| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

The Attitudes of English as Foreign Language Undergraduates towards Learning Basic Writing Skills through the Using of Blackboard at the University of Tabuk

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| **ABSTRACT**

This study aims at examining the attitudes of English as a foreign language undergraduates' towards learning basic writing skills through using Blackboard at the University of Tabuk for the academic year 2022/2023. The sample included 30 undergraduates selected purposively. It was distributed over two groups each 15 undergraduates (experimental and control groups). The theoretical framework of the study was based on Tubaishat and Lansari's (2011) Model of E-learning. The researcher used SPSS (Version.26) for data analysis. Findings showed statistically significant differences at level (0, 05) for the means of the achievement test for the two groups in favor of the experimental group that was taught using blackboard. Also, findings revealed statistical significance differences at level (0, 05) in developing the correlation between English as foreign language undergraduates towards basic writing skills as a result of the use of blackboard. This research recommends that the blackboard be activated in teaching all the subjects because of its positive effect on the achievement of the faculty members and developing their attitudes towards teaching English as a foreign language.

| **KEYWORDS**

Blackboard, Achievement, Attitudes, English Language

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1. Introduction

The development that emerged lately provided more attention to the use of information technology and communication (Alotaibi, 2021). However, the traditional teaching techniques have the basis of teaching the English language at many academic institutions worldwide, which have not given faculty members and students the adequate opportunity to contribute and achieve knowledge. These techniques relied mainly on route learning and commonly emphasized the theoretical notion of learning rather than the applied part of it. This is not enough in learning and teaching languages and linguistics, which usually depend on both the theoretical and applied aspects (Evisen et al., 2020).

The prospectus has not developed to be anymore the only basis of teaching and learning in which learners search for knowledge. This shows that route learning is not the appropriate technique to offer learners with information and skills that they need to attain critical thinking skills and be innovative (Francisco et al., 2020). According to Male et al. (2020), recent learning systems turned to be very reliant on the computer with the growth of the existing progress in the field of human sciences. Depending only on a computer as the merely teaching technique is not satisfactory but it should be escorted with contemporary teaching techniques and computerized programs that suit all the diverse learning levels.

The necessity for advanced hi-tech programs that encounter the difficulties of all disciplines in language and linguistics, in particular, has become very essential. This has become essential to make the educational process more collaborative and positive in which the effect will be observable over not only the students' academic achievement but also the faculty members' performance and efficiency. It is also essential to inspire them to be academic-oriented (Al-Oqaily, 2022).

Further, it is no doubt that all the contemporary algorithms and databases that depend largely on multimedia are the origins of the teaching process. So, linguists and educationists should give more consideration to these aspects in the academic institutes because contemporary teaching approaches are students' oriented and help learners to be communicative. These techniques allow learners to have great involvement in the process of obtaining knowledge and developing creative thinking skills (Al-Nofaie, 2020).

Alamer (2020) states that the emphasis on information technology in the learning institutes, whether lower or higher education levels/schools or universities, have become the concern of every learner due to its connection to the learning process. The significance of information technology in this regard is perceived in advancing the educational level as well as evolving the learners' critical thinking skills and creativity. They add that one of the utmost significant educational techniques used in educational technology is "Blackboard". They have many practical features that make them distinguished from other learning techniques in which they essentially rely on many of the contemporary programs that comprise different methods and can be used in teaching applicable subjects, particularly languages and linguistics.

This era has witnessed countless developments in the educational field, chiefly in the field of language and linguistics, that necessitate the entire world to be well-prepared to face the challenges and demands nowadays (Aljuaid, 2021). According to Suhaibani (2021), the main objective of teaching is growth and development. Teaching and learning are life. That is, with the prompt growth of the internet, it is essential to improve and develop education, training programs, and learners' skills. This is why; various countries worldwide have called for strengthening the efforts to connect all educational institutions through internet and websites technology. Blackboard technology has become one of the most significant fields of debate in the field of EFL (Basilaia G. et al., 2020). Blackboard will not just be providing new technology for learning, but it will also offer a modern mode of learning which requires remarkable standards such as the preparation of the learners and assisting them with the necessary knowledge about the use of blackboard concepts and what potential benefits can attain (Al-Qahtani, 2019).

