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Exploring The Impact Of Adopting A Web-Based Instructional Model In Algerian Universities

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Abstract

Amidst a transformative phase in Algerian higher educational institutions, there is a notable shift in instructional methodologies and course delivery mechanisms. Embracing contemporary trends in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, there is a growing emphasis on leveraging technological advancements to enhance teaching and learning experiences. Against this backdrop, this study endeavors to explore the efficacy of web-based learning models as a supplemental tool for delivering instructional content. Specifically, it aims to examine the implications of implementing a web-based instructional approach in English language learning and its influence on fostering communicative competence among EFL learners. Furthermore, the implemented ¹model of learning utilizes the web-based tools as a practical framework that target directing the students' communicative competence in solving tasks, achieving objectives as well as improving their 21-st century skills. For accomplishing the present work's investigation, the suggested hypotheses set forth that the web-based instructional model of English learning can be considered as an efficient model of learning that promotes the learning outcomes, self-directed learning and study skills of English language learning. Additionally, EFL learners would display positive attitudes towards the implemented model of learning. Thoroughly, the adaptation of the method and research approach sought to confirm the research hypotheses and to draw upon the research findings based on data collection tools .A case study involves 25 master 2 students and 10 teachers of English from Mascara University's Department of English. Two research instruments were used to cross-check gathered data and validate them, a students' questionnaire and teachers' interview. The information gathered were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. In reference to data analysis, the findings revealed that the Web-based Instructional model is an effective model of learning which positively contributes in fostering EFL learners' communicative skills. With the various supported activities and along with the flexible learning atmosphere and methods of delivery.

Keywords: The teaching and learning processes, English as a foreign language (EFL), Web-Based Learning Model, Communicative Competence, Instructional Materials.

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1. Introduction

It goes without saying that language acquisition is an ongoing pursuit, mastery of the English language extends beyond academic settings to encompass the diverse needs of individuals across various aspects of life. In light of English becoming a crucial tool for navigating a globalized world, it serves as a means of communication, fostering interaction among individuals with different native languages. Consequently, proficiency in English is deemed indispensable for navigating the complexities of this interconnected world. In practical terms, advancements in technology, such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), have been introduced to facilitate the teaching and learning of English.

The integration of these new technologies has transformed the methods and approaches employed in teaching and learning English, ushering in contemporary practices like distance learning, blended learning, web-based learning, and the utilization of internet resources and multimedia platforms. The adoption of these innovative models has notably shifted the dynamics between teachers and learners. The advent of network technology has sparked a heightened interest in web-based learning across various educational dimensions, reshaping traditional teaching methods and offering modern opportunities for foreign language acquisition. These contemporary teaching and learning modalities provide unrestricted access to information while offering flexibility in terms of time and location. Khirwadkar & Puchpanadham, (2005).

1.2. Review of literature Related to the Use of Web-based Instructional Model in Universities

Studies have explored the amalgamation of web-based learning with the concept of communicative competence, emphasizing the enhancement of learning outcomes. Specifically, the focus is on web-based English learning. Despite this shift towards the use of ICT tools, teachers retain crucial roles as pedagogues and facilitators. Researchers view the application of web-based learning as an effective instructional model for fostering learners' communicative competence, enabling learners to actively engage as knowledge creators and users in educational practices. This departure from traditional teaching methods underscores the evolving nature of education, where the teacher's role extends beyond the conventional classroom setting. Camacho-Marti (2006).

Web-based learning significantly affects various aspects of people's lives, especially in the realm of English language learning. The web-based learning context provides increased opportunities for English language learners to immerse themselves in technologically enhanced environments, leveraging an extensive array of academic and scientific information. Davidson-shivers et al (2018) believe that today's learners are dubbed the digital generation because of the availability and usefulness of modern technical support; their key communicative practices are achieved through digital platforms, The role of communicative competence in English language teaching is critical and achieving it in a foreign language entails not only learning grammatical rules but also knowing when, where, and with whom to use the language in context-appropriate manner. This requires more than just knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary; it also requires knowledge of how to use English in communicative situations. Students are motivated to learn because they want to communicate meaningfully in real-life situations. As a result, teachers must consider the best method for the learners' needs. Ngigi and Obura, (2019).

