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Abstract

The concept of e-learning is very attractive as a new learning paradigm, the effect which will be a positive one to the development of education in developing countries especially Egypt. E-learning in Egypt is still facing a lot of problems and challenges that are not only technological but also social and cultural and other technical ones. This paper explores another possible reason—a mismatch between learning orientation and e-learning design in the form of inappropriate implementation of teaching or learning strategies during implementation. So, the purpose of this paper is, firstly, reflecting on the application of e-learning in the courses of university learners in Egypt; secondly, to review empirical studies on solutions to problems encountered in university stage in relation to e-learning; thirdly, to analyze the social and cultural prospects of e-learning application for Egyptian students. Some suggested ideas are discussed, and some reflections are presented about new technologies used. Still, there are some cultural and social aspects about e-learning implementation in Egypt. Major problems are lack of experience, cost of developing courses or weak infrastructure, and negative attitudes of some families.

Keywords: e-learning discourse, e-learning implementation, social e-concepts, cultural e-concepts, e-learning implementation problems

1. Introduction

Contemporary societies have been improving and documenting their culture and civilization through education. In so doing, they are trying hard to improve their well-being and human resources through the educational system that provides them with working minds, which is the corner stone of the desired progress in life. Most scholars indicated how using technology in our life became a habit like eating or drinking by selecting tools as favorite items, but also preparing learners for the future in the same way. This may be achieved through active interaction with modern technology [1, 2]. That's why many websites are developed by instructional practitioners to be used in educational settings. These instructional practitioners hope to help
learners better develop their skills and learning in a flexible motivational learning environment. Thus, this paper is focusing on how this can be appropriately done through well understanding and clear vision toward e- EFL communication. More likely, how it is socially and culturally received and be accepted in Egypt.

During the pandemic, there was a big problem in communication with all people in Egypt, and only during this time the importance of using technology emerged. It was the first time that all social parties in Egypt felt that they are directed by force to use internet and mobile communication skills. Even academic communities are pushed to use different apps to get communicated with their students. They are convinced for the first time that technology may be the solution for many of their problems and not a problem. However, it is also the first time they feel unable to go up with the global educational system. Technology during the pandemic played the part of emotional supporter to all as students felt not alone. This is the starting point for the government to think seriously in applying e-learning in an official way.

2. E-Learning in higher education

Most university activities consist of assignments tailored to ask and to demonstrate what the learner has learned giving him opportunities to pose probing questions that his/her performance will answer [3]. A lot of studies compare face-to-face interaction and e-learning and reported that the latter has several benefits for learning in general. In e-learning, no need for turn-taking competition [4], it provides equal participation and allows shy or less motivated learners to interact with others freely and with more trusted performance [5]. Moreover, it controls their learning process. However, the degree of previous knowledge they have is an important factor, as the more they have knowledge, the better they can cope with their responsibility and appropriately do their job [6, 7]. A core point in e-learning environment is interactivity, which is very difficult to be gained in the traditional learning environment as indicated by some scholars [8–11]. Among the several benefits of e-learning, it is usually less expensive to deliver, it is self-paced (usually, can be taken when they are necessary), and it is faster (learners can skip material they already know). It provides consistent content updated easily and quickly. It may lead to an increased retention and a stronger grasp on the subject due to flexible and easy use of media. In addition, it is easily managed for large groups of students. Providing immediate feedback, encouraging interaction with other e-learners and e-instructors is of great benefit of e-learning. Moreover, since they can customize the learning material to their own needs, students have more control over the learning process and have the possibility to better understand the material, leading to a faster learning curve. The question now is how faculties can achieve all the previous benefits and others. The desired outcomes need well-organized steps.

3. The ideal online EFL learning and teaching discourse

As the term indicates, the ideal means the best that one can gain. There are many sides that should be considered in an appropriate e-learning implementation; namely technical, pedagogical, and social ones. The delivery is a set of quality benchmarks distributed along four parameters. These four parameters are:
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• Course development and structure.
• Teaching and learning strategies.
• Institutional, student, and faculty support.
• Evaluation and assessment processes.