2. Literature Review
A lot of empirical studies were carried out to facilitate the basics for adapting the learning materials to meet the needs of the era of technology and learners. But there is not any thorough link between teachers and learners regarding the nature of the differences that should be accomplished. Presenting changes to the prevailing learning resources is understood by many parents and teachers as an original idea to meet the reforms of new technology (Alahmadi, 2020).

Introducing changes in the learning materials through the use of technology in education is the only way to hold substituting data and develop the learning resources. The use of a blackboard in learning basic language skills such as writing is one of the contemporary forms that lead to the progress of learners not only in the field of human sciences but even in pure sciences (Kelly et al. 2017). The aforementioned explorations found that technology-based learning is far better compared with conventional learning techniques (Rusk et al., 2019).

With the prompt growth of the network, many scholars have discussed the concept of blackboard under the umbrella of e-learning. For instance, Abu Al-Hajj (2019) argues that e-Learning refers to distance education or online learning. Terms such as "electronic-learning" are adopted at the existing time in which blackboard is one of these technologies. It discusses the actual combination of a variety of support to conventional learning in which it can take place in the classroom, from home, not restricted to a particular place. It can be suggested that there are many classifications of e-Learning. The most general characteristic is that it is a kind of a learning technique that uses the apparatuses of modern communication, networks, and multiple approaches of voice and pictures, drawings, e-libraries, as well as Internet portals, either remote or in the classroom (Conley et al., 2019).

It is reinforced by technology and Internet /World Wide Web. Blackboard can be used formally and informally for learning development through any electronic approaches involved but not limited to the internet. This assists students' learning anywhere and anytime as it affords reachable access to learning resources at learners' convenience'. It seems valid to explore the potential advantages of the blackboard in detail (Ta'amneh, 2022).

Blackboard is very useful for learners. It gives learners the ability to read texts, examine pictures, listen to clarifications, and even interact with the teachers. For instance, using a blackboard can aid learners in learning 10% of the data taught in the classroom and 40 % of what they see or listen to (Bıçak, 2019).

2.1 Study Problem
The rise of technology-based learning has changed the role of language teachers in the classroom. The stress has changed to be essentially affording learners the chance to be the key to the learning process, particularly in learning basic skills such as writing

(Uziak et al., 2018). Thus, the focus has shifted to making language learners self-independent and have the skill to use multimedia and information technology in learning writing.

Information and communication technology provides language learners with the required skills for getting knowledge about what linguistic competence is needed for developing writing skills. Many teachers state that the use of technology such as blackboards affects learners' linguistic competence and basic writing skills at the university level. Blackboard has developed to be a very significant modern learning technique used by academic institutions instead of emphasizing learners' achievement.

Using modern learning techniques aid learners develop their writing skills. They help improvise the quality of students' writing (Ismail and Saleh, 2018). But most Saudi English as foreign language learners encounters many problems when they try to learn basic writing skills when using Blackboard. They do not have the aptitude and skills to use the blackboard to learn the English language. The main problems with English language learners at the University of Tabuk are those associated with learners' inability to use "blackboard" effectively when attempting to learn basic writing skills and relevant linguistic competence.

2.2 Study Objectives
This study intends to achieve the following research objectives:

i. To examine the correlation between EFL undergraduates' learning basic writing skills and the use of blackboard?
ii. To find out whether there are any effects due to the use of Blackboard on developing undergraduates' attitudes towards learning basic writing skills.

3. Methodology
The corpus comprised 30 EFL undergraduates (males) from the Department of Languages and Translation at the University of Tabuk in Saudi Arabia for the academic year 2022/2023. The researcher used purposive sampling procedures for selecting participants. This research included two groups (the control and experimental groups) in which each group included 15 participants.