1.3. Research Methodology

1.3.1 Statement of the Problem

With the widespread adoption of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), English language educators and learners express interest in educational innovations. However, many remain unfamiliar with these advancements, relying on conventional learning methods. Web-based learning serves as a bridge between traditional face-to-face learning and online learning.

The primary focus of this study is to engage Master 2 EFL learners at the University of Mascara in a web-based enhanced environment. Specifically, the study aims to implement a web-based instructional model for English learning, considering the learners' willingness and adaptability to participate in such learning contexts. The rationale behind this investigation lies in the observation that Master 2 EFL learners often struggle to enhance their communicative skills and to take charge of their English language learning as well, perceiving themselves as passive recipients of knowledge. Additionally, they lack proficiency in web-based research skills and personalized study skills. Consequently, introducing a web-based instructional model is seen as an avenue to cultivate learners' motivation, thereby enhancing their awareness and motivation to actively participate in the learning process.

1.3.2. Research Questions

This study aims to address the following research questions:

- What effects does the web-based instructional model have on the development of learners' communicative competence?
- How can web-based instructional tools be employed as effective instruments to enhance learners' communicative abilities?

1.3.3. Aims of the Study:

The primary goal of this study is to bring attention to one of the most contemporary globally practiced learning models. Specifically, it seeks to explore the effectiveness of employing web-based learning to facilitate the learning experiences and the enhancement of their language learning skills and achievements. The study particularly endeavors to raise motivation among Master 2 EFL learners by utilizing a web-based instructional model aligned with their English learning resources. Additionally, the study aims to investigate EFL learners' attitudes towards the use of web-based tools, such as online platforms, web resources, and quizzes, as mechanisms to cultivate their research and communicative skills. Ultimately, the study sheds light on raising EFL learner's motivation through a web-based model. The planning of online courses could involve the design of both synchronous and asynchronous environments, coupled with the integration of web-based instructional tools.

1.3.4. Research Approach and Tools:

To validate the proposed hypotheses and achieve the aim of the current research, a mixed method approach was employed, that is a quantitative and a qualitative one. The quantitative approach was used in students' questionnaire about their use of technology tools in the classroom, while the qualitative one was used in teachers' interview when seeking their attitudes and perceptions about the use of technological tools to improve students' communicative competence. The data from students' answers were statistically and graphically represented, while teachers' answers were clearly interpreted.

1.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation of Interview Results

A descriptive analysis procedure is employed to interpret the gathered data, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the findings; qualitative data are interpreted, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the research outcomes. This approach facilitates the interpretation of the qualitative data obtained from the study. To accomplish our

research, we have selected EFL learners and teachers at Mascara university as a population in addition to the unstructured interview which incorporates both closed-ended questions with justifications and open-ended questions, the analysis and interpretation of the interviews aim to offer contextual and practical insights regarding the practicality of web-based learning in delivering educational content and resources, with a primary focus on enhancing learners' communicative skills. Specifically, the goal is to seek the teachers' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions regarding the proposed and implemented instructional web-based learning model presented to EFL students.

1.4.1. Students' Questionnaire Analysis

After the process of data collection, the results of this designed questionnaire have been analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively as follows:

The first question was addressed to explore whether the online classes are useful for students or not. The results have shown that the majority of students 45.50% believe that the online classes are beneficial and 40.90% have some doubts about the idea of online classes' use; while the rest of the learners 13.60% were not convinced with the shift to online classes.