Output will never be the appropriate desired one unless the input is enough to get it. However, both have an equal role in reasonable success of an e-course. They form a complete matrix as outlined in Figure 1 [12]. An e-course cannot be effective if not well implemented or managed as any deficiency in one of its components is clearly reflected on the other parts. This means that e-courses are not just content and instructors dealing with learners, but there are other supportive sides.

Thus, the challenge of e-learning in corporations is to facilitate learning in such a manner that technology, pedagogy, and organization are related and create a coherent, manageable, and logical system for learning activities [13].

It is important to bear in mind that technology involves basic components; infrastructure, methodology, and content as well as forming part of various working and learning activities. The organizational dimension applies to creating space and time for learning, setting goals, selecting participants, keeping track of their knowledge needs and preconditions, issuing evaluations as well. Whereas, the pedagogical dimension relates to teaching categories and their interrelations. What this paper implies is the balance among interacting, organizational, technological, and pedagogical components of a course as a whole system rather than separate spheres.

Designing learning needs a complete understanding of what is inside the learners’ mind and what will happen during learning. What steps they should pass on to reach the settled goals of learning. A designer should have a clear vision of what will happen when giving and idea or even text on a screen to their learning path. He also should predict the time they are ready to move on to the next step of learning and draw this well. A well-established background about the idea is critically needed for both sides of participants in the course—students and instructors. Staff being unaware of the

![Figure 1.](image-url)

Components of e-learning Implementation (Source: ([12], p. 9)).
implementation processes and steps sequencing may cause inappropriate application of the course. The idea of interaction for EFL learners is a core point, upon which all strategies of learning and teaching are built. Involving students in an EFL environment is critically needed to acquire the language skills as university students spent years learning about the language not applying it. They should have an environment that enables them to use real communication skills. Instructors may ignore recording students’ responses or avoid it for technical reasons or lack of information about recent applications; hence, preventing them from a critical practice to check pronunciation accuracy and efficiency as will be shown in the discussion part.

4. Technical dimension

Any learning system should consider the context it is built upon, and for any online learning endeavor, discipline, department, faculty, institution, or company will have a mandate, a mission, specific goals, and values that must be considered when planning and designing an ideal system. Considerations of student demographics and other social and cultural factors would, of course, affect the timing and method of learning and teaching. With the best information and intentions, the results and experience rarely meet expectations, and thus, the ability to adapt and refine the online learning system is crucial. Most of problems in application arise from connections for using complicated developing applications. The application is not just browsing or clicking on links but also facilitating access by building courses with soft tools available to everyone and easier to use if modification needed. Most of the authoring tools used are open-source ones, which means depending on tutorials more than original application, which in turn limit the tools utilized in building the courses and hence may be the design not sufficient to display all learners’ needs to perfect language skills. Skype application may be very useful in applying language conferences that learners may like, but at the same time it needs connection speed to continue listening that is considered the first skill that led to another skill mastery. Second life also may be a good tool to be used; however, inserting tools without knowing how to appropriately utilize it is not recommended. In an EFL course, each tool should be inserted to respond to learners’ needs in using the language naturally. Thus, usability and accessibility are both critically considered when developing e-EFL courses. Technical development of the course should respond to learners’ minds and needs in cumulative knowledge about language in order not to interrupt the mind flow of learning during language practice. A technical drop may cause blocking for a learner’s mind about a specific point such as practicing vowels, which are considered also a nightmare for a lot of nonnative or even Egyptian learners. Another point that is interface design is a very important one. A lot of interfaces may prevent or cause negative attitude about the whole course due to links of windows or advertisements that may cause disturbance to learners.

5. Pedagogical dimension

At a general and highly abstract level, the process of learning in the e-environment and the planned learning activities consider the following aspects and interrelationships: why learning activities are being sequenced in this way; who the learners are (participants); what is to be learnt (content); how it is being learnt (strategies of
learning); where and when the learning activities are taking place (learning environment). These critical issues are well considered during course development and implementation. Consequently, it is unwise to do all these efforts without gaining what we aim at by mismatching between what we planned to and what we get.