The corpus embodies almost all the prevailing socio-economic classes since social-class dissimilarities that are revealed in undergraduates have a deep influence on their achievement. They are alike in gender and age, ranging from 19-20 years. They are also homogenous concerning native language (Arabic) language proficiency. It was indispensable to adopt the experimental approach to reach the reliability and validity of the research. This approach is used to examine the correlation between learning basic writing skills and the use of blackboard by undergraduates. Two research methods were used in this study. They are surveys and an active inspire test.

Certain measurements were placed on learning basic writing skills by advanced undergraduates with proper thought to their achievement. The test included involved 20 items validated by a panel of experts who are specialized in measurement and evaluation to reach the validity and reliability of the test. The purpose of this test was to measure the dissimilarity in the achievement of both experimental and control groups in the basic writing course.

The survey was the second research instrument used in this study. It comprised 12 items. The groups were taught by using the educational program "Blackboard". This was monitored by piloting the efficiency test and the statistical analyses for producing the responses of the respondents. In connection with the efficiency test, the researcher piloted the survey over the two groups to discover the correlations between the two groups. After having taught basic writing skills to experimental and control groups, a post-questionnaire was disseminated to respondents. The researcher conducted statistical analyses for the data using SPSS (Version.26).

4. Results
The findings of the first hypothesis showed that there are no statistically individual differences at the (0, 05) level due to the use of Blackboard. The findings of the analysis of the independent t.test are discussed as follows in Table.1:

Table. 1 Findings of the T. Test Differences between the Control and Experimental Groups

Groups	Mean	Standard Deviation	Difference between Two Groups		T. Test Value	T. Test Periodic Value	Level
			Mean	Standard Deviation	3.09	2.04	0.000
Control	15.1	6.18					
Experimental	19.1	2.80	4	3.38			

Table.1 above depicts that the results of the tests indicated that the means for the experimental group was 19.1 with standard deviation of 2.80, whilst the means for the control group was 15.1 with standard deviation of 6.18. The findings showed that the statistical variance for the two means of the experimental and control group is 4, and the variance for the standard deviations of the two groups is 3.38 at level (0.05). The t-test value was 3.09 at level (0.00), and the t-test periodic value was 2.04. This is in favor of the experimental group.

The researcher discards the null-hypothesis category and implements the substitute in which there is a statistical difference of 0.05 in the efficiency of the EFL undergraduates. To test the second hypothesis, which states that there are no statistical differences in developing the attitudes of EFL undergraduates at 0.05, the researcher concluded the means and standard deviations for the items of the questionnaire as depicted in Tables 1 and 2 in the next section.

Findings in Table 1 show that the value of the means for the responses to the questionnaire concerning the experimental group ranged between 1-1.62 for those participants who liked the basic writing skills subject and varied between 1.06-1.17 for those participants who liked basic writing assignment and ranged between 1-1.27 concerning the participants' evaluative beliefs about basic writing skills. Whilst, the mean ranged between 1.29-1.68 for the participants' behavioral tendencies to learn basic writing skills.

Table.2 Attitude toward Using Blackboard in Learning Basic EFL Writing Skills for Experimental Group

Standard Deviation	Mean	Item
1.	**Like Basic Writing Skills**	
0.70	1.62	I like learning basic writing skills using the Blackboard.
0.48	1.13	Learning basic writing skills is exciting using Blackboard.
0	1	Basic writing skills are my favorite topic.
2.	**Like Basic Writing Assignment**	
0.48	1.12	I like to do basic writing classes using Blackboard.
0.52	1.17	When I use Blackboard to learn basic writing skills, I feel I am doing something significant.
0.24	1.06	Learning basic writing skills at the Dept. of Languages and Translation is fun.
3.	**Evaluative Beliefs about Basic Writing Skills**	
0.46	1.27	Basic writing skills are useful for solving interaction problems globally.
0.23	1.05	Students must learn basic writing skills because it affects their lives.
0	1	Basic writing is one of the most significant topics for undergraduates to learn.
4.	**Behavioral Tendencies to Learn Basic Writing Skills**	
0.69	1.67	I am willing to devote more time to learning basic writing skills.
0.53	1.68	I like trying to solve new writing-based problems in English.
0.59	1.29	If I had the opportunity, I would learn how to do basic writing projects in the English Language.