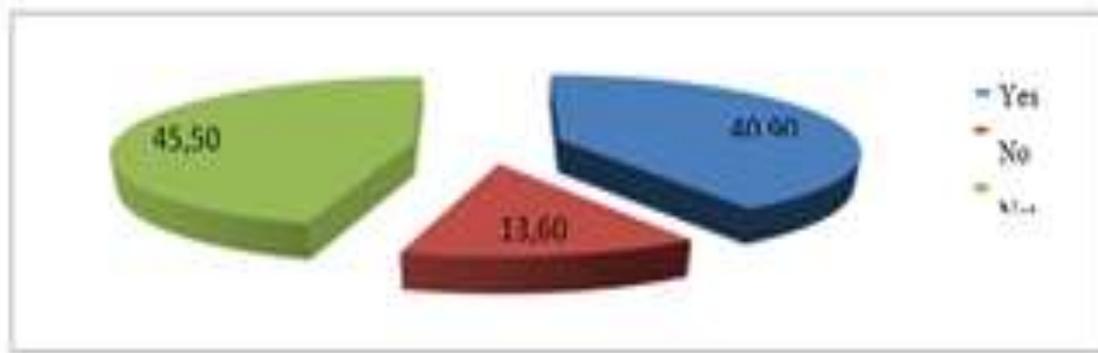


Figure 1: Students' perceptions about the use of online learning

The students were asked if they do support the use of technological tools in classroom. The results revealed that the majority of students 95% stated that they strongly support the use of technology inside the classroom, and the rest of them responded that they did not support the idea of using technological materials in classroom for several causes. The following pie chart shows these data clearly.

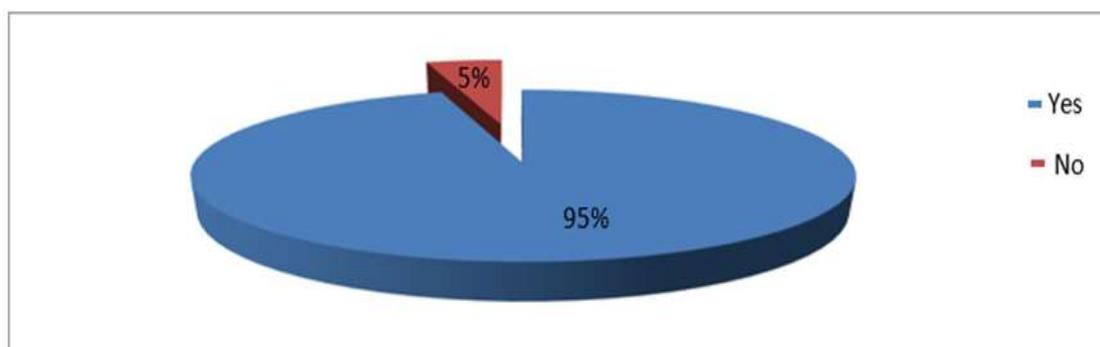


Figure 2: Students' Attitudes towards the use of technological tools

The aim of the third question was to identify the learner’s perceptions about mastering the English language, and to seek whether the linguistic competence is enough for the learner to use the target language in context. The results obtained from this question showed that 45.50% of participants believe that the mastery of the linguistic competence is not enough for the use of the target language in context while 40.90% of them goes for linguistic competence perhaps is not sufficient for using language effectively. Then the minority of students 4.50% think that the linguistic competence is perhaps enough to master a language. This figure illustrates these answers well.

