

Original Paper

Jadara University Students' Attitudes towards the Use of Microsoft Teams in Learning English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

This qualitative study aimed at investigating students' attitudes towards the use of Microsoft Teams in their learning. The study has adopted a qualitative research design to determine attitudes of EFL students towards the use of Microsoft Teams in leaning. Six EFL students were chosen and interviewed using a focus group interview. Three positive themes emerged from students' responses namely, convenience, time efficiency, and shared learning resources. And two negative themes were noted as well including technical problems and difficulties in doing certain types of exercises. This study also recommends a comparative study between traditional and virtual learning and teaching.

Keywords

Microsoft teams, online learning, Jadara University, English language

1. Introduction

The era is witnessing many changes in Information Technology (IT), and this has led to unprecedented changes in the widespread use of technology in education. This led to the need to keep pace with changes from educational systems to face the problems that societies face, such as an increase in literacy and the ability to compensate for the shortfall of academic and training cadres in some sectors through virtual classes and to provide an interactive environment rich in multiple sources that serve educational processes in all its sector (Martin & Tapp, 2019).

Online learning appeared to help those willing to acquire knowledge. The time one chooses without being restricted to specific places or times, and also for learning through electronic content that differs in its preparation technique from what is presented in traditional books, where it contains multiple media and patterns of simultaneous and asynchronous interaction (Ko & Rossen, 2017).

Today, the trend towards benefiting from technological development is increasing rapidly in the higher educational institutions. These institutions have used diverse teaching methods in the education and training processes that depend on the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Alkhalwaldeh & Menchaca, 2014).

In the context of education, teaching and learning English language skills has become a necessity for educational expansion and overall development worldwide after the spread of covid-19 pandemic. It is not just an option for universities; it has become an urgent necessity to shift from regular classes to virtual classes worldwide. Universities have turned to computerize curricula and introduce the e-learning system in their fields (Alshehab & Rababah, 2020; Rababah, 2019).

Since the first day of the pandemic, Jadara University has adopted the use of Microsoft teams at the beginning of the academic year 2019/2020 in order to encourage its faculty and students to implement such programmes in teaching and learning. In a constant effort to foster ICT literacies, Jadara University has launched several initiatives. The university has also developed some classrooms electronically concurrently, which may be regularly in the present and perhaps in some way asynchronously for those wishing to learn in the future. The university experience in adopting this software in teaching is still new, so this study came to measure students' attitudes about using Microsoft Teams in their learning and teaching. This work requires cooperation and collaboration efforts and participation of all members of the teaching and administrative staff at the University.

Perhaps the above goal highlights the need to know students' attitudes towards some programmes because of their impact on the extent to which they accept concepts and experiences of the subject matter and employ it in education. Then their academic achievement is affected in this subject. So a student who has a tendency towards e-learning achieves more success than if he or she had a negative attitude towards it (Rababah, 2020).

So, knowing their attitudes towards this software is significant as it may give an indication of its efficiency or inadequacy. That is why this study came to evaluate students' attitudes toward adopting Microsoft Teams by their university.

2. Literature Review

Microsoft Teams is a program produced by Microsoft, and the first version of which was released in 2017. It aims to create a virtual environment for collaborative teamwork among a group of members. With 13 million daily users, Microsoft Teams overtook slack in July 2019 (Forbes, 2019). Its system allows for the use of modern office applications, Office 365, in managing administrative, educational, and commercial work. It also permits keeping all elements of user-generated digital content and text chats simultaneously and asynchronously. It allows the implementation and management of meetings remotely in its direct and scheduled mode according to a date on the calendar applications. It is available on all computer and mobile operating systems with convenient interactive interfaces.

2.1 Related Studies

Empirical studies have been conducted to investigate and evaluate the implementation of MT. Based on the literature review, many studies were conducted to investigate the attitudes of learners towards using ICT in learning and teaching (Ingeç, 2015; Maruthavanan, 2020).

Maruthavanan (2020) conducted a study to find out the attitude of students and teachers towards learning through MOODLE. The study has used a survey from 100 participants of teachers and students to find out their attitudes towards learning through MOODLE. The findings showed that the participants' attitudes were positive towards such a programme.

Al sharif (2016) aimed to investigate the attitudes of Shaqra University students towards e-learning. The study sample consisted of 366 students, enrolled in undergraduate programs. For the sake of achieving the objectives of the study, the researcher used a descriptive analytical method, as well as using a scale to measure the trend of e-learning consisted of 28 phrases. The study resulted in the followings: 1) The students' attitudes toward e-learning were positive. 2) There are no statistically significant differences in the students' responses to learning depending on the specialization variable (i.e., scientific or literary). 3) There are statistically significant differences in favor of females at the level of 5% in the students' responses to e-learning in terms of gender (i.e., male or female). The researcher recommended the need to set training sessions for faculty members in the field of web design courses, as well as the necessity of activating e-learning technologies in teaching undergraduate courses.