The two big anxieties for many students are about tests and grades. If the students’ anxiety level is high, they cannot see the connections. A clear scheme to determine the final grade will also alleviate some of their anxiety. Another important aspect in the implementation phase is the identification and handling of resistance for new ideas [14]. The implementation of e-Learning brings deep thoughts and ideas that are not welcomed by every individual or group within the related parties to the discussion forum. They must take part and write their reflections about ideas that they may be unfamiliar with. Concerns are often not expressed openly, but act as “hidden agendas,” covered by other official arguments with peers [15]. Open and honest communication as well as sound good and stakeholder management is an important success factor within this phase. So, what is the appropriate method of e-learning implementation in such Egyptian learning environment is a main question that needs an answer in this paper. Monitoring is very important to get learners back to the track if they are going to commit mistakes. A lot of tasks are not executed for the lack of time and equipment, and once instructors have the facilities, they can do these tasks with accuracy.

6. Social dimension

The learning culture in society is of major influence on the quality of e-Learning; as cultural attitudes have a significant role on pupils’ conceptual attitudes about using technologies, the way they learn or taught, and what they expect to do and gain from their educational system. So, it is not just transposing a teaching method that apparently produces good results in one country as this does not mean you will get an improvement in educational performance in another different country with different environment—as it could do more harm than good. Negative attitudes about internet and using e-learning are still controlling some areas in Egypt. To have the best solution for any problem, one should recognize the source and guarantee that all the related sides are well emplaced. So, this paper explains some of the problems found out during the first implementation of e-learning to university students and suggest some solutions to it to guarantee the best implementation of this innovative technology. So, what is the appropriate method of e-learning implementation in the Egyptian learning environment and how social environment affects the learning discourse are two main questions that need an answer in this paper. Implementation of developed e-courses indicated a problem of three core sides. The first is cultural social side, infrastructure side, and pedagogical assessment of learners’ performance. Negative attitude of some parents causes or interferes in the learning process. Till now and after this revolution in technology, still some restricted families prevent their children from access to the internet as they consider it something of adverse effect on their children’ morals and values. They may let them use mobile phones I5 and so on and do not allow internet connection at home. Ironically, there are others prevented from access due to distance or being out of service. Open societies allow individuals to access YouTube and interact with natives for this is the best way to acquire language. Rural societies do not let this happen, and hence, the application of e-EFL course may be in vain. They may prevent learners from contacting foreigners or natives for
fear of transferring unhealthy habits while the world now is trying to spread distinct types of cultures. This difference in ideas and thoughts about using internet access influences in turn using e-EFL courses. False concepts about using the internet and the open access may prevent learners from dealing with it or even create negative attitude about it.

7. Methodology

Analysis and descriptive research method is used in this paper. Different forms of information gathering have been used. Initially, a review of research literature was conducted as well as interviews with professionals on e-learning at Damanhour University, Bany Sweif University, and Port Saeed University, where a course of applied linguistics is lunched. The main question is: what are regarded as social and cultural challenges and improvement areas for implementation of e-learning? To answer this question, the investigator followed up courses’ implementation around the last 2 years and collected a lot of comments around problems of implementation whether from learners or SMEs or even parents.

7.1 The sample

The sample in the present research is formed of fourth-year EFL learners at Damanhour University, who were studying applied linguistics course in the second term of year 2019/2020. They are alert with technology use enough to enable them to deal with the course and surf its content. They are supposed to acquire the language skills and can communicate using writing, speaking skills and hold discussion about language issues. Also, they are supposed to know applications of technology in EFL environment and develop their techniques as teachers.

8. Findings

Positive feedback comes from data on tremendous growth of computer equipment and internet utilization by EFL academic staff in the Egyptian universities and different contradicted ones from students. Language is not merely a tool by which information about mental states and feelings or facts are expressed. On the contrary, language is a “machine” that generates, and as a result constitutes, the social world even if it is virtual through website communities. The Internet has radically changed nearly every level of human experience in an incredibly short amount of time. The greatest potential for new information technology lies in improving the productivity of time spent outside the classroom. Meanwhile, modern technologies can very well be a double-edged sword. Results indicate that several aspects of teaching and learning did change, when the ratio of learners’ performance increased in the final report, after dealing with the course via the suggested techniques. These results include the following points:

1. Instructors indicated a major need to well-training program about the Moodle and how to manage learners. Learners indicated lack of sufficient skills needed for surfing the courses and if they know they still need to know the best way for doing the activities. Parents, however, may or may not support the idea of using
technology, they still fear dealing openly with the internet due to cultural aspects and social restrictions mentioned above.