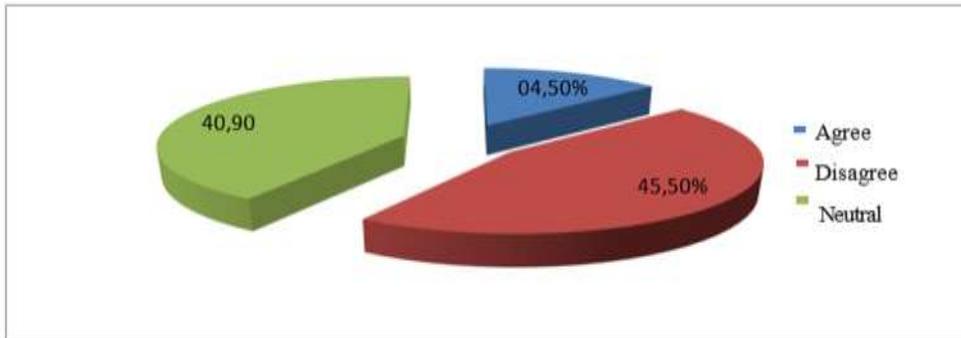


Figure 3: The importance of Linguistic Competence on Students’ abilities

As far as this question is concerned, the participants were asked to express their perceptions about the influence of the technological tools on their level of English. The wide majority 81.80% of students confirmed that the use of technologies influence and improve their level , and 13.60% of them said that perhaps the use of technological tools affected their level in the English language positively , while the remaining participants disagreed and did not see any effect of the use of technology in learning . The following pie chart illustrates these answers.

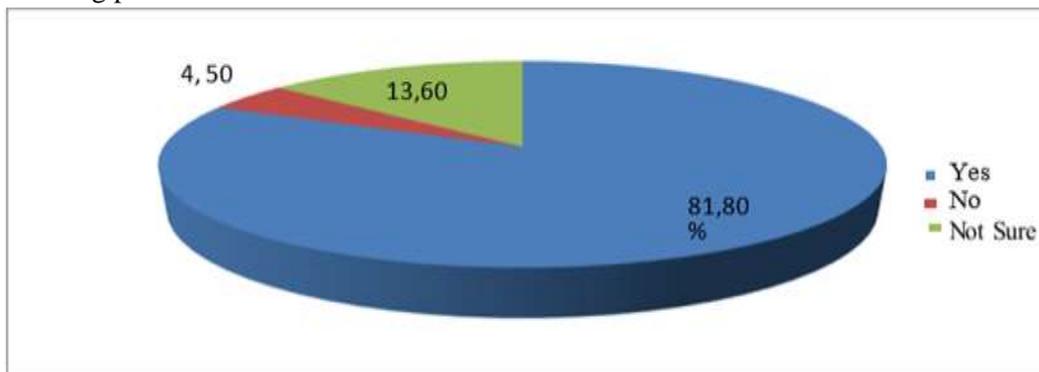


Figure 4: The Influence of Technology on Students’ level.

The study participants were enquired to say whether the use of web-based materials do help them in classroom to enhance their communication abilities or not. The results obtained illustrate that the majority of the respondents 72.70 % confirmed that with the use of web based materials they improved their communication skills, however 27.30% of our informants said that the use of such materials was not that effective due to the lack of the infrastructure in addition to the difficulty of mastering these tools without any training or guidance. The pie chart below presents these data clearly:

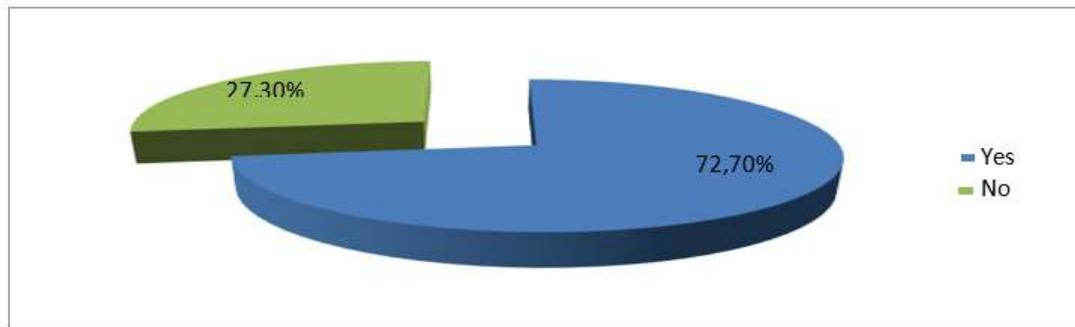


Figure 5: Enhancing Communication abilities via web-based materials.

