four emergent categories: the uses of Moodle and its mediating tools, impact of Moodle on the English language skills, the challenges constraining the use of Moodle in ELTL, as well as suggestions for successful use of Moodle, all from the students' perspectives.

The uses of Moodle and its mediating tools

In congruence with findings from literature in the field (Alhothli, 2015; Liu, 2013; Suppasetserree & Dennis, 2010), the student participants in the current study found Moodle motivating to use due to its accessibility anywhere, anytime. Student C EAP said that *"wherever you are you can access it (Moodle) if you have Internet"*; whereas, Student E PLU indicated that *"it is self-paced, like you decide when to study, whatever time and at any place"*. Nevertheless, both previous studies and the current study found lack of face-to-face interaction to be a key challenge in the process of using Moodle. *"It (Moodle) takes out the accessibility and the efficiency of communicating with the lecturer"* (Student C EAP). In addition, Student C PLU attributes that:

"One of the challenges I've experienced is that sometimes you have been instructed by the lecturer that you should listen to a certain audio or read a certain story on Moodle; ...you can't find the right one".

The ability of Moodle to facilitate authentic learning experience, for example the ability to generate ideas to solve real-life problems, was found to be another motivating factor to use Moodle in the current study. To this, Student A EAP said the following:

"You just open up a discussion amongst the students on the high accident rates on the B1

road which was positive as you could see each and everybody's unique view on this whole accidents problem. So, in that sense it assists for us just to see or obtain different ideas from other students".

Other studies in the field acknowledge this notion by pointing out the ability of Moodle to facilitate online interaction and co-creation of knowledge, for example by using discussion and chat forums that have emerged as favourite Moodle tools in some other studies (Hirschel, 2012; Suppasetserree & Dennis, 2010; Ziad, 2016). Also, the instant feedback provided by Moodle activities was found to be a motivating factor in the current study as it enabled students to do more activities within a short period of time as opposed to activities.

You get your marks there right after you just submit your work" (Student D EAP). *"It's usually multiple choices and then you receive your marks as soon as you finish with the post-and pre-test"* (Student C EAP).

Furthermore, the student participants in the current study found the embedded electronic study guides and embedded web links beneficial as they broaden understanding.

"The links are also stated within Moodle which is linked to another application such as YouTube or Wikipedia; so, the moment you go within Moodle it will give you the information you need within, with respect to that specific chapter" (Student A EAP).

Multi-media files that had been uploaded onto the Moodle platform, such as videos and book chapters, had also found beneficial in other studies (Ziad, 2016). The student participants were also mostly in favour of online quizzes, especially the pre- and post- assessment quizzes that afforded them an opportunity for self-reflection or self-evaluation. *"In a sense of the pre-test gives a little bit of self-evaluation of where you stand before you even start to learn"* (Student A EAP).

"When you do an assessment and this grading, then you can tell how good or where your weak points are..., (and) where you're correct" (Student A EAP). *"You can evaluate the difference between how you were doing before you were taught and after you were taught and then you see what you learned in-between and where else you are lacking in a*

certain topic" (Student E EPR).

Regarding video lessons, although used minimally, the students noted the importance of both listening to and seeing what was being presented as it helped them to understand the lesson content better. *"The videos we watch, so much better than in class, some of us we learn better by watching someone say"* (Student F EPR).

"A good example I picked up was, when you use Moodle in the English course there's usually videos that assist you when you don't understand something properly" (Student A EAP).

This finding concurs with Althothli's (2015) study in which students with insufficient English language skills appealed for more video lessons to be able to learn the English language better. The appeal for lecturers to use the Moodle tools that were not being used effectively both in the current and previous studies points to the potential these tools have to enhance the English language skills.

Impact of Moodle on English language skills

The use of Moodle was found to enhance a variety of the English language skills, namely speaking, reading, writing, and listening, as well as grammar and vocabulary, as illustrated in the excerpts below:

"The level of interaction you have with other students can also assist your English language skills; you see how they write and how they speak. It can improve your grammar" (Student A EAP). *"The more you use Moodle, the more you can express yourself in terms of speaking and writing your English"* (Student C PLU).