Ingec (2015) conducted a study find out the students' attitudes towards e-learning. The sample consisted of 119 participants. The study used a questionnaire as a tool of the study. The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences attributed to gender except in the use of computers, frequency of using the Internet and motivation. The analysis indicated that this method of studying and learning had significant impacts on the students' attitudes towards eLearning.

3. Methods

The current study has made use of qualitative research design to determine attitudes of EFL students towards the use of Microsoft Teams in leaning. Six EFL students were chosen and interviewed using a focus group interview. According to Creswell (2013) focus group interview is "the process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people, typically four to six" (p. 218). In the interview, the researcher carries out small questions to get answers about a specific topic. The group of participants is of similar ideas and ages. This method is useful when there is a lack of information or when there is hesitation in expressing opinions. Participants were given the option of replying either in English or in Arabic. The interview process was initiated with the researcher identifying the purpose of study and conveying his gratitude to the participants for taking part in the study (Creswell, 2013). Every student was requested to respond to questions revolving around their attitudes towards the use of Microsoft Teams. During the interview process, the questions and respondents' replies were audio-recorded, and

the researcher also took pertinent notes during the session. The responses of the interviewees were coded in the following way; student X—for instance (SA) refers to “Student A”.

4. Results

The researcher conducted interviews with six EFL students to answer the question about their attitudes towards the use of Teams. In order to achieve the aims of the study, a focus group interview was utilized on a convenience sample comprising six students at Jadara University. Three positive themes emerged from students’ responses namely, Convenience, Time efficiency and Shared learning resources. And two negative themes were noted as well, technical problems and difficulties in doing certain types of exercises.

The positive themes

Three positive themes emerged from students’ responses namely, convenience, time efficiency and shared learning resources.

The first theme: Convenience

The first theme that the participants provided in their interviews was convenience. There was a consensus among the participants that Microsoft Teams is convenient. SC: “Learning became easier because one does not need transportation and the lecture can be accessed from anywhere”. SF: Communication with teachers is more comfortable than on campus, as in the past it was difficult at times to ask questions in class. The Teams program solves this problem.

The second theme: Time efficiency

The second theme emerged from the interview is time efficiency. Students claim that time is important. Most of them agreed that traditional learning is time consuming. SB: students have become more skillful in time management, which helps them prepare for lessons and do their homework. SE: “Learning through the TEAMS program saves the student’s time and effort”.

The third theme: Shared learning resources

The third theme that was noted from the participants’ responses was shared learning resources. The majority agree that it has become easier to send and receive materials. SA said that “it is easy to deliver information, whether video, audio, or otherwise, within less than a second to all students. Similarly, SE commented on that “as a learner, I receive information from the teacher (the source directly) and it is kept secure on the system”.

The negative themes

On a negative note, students in this study have some negative experiences with using Microsoft Teams in their learning. Two negative themes were noted viz. technical problems and difficulties in doing certain types of exercises.

The first theme: Technical problems

The first theme noted from the responses was technical problems. Students agree that this issue is a big

headache for every student. In this regard, SC said “There is no doubt that there are advantages to e-learning, but there are also disadvantages and shortcomings to distance learning, which are technical problems such as Internet disconnection and other problems”. SE added that “Once, I was disconnected from the Internet for a week, and I was unable to refer to some of the material because it was not recorded.

The second theme: difficulties in doing certain types of exercises

The second negative theme noted from the responses was difficulties in doing certain types of exercises. SA: “some subjects, such as pronunciation, for example, require seeing the instructor pronounce some words to be able to answer some of the exercises”. SB, “Some practical subjects need to be taught on the university campus due to the difficulty of understanding them online”.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This current study aimed at investigating students’ attitudes towards the use of Microsoft Teams in their learning. The study has adopted a qualitative research design to determine attitudes of EFL students towards the use of Microsoft Teams in leaning. The study has chosen and interviewed six EFL students as a focus group interview. Three positive themes emerged from students’ responses namely, convenience, time efficiency and shared learning resources. And two negative themes were noted as well, technical problems and difficulties in doing certain types of exercises. It is evident from the above results that most of the students’ answers were positive, with the exception of some answers, which are recommended for decision-makers to work to overcome and get rid of them as soon as possible. Instructors who are proficient in Microsoft Teams should run training workshops for the rest of their colleagues.

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