1.4.1. Teachers' Interview Analysis

The second research instrument applied in this research paper is an unstructured interview conducted with ten teachers of English from Mascara university, the first part of the interview aims to gather general background information about the teachers, encompassing their academic degrees, years of teaching experience, and expertise in the use of web based instruction.

The first item features an open-ended question designed to identify the academic degrees of the respondents, establishing their standing as English language teachers at the university. All the respondents in this study hold postgraduate degrees either doctorate or magister. Specifically, the required degrees for tertiary education are magister or PhD (doctorate), designating their positions as associate or assistant professors, depending on their years of experience, lecturing, and other academic responsibilities. Consequently, the insights provided by these interviewed teachers, given their elevated status in English teaching, are crucial for supplying reliable and credible information to the research study.

The objective of this item's question is to ascertain the teachers' expertise areas, specifically by asking respondents to indicate the number of years they have been teaching English. This information allows categorization into expert or novice teachers. According to Scott, C.L. (2015). a key criterion for distinguishing between novice and expert teachers is the teaching experience.

The majority of teachers possess significant teaching experience, with more than 7 years of expertise, while two teachers have 3 years of experience. Both expert and novice teachers contribute to the teaching planning process; however, expert teachers are more qualified and knowledgeable about teaching methods, strategies, student styles, classroom management, and material planning. Importantly, as noted by Lin-lin, Z. (2015). Therefore, discussions with these teachers provide clear recommendations and valid explanations about the variables under investigation. The third item's question focuses on the teachers' proficiency in the use of web based instruction, specifically whether they have experienced teaching English language using digital or technological aids in an online format. The responses reveal that six teachers have confirmed their experience with distance teaching as a facet for web based instruction. However, the nature of their experiences varies based on their individual situations and internet accessibility. Taking into account that, distance education supports various approaches, their insights offer valuable perspectives on the integration of digital tools in teaching.

In the realm of web based teaching and learning, one teacher adopted the flipped classroom strategy to enhance students' speaking skills. This involved incorporating blended online videos and dedicating classroom sessions to practice. She reports that students exhibited positive attitudes, with noticeable improvements in their speaking abilities. The other three teachers employed "web-based tools," specifically utilizing social networking sites like

Facebook and YouTube to disseminate course materials and assignments. They emphasized the intentional and effective use of these tools for delivering learning materials and tasks. However, the remaining three teachers did not have experience with such approaches but expressed their intentions to explore them in their plans.

This shift from traditional teaching methods aligns with the evolving demands of technological advancements in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. The majority of interviewed teachers highlight the benefits of integrating distance teaching as a supplementary element to their classroom instruction. The fourth item is designed to probe the teachers' general practices and attitudes towards web-based teaching and learning and its connection to raising EFL learners' communicative competence. The exploration begins with understanding the teachers' practices using the web, followed by their perception of the learner's motivation and the methods to promote it. Finally, they are asked to express the applicability of online and in-person courses.

According to the collected data, all teachers acknowledge their reliance on web-based sites and resources, both as learning materials and in the course design process. They highlight the richness of content in web-based resources, providing authentic language input that allows them to search, clarify, or design information. For instance, Web-based resources are recognized as the primary and most accessible source for English language teachers and learners. Some teachers illustrate that they rely on the web to adapt relevant tasks and activities, create documents and courses, deliver authentic audiovisual materials, and download e-books. However, they emphasize the importance of "selectivity" when using such web-based resources, as not every website is academically reliable and credible in providing information and this goes with Davidson-Shivers et al. (2018) view about selectivity and authenticity.

As teachers themselves heavily depend on web-based resources and sites, the impact of these platforms on the teaching and learning of the English language is undeniable. They offer accessibility to a vast amount of information. However, language learners need to be selective and align their usage with their learning objectives.