Likewise, other studies in the field illustrate how Moodle has the potential to improve a variety of English language skills. Liu (2013) and Shahrokni and Talaeizadeh (2013) explain how Moodle has potential to improve listening and speaking skills, while Al Zumor et al. (2013) found Moodle to have a positive impact on the development of reading and vocabulary. Furthermore, Liu (2013) found the use of Moodle beneficial for the development of grammar and reading skills, while students who participated in Zyad's (2016) study found Moodle collaborative writing activities useful. The efforts made by both lecturers and students to use some of the Moodle tools in

this study to enhance students' English language skills were hence commendable, and the student participants acknowledged how a variety of their English language skills have been enhanced.

Challenges constraining the use of Moodle in English language teaching and learning

Access to the Moodle application emerged to be one of the challenges and threats to the effective use of Moodle for ELTL. Accessing the Moodle application to engage in the e-learning content directly, without going through a web browser, was found to be a major challenge, as per the excerpt below:

"We don't have direct access through the Moodle app; we have to go through a web browser" (Student A EAP).

The students' interview data also revealed that there was a need to keep the online course content updated as it was found to be sometimes disorganized and thus confusing. This shortcoming arose from the old course content that was not removed from the platform even when the curriculum had changed as illustrated below:

"Old content from when we were still Polytech, especially some things that are dated 2013, that may not be so relevant in our studies" (Student C EAP). *"One of the challenges I've experienced is that sometimes you have been instructed by the lecturer that you should listen to a certain audio or read a certain story on Moodle; ...you can't find the right one"* (Student C PLU).

This finding is not atypical in educational technology only as Carvalho et al. (2011) also report how the student participants in their study complained that it was sometimes a challenge to locate the course material when using the LMS. Another challenge that the students' interview data revealed was minimal use of Moodle tools due to limited knowledge and skills to use it, such as the discussion forum, as illustrated in the excerpt below:

"Some of these tools are not really that active, especially the forums and blogs and the chat; if many people were using these tools more, and they would improve skills" (Student D EPR).

This finding ties in well with the work of Penãfiel et al. (2016) and Gamundani,

Kanyangela and Chitauru (2015) whose studies indicate that the Moodle platform was found to be underutilised in some institutions of higher learning. Also, Dias and Diniz's (2014) study reveals how discussion forum was found to be underutilised by students in their study. Similarly, the study by Al Zumor et al. (2013) identified inadequate skills to use the LMS as a threat to the learning process. Inadequate online feedback and guidance provided in Moodle was also found to be a challenge as students felt that the system did not provide constructive feedback, as reflected below:

"The activities don't give feedback to where you went wrong. Sometimes you get zero out of five and then you don't understand why" (Student C EPR).

However, the inability to provide constructive feedback emanated from the inability to use the system effectively, because Moodle is designed with feedback options that can be employed to provide constructive feedback in the process of language teaching and learning (Jose, 2015; Sahin-Kizil, 2014). This problem ties in well with the challenge of lack of human touch to provide constructive feedback when using Moodle that also featured in the current study and it is a challenge that is consistent with findings from previous studies (Alhothli, 2015; Suppasetsee & Dennis, 2010). Technical challenges also featured on the list of the challenges that were experienced in the present study.

"There was a time when the problem was with the e-learning system when it didn't want to work, when you couldn't go onto the e-learning platform. And we couldn't do our activities, we couldn't do our exercises and had to come back to our lecturers, like it was during the weekend and we had to come back to our lecturers on Monday and we had to inform them that the platform was down" (Student E EPR). *"There would be times when you are on Moodle, accessing your English documents for 20 minutes. You refresh a page, and it is just down"* (Student A EAP).

There is a challenge in the consistent with findings from other studies in the field (Al Zumor et al., 2013; Dube & Scott, 2016; Khan, Hasan, & Clement, 2012; Simon, 2019; Tshabalala, Ndeya-Ndereya, & Van der Merwe, 2014), especially in developing countries. In the light of the challenges hereby

presented, the following sub-section presents suggestions for improved educational practice, emerging from the empirical data.