2. There was a clear increase in learners’ use of the site access after each login. For many learners, the site became the preferred source for gaining knowledge about applied linguistics especially it contains sound files to comment and explain the content.

3. Most of learners viewed forum and chat as a primary tool for expressing their opinions and communication with others. Hence, the rubric for the internet tools usage changes the way they approached studying and learning. They started to even discuss their daily issues through the social tools such as graduation party or spending time with each other.

4. Most learners preferred to make drafting of their assignments directly on the computer, as it took less time to write and revise on a word page using word formatting tools. They gained self-conference using little jokes and funny situations.

5. Although they found it difficult at the beginning, typing became much easier and surfing the internet for more sources became a target for them and of great help for gaining information. They were trying to help each other who could not login by inserting comments on Facebook as a starting point to deal with the course.

6. It was much easier for the instructor to manage learners using the e-course, as learners kept in touch and followed up with much care their postings and replied on them.

7. Using the e-course performance rubric allowed all learners to work in the same activity at the same time with different performance on the task steps according to their individual abilities. Therefore, the instructor was given a chance to follow up learners’ performance. They have an obvious plan about their tasks and how they are going to be evaluated. Consequently, directing their efforts and managing their time and practice of parts on the course.

Guiding learners during the e-course dealing is of great benefit for the course goal achievements. This means that the e-learning and teaching rubric was effective in improving learners’ performance. E-learning in the Egyptian universities/institutions is still in the very early stage. There are many theoretical and technological issues that need to be explored. Therefore, the need for a tested quality management scheme is becoming crucial.

9. Discussion

One of the most problematic ideas in the e-course learners’ performance is how to evaluate their performance. For example, what degrees can be given to them about writing e-mail or posting to the forum. And what degree of performance is accepted and satisfies the learning objective achievement. If he is informed about how each tool is used and how much effort must be exerted to activities, so he can manage the
learning process very well and can have the right decision at the right time. Timely, detailed feedback is provided to the performance of the assessed behavior of learners providing motivation and shaping behavior or mental learner constructs. Machine evaluations, in the form of online multiple-choice test questions or in simulations, can be effective learning devices [5]. However, most models of online learning also stress the capacity for direct communication and feedback from teacher to the student. This feedback is provided as an integral part of the discourse facilitation function of the online teacher. So, a suggested rubric is given to them to know how much effort can be devoted to a certain activity as shown in appendix [A]. The course of applied linguistics is directed to three universities students: Bani Sweif and Port Saeed Universities. Learners in both Universities are applying the tasks systematically or without monitoring to direct them if discussion is needed. They do not even respond to each other, and this was noted by some of Damanhour learners too. Topics for forum also are posted without any feedback from anyone. They did not suggest any of the links to help their colleagues, which means no communication is done. They only used web links to submit their assignment and even did not modify the text or comment on it. They just copied and put in a word file and submit it, which means they did not depend on their own style or even try to practice. Hence, losing motivation is clear in this learning environment, and as a suggestion to change this is to present some topics from outside related to social life or their daily activities using some picture comments or shortcuts.

Research on assessment in distance education has shown that rapid feedback is important for both understanding and motivation to complete courses. This point is totally neglected in our courses most probably because of university legal documents and rules of dealing with assessment. Learners still study online and paper-pen assessed for final exams. So, they lack a part of the motivation, which concerns a lot of learners. The traditional way of assessing learners still controls their minds as well as the idea of studying for exams only due to the fact that their courses’ outcome is not linked to the daily work activities. Thus, the challenge of online learning is to provide high quantity and quality of assessment while maintaining student interest and commitment. So, a review of faculty legal documents could solve this problem.