As far as the fifth item is concerned, all teachers unanimously agree with the statement, justifying that the use of the web based instruction has become an integral part of students' daily practices. They emphasize that students are "internet users" who depend on digital and technological tools to achieve specific objectives. Additionally, they highlight the importance of "identifying learning objectives" where students define a specific goal before exploring the web to accomplish it. They stress the need for selectivity in choosing reliable websites and condition the success of web-based learning on the seriousness and motivation of students. As for, all of the teachers share the common features that entail web-based sites are accessible, rich, varied and organized and its ability in equipping any student with his or her intended achievable objectives.

The seventh item intends to dig over the teachers teaching instructions about advising their students to check for websites and their intended reasons to do so. The purpose of this question is to examine the teacher-students interdependence and if the teacher freed up the space for further web-based inquiries. Based on the teachers' answers, all of them confirmed that they do ask and instruct their students to check for websites and internet-based resources. They explain that it is important to direct their students to provide relevant study guides and resources through the web. For instance, some of the teachers exemplify that they provide their students with websites and YouTube channels that are of great relevant of studied courses; and that they advise their students to seek for or clarify certain information that may facilitate learning tasks. Similarly, other teachers emphasize over "the practical side" that the web-based sites offer in which they provide their students with practicing online grammar quizzes, and vocabulary quizzes, and further related activities for self-directed learning. Furthermore, some teachers shed

light over the importance of "the web-based tools" in equipping the students with the necessary technical skills as an initiative to cope with these modernity mediums of instructions.

Clearly stated, the teachers contribute in promoting their students' motivation and communicative abilities through which the web-based sites and resources are the central medium of delivering it. Progressively more, the web-based sites contribute in setting the self-paced environment for learners in which he/she is independently able to achieve any objective of language learning. Yagcioglu (2015)

After reviewing the platform, teachers were asked to identify the type of learning the platform facilitated. Based on the collected data; nearly all teachers perceive the platform as fostering an active learning environment. However, one teacher contends that the platform is somehow passive. The former perspective is rooted in the idea that the platform aligns with the objectives of raising learners motivation, allowing students to work at their own pace and chosen time and place. Students are motivated to explore content, practice quizzes for self-assessment, and interact through comments or queries. The platform, thus, dismantles the constraints of formal institutions, advocating for learning opportunities anytime, anywhere, making students active participants once they enroll in an online course. Conversely, the latter perspective suggests that the platform lacks some active learning materials, particularly in the use of audiovisual materials. Consequently, the majority of interviewed teachers affirm that the platform creates an active learning environment where students interact with learning materials and quizzes.

1.5. Discussion of the Questionnaire and Interview Results

The use of web-based materials has a positive effect on improving EFL learners' communicative competence according to the detailed analysis of the data obtained from students' questionnaire. All the study participants shared their personal opinions and thoughts in order to understand the contribution of web-based tools in the development of communicative competence.

The collected data indicates that the majority of the interviewed teachers express a keen interest in the integration of web-based tools into their teaching methods. Some of them have incorporated technological mediums admitting their significance in enhancing English language skills and delivering study materials to students. Additionally, they acknowledge their reliance on web-based resources and sites as primary sources for daily language teaching, especially in course design and task adoption. Emphasizing the importance of the web for students' study practices; they highlight the role of selecting appropriate websites to achieve learning objectives. Consequently, the results suggest that web-based learning is an organized, revealing, and systematic learning process that provides an authentic, practical, and achievable language-learning environment. Accordingly, teachers encourage their students to rely on such web-based resources to improve their communicative skills.

1.6. Pedagogical Implications

The utilization of the web-based instructional model represents a contemporary approach to delivering instruction, particularly in the context of English language learning. With this understanding, the current study deliberately chose this learning model with the aim of enhancing learners' communicative competence, which, in turn, signifies their independent learning and proactive engagement in their educational advancement. As a result, the study provides noteworthy insights into the integration of a web-based environment in EFL classes. Drawing from the findings derived from teacher interviews, and platform data analysis, which collectively affirm the effectiveness and positive impact of the web-based instructional model as an efficient learning approach, we propose some pedagogical recommendations and implications. These suggestions aim to facilitate the successful implementation of web-based learning models, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of the learning experience.