Suggestions for improved use of Moodle by the students

The suggestions for improved educational practice that emerged from the empirical study were in a way harmonious with recommendations that emerged from literature review. Consistent with the reviewed literature findings, the student participants in the present study appealed for more embedded video lessons, thus confirming the notion of how more lesson content could be beneficial to students with low proficiency in the English language. This finding was congruent with Motteram (2013) who supports the notion that video clips enhance pronunciation, and develop vocabulary skills, and these are essential English language skills for students with insufficient language skills.

In a similar vein, the student participants in the present study also expressed the need for increased use of the Moodle tools currently underused, such as the discussion and chat forums and blogs. Findings from research literature (Hirschel, 2012; Jose, 2015) indicate that forums facilitate negotiation of meaning which is a contributing factor to the development of language skills, and how they improve communication and writing skills through interaction with other students.

Improved navigation of the Moodle course content was found to be another shortcoming to reconsider, especially disorganised course content, and like other studies in the field (Al Zumor et al., 2013; Dube & Scott, 2016; Khan et al., 2012; Simon, 2019; Tshabalala et al., 2014), the student participants appealed for solutions to technical challenges, especially improved student access to the Moodle application.

Discussion

The study entailed an investigation of students' perceptions regarding the use of Moodle and its mediating tools for ELTL. Four key themes emerged from the analysis of students' interview data: the uses of Moodle and its mediating tools, impact of Moodle on the English language skills, the challenges constraining the use of Moodle in ELTL, and suggestions for successful usage of Moodle were given.

In accordance with findings from the literature review, the student participants found

Moodle motivating to use and were mostly in favour of the online quizzes, especially the pre- and post-assessment quizzes, and the video lessons. However, the discussion forum was found to be rarely used due to limited knowledge and skills to use it. This finding does not concur well with Second Language Acquisition theory, whereby negotiation of meaning has been found to be a contributing factor to the development of language skills as it creates a platform for students to produce more language (Motteram, 2013). Discussion forum facilitates such opportunities for negotiation of meaning. Similarly, increased use of the Moodle communication tools such as blogs, chat and discussion forums, facilitate opportunities for student-student interaction. This enhances input and output skills that have a role to play in second language learning as they enhance language production.

Both findings from literature review and primary data point to the key role human touch plays in a face-to-face learning environment as opposed to an online learning environment. This points to the importance of a blended learning approach when using Moodle, where both face-to-face and online teaching and learning are taken into account. This is in accordance with Al Zumor et al. (2013) who also emphasise the use of the blended learning approach that has been found to be beneficial compared to face-to-face only instruction.

Conclusion

Although the Moodle platform is becoming increasingly used in the department under study, the student participants in the study acknowledged some impediments that needed to be addressed at departmental and institutional levels for Moodle to be used more effectively. One of the key challenges that was experienced was the inadequate knowledge and skills to use the LMS effectively. The student participants expressed the need for more staff training opportunities so that the lecturers were able to use the Moodle tools that were found to be either underutilised or not in use. Thus, the study points to the need for enhanced interaction with the use of Moodle tools to create opportunities for both comprehensible input and comprehensible output in the process of developing students' English language skills.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the present study, the recommendations for educational practice are

made to the department and the institution where the study was conducted to enhance the use of Moodle for English language teaching and learning. Furthermore, recommendations for further studies are presented.

It is recommended that the department revisits the teaching and learning approaches that are currently in use to address some of the challenges that emerged from the present study, such as insufficient student-student interaction in the online activities. Moreover, increased moderation of online activities is essential, for example the forums, to cater for the scaffolding element of the learning process that was found to be minimal in the online activities involving the use of the Moodle communication tools. Online assessment methods is another area that needs improvement from the lecturers' side as students in the present study found electronic feedback to be incomprehensible to guide them when they did not perform well in the online activities.

It is also recommended that staff in the department explore the functionalities of the embedded Moodle tools that were found to be underused or not in use. With respect to recommendations at institutional level, there is a need for the lecturers to be trained so that they can use a variety of the Moodle tools that the students felt were underutilised, especially the communication tools, such as the discussion forum.

In terms of further research, debates surrounding the Moodle interface and how it affects the performance of students in the English language courses are one area of research. The present study revealed how students were dissatisfied with the Moodle interface, which they did not find to be user-friendly, thus contradicting existing literature in the field.

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