Infrastructure deals only with the production criteria now but what about the delivery side. Still, most of our faculties are not well equipped with labs for learners so the implementation at this phase depends on the learner’s facilities, which can be negative for the family resistant of the idea itself not for the computer availability. Even the survey on the NELC model deals with the learning side, and no item concerning the performance is included in it.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be noticed that the idea of model implementation of e-learning is clearly complex but is not impossible. Changing the role of the instructor suddenly is not correct, but it has to be gradually. He cannot be the only one to bear the whole burden on his shoulder. So, a suggested solution is giving a hand to him by adding two people who can be at the same level of responsibility. The instructor assistant can do many things. He can get the follow-up reports and give detailed idea about tracing the students. This role’s needs are not easy as he should have the same technical skills of using the web tools in teaching. He should have a detailed idea about the function of each tool used in the course. The design of the course employs some specific tools directed to achieve the targeted learning objectives. For example, the blog can be a very useful tool for improving writing skills for language learning students. Other tools can be of great benefit for developing thinking skills such as forum and chat rooms. Studies in the field proved the effectiveness of using
each tool in teaching. So, when handling the follow-up of learners on the Moodle and their appropriate performance for each tool, this would spare the instructors’ time to concentrate in following their weaknesses and suggesting solutions for them.

Another role for the assistant instructor is to guide the learners to the correct performance. For example, they may respond using simple response. He can show them how to respond to their peers and colleagues. Learners at this stage are not well trained to use computer sets, so how about using the tools, and giving appropriate response to the activities. In addition, he can manage the technical problems in the lab or respond to the learners’ inquiries about technical problems. Now the instructor can evaluate the learners’ performance by concentrating on the targeted behaviors needed from them.

These things cannot be well done unless the institutional system supported this way of implementation. Still, the institutional documents apply the paper-pen way of achievement evaluation. How the learners learn electronically, apply, and be tested in the traditional way. The idea is what can be the motivation to continue learning using this web-based course unless it is providing more easiness in learning and before that in evaluation and testing. Learners may perform better if they are told what to do in what extent. Thus, a suggested performance rubric for learners is attached to be given and explained carefully to them before starting the course. This rubric guides them for the best performance to each activity and tool in the course. It also gives the instructor the chance to discover the learners’ individual differences and abilities in learning. So, institutional regulation should be changed to adapt this teaching way; to redistribute the scoring of the learner to push him to use the e-course.

The solution of the problem does not lie upon the staff and instructional institutions. Still, the cultural negative aspect controls some of our parent’s mind. They are afraid of the bad side of web openness. Here comes the role of the enlightenment meetings with parents and social support for the learners as they are faced with two opposing sides. Some of the parents prevent and the instructors pressure them to do so how they can perform on this environment. It becomes a source of disturbance instead of appropriate one for learning. Some of the learners printed the questions and topics to read away from the net screen, which means they did not like reading from computer screens. Others used phone to log in and find problems. So, problems like these may affect them in dealing with the course even if it is interesting and valuable. The recommendation here is to develop applications for the phone delivery. This may facilitate dealing with the course especially they have the phone for 24 hours daily and no problems of DSL connections.

Implementing an e-Learning course will change established educational practices. Some participants will resist changes. The key to overcoming this resistance is to establish a clear goal for institutional e-Learning strategy that delivers strong benefits and rewards and goes parallel with global trends in education. This goal is to be communicated to the organization, and support for the e-Learning initiative should be solicited. Implementation should proceed at a steady but deliberative pace to reduce the risk of failure and to establish early skills gain and development. The e-learning initiative should then proceed more aggressively since e-Learning is one of the few IT investments that has been shown to deliver tangible results for many organizations.

The key challenges and improvement areas the respondents emphasized were the need for an overarching institutional strategy that includes follow-up of all parties, followed by top leadership endorsement and funding because still the infrastructure not complete or available to learners at their own pace. Moreover, this strategy needs to take account of the pedagogical underpinning of e-learning activities. Infrastructure, training, support, and incentives for both instructors and learners are
also considered to be important for successful e-learning. The implementation should be done in the light of the universities bylaw as learners do not care only for subjects evaluated with final scores.

10. Conclusion

As in planning every side should have alternates to guarantee successful results. Sharing parts in e-learning also should have their ones and exert the outmost of their efforts to have the targeted achievements from what they plan to. However, e-learning projects often failed to deliver the results expected, mostly because of poor implementation or neglecting social or cultural aspects during implementation. It is necessary to understand that e-learning is not a technological solution but rather a process with cultural consequences. Successful implementation of e-learning process requires reflection in three main areas, people, processes, and technology as mentioned above.
References