A- Recommendations for Teachers

1. Align teaching styles with the preferred learning methods of students.
2. Evaluate students' needs, recognize their learning preferences, and foster independent learning.
3. Embrace new teaching and learning models of technology, avoiding resistance to innovative approaches.
4. Acquire familiarity with technology-based approaches and understand the potential of implementing technological aids to enhance teaching.
5. Utilize information and communication technology (ICT) tools and integrate them into teaching practices.
6. Take advantage of web-based training to update teaching strategies.
7. Encourage teachers to employ web-based instruction to enhance the teaching and learning of basic technology.
8. Plan and create personal websites, blogs, or platforms for English learning, integrating relevant courses and materials.
9. Collaborate with peers to design web-based teaching programs for students.
10. Utilize web-based instruction to address performance gaps among High, Medium, and Low achievers.
11. Transition from traditional roles as dominators or authorities to become facilitators, guides, and supervisors in the learning process

B- Recommendations for the Administration

1. Plan educational programs for teachers and students to offer opportunities and training on promoting teaching and learning practices.
2. Organize seminars or training sessions focusing on learner autonomy for both teachers and students.
3. Provide essential technological resources in the English learning department, specifically ensuring the availability of computers and internet access.
4. Offer web-based training sessions for teachers and learners.
5. Support initiatives related to distance learning, web-based learning, and their integration into teaching curriculums.
6. Consider the applicability of this study in other English learning courses.
7. Explore the replication of this study with different English proficiency levels to conclusively support the effectiveness of web-based conditions.
8. Include other language skills (listening, speaking, and writing) and language components such as grammar and vocabulary in future research.
9. Provide material support for web-based learning programs.

C- Recommendations for Students

1. Encourage students to utilize web-based packages for learning, as they offer an interactive, student-centered approach and user-friendly basic technology.
2. Promote autonomous learning among students.
3. Encourage students to identify their learning styles and strategies and study based on their preferences.
4. Emphasize reliance on web-based tools and resources as supportive and additional aids for developing reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.
5. Students should be assisted through web based instruction in developing their ideas
6. Student should maximizes the use of web-based instruction options for developing their cultural knowledge by exposing them to multicultural context;

7. Students should be encouraged to use technology for their academic progress. This would foster learner autonomy, and will make them sense the responsibility they have for their learning.
8. Students are required to take advantage from web-based tools in the learning process through which they can evaluate, assess and develop their learning performance.
9. In short, any attempt towards the integration of ICT tools and CALL devices are of great advantageous to the English learning process. Thus, the web-based learning model is an example of this integration through which EFL learners are able to develop their autonomous learning and study skills of English language learning based on this platform.

1.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the implementation of a web-based instructional model in universities presents both opportunities and challenges. By understanding the reality versus expectations, universities can make informed decisions, leverage the model's benefits, address potential drawbacks, and ensure continuous evaluation and adaptation for a successful educational transformation. Based on the findings derived from the learners' questionnaire, it is evident that the participants exhibit positive attitudes and a willingness to engage with the web-based platform. Similarly, teachers express positive attitudes and appreciation for the adopted web-based learning model. They assess the efficiency of the implemented courses and web tools in delivering valuable learning content. Moreover, they demonstrate enthusiasm and a willingness to apply the same learning model to other diverse courses. Consequently, the implemented platform stands as an efficient instructional model grounded in the web, offering effective and valuable tools that contribute to the development of communicative competence. Specifically, the web-based platform advocates for an active learning environment, enabling learners to cultivate self-directed learning and decision-making abilities through assigned courses and instructional tools. As a result, it enhances the learners study skills in English learning, primarily by nurturing strategic learning and aligning tasks and activities with their individual learning styles. In this regard, the web-based instructional model proves to be an effective approach that establishes and yields further benefits in promoting learning achievements and communicative abilities.

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