Table (3) in the next section displays the participants' attitudes towards EFL basic writing skills scale for the control group.

Table 3. Attitudes towards basic writing skills' scale for control group

	Standard Deviation	Mean	Item
1.	**Like Basic Writing Skills**		
	0.71	2.6	I like learning basic writing skills using the Blackboard.
	0.95	1.79	Learning basic writing skills is exciting using Blackboard.
	0.81	2.23	Basic writing skills are my favorite topic.
2.	**Like Basic Writing Assignment**		
	0.52	1.17	I like to do basic writing classes using Blackboard.
	0.78	1.39	When I use Blackboard to learn basic writing skills, I feel I am doing something significant.
	0.79	1.45	Learning basic writing skills at the Dept. of Languages and Translation is fun.
3.	**Evaluative Beliefs about Basic Writing Skills**		
	0.76	2.12	Basic writing skills are useful for solving interaction problems globally.
	0.85	1.62	Students must learn basic writing skills because it affects their lives.
	0.91	1.89	Basic writing is one of the most significant topics for undergraduates to learn.
4.	**Behavioral Tendencies to Learn Basic Writing Skills**		
	0.61	2.62	I am willing to devote more time to learning basic writing skills.
	0.94	1.95	I like trying to solve new writing-based problems in English.
	0.91	1.67	If I had the opportunity, I would learn how to do basic writing projects in the English Language.

Analysis of the findings in Table 2 displays that the value of the means for the responses to the questionnaire concerning the control group ranged between 1.79-2.23 for those participants who liked the basic writing skills subject, and varied between 1.17-1.45 for those participants who liked basic writing assignment, and ranged between 1.62-2.12 concerning the participants' evaluative beliefs about basic writing skills. Whilst, the mean ranged between 1.67- and 2.62 for the participants' behavioral tendencies to learn basic writing skills.

Therefore, the results of the analysis revealed that there is a statistical difference and effect of using Blackboard on developing the attitudes of undergraduates in learning basic writing skills. T.test independent findings revealed that there is an influence because the T.test value was 3.09 at level 0.00. This confirms the rejection of the null hypothesis and accepts the substitute, which states, "there is an effect with the statistical difference in developing the attitudes of EFL undergraduates to use Blackboard in learning basic writing skills.

The findings of the study showed that learners have positive attitudes towards the use of blackboard in teaching basic writing skills that appeared in the development of their written achievement. This goes in line with past research conclusions that presented the effectiveness of the use of blackboard in developing academic achievement (Al-Qataan, 2018; Abu Al-Hajj, 2019).

The use of Blackboard is found effective in uploading basic writing assignments, online tests and quizzes, virtual discussions, and related classroom discussions with peers and teachers. The use of the blackboard helped learners achieve basic writing needs and reduced sociocultural and emotional aspects of writing problems based on the discussions of the findings. That is, the learners' tendency to develop their level of basic writing performance as a result of the effective and positive use of the blackboard. Therefore, during the basic writing process, the use of the blackboard presented some benefits and outfalls during the learning process. Most of the learners showed a high level of positive attitude towards blackboard technology.

Despite a comparatively lower level of argument, the learners succeeded in overcoming their basic writing anxiety, developing greater confidence, and sensed that they achieved progress through recognizing basic writing errors, using writing processes and conventions as a result of the accessible and reachable use of blackboard that reflected by learners and teachers' interaction in the virtual classroom. These findings agree with past studies' conclusions (Al-Oqaily, 2022). Therefore, developing critical thinking in learners assists in improving their basic writing learning process, particularly in a blended online setting. Blackboard settings can provide sources that learners can use to support their academic writing requirements (Ta'amneh, 2022).

The use of Blackboard presented an online learning community in which learners can cooperate and assist one another perform certain writing tasks such as editing and revising to develop their linguistic competence. This is consistent with previous studies proposing that the Blackboard setting can be favorable to common group collaboration and involvement (Conley et al., 2019).

In the current research, the use of a blackboard presented a practical setting for cooperation in which EFL basic writing learners can develop the sharing of perceptions and views through both synchronous and asynchronous implements of contact with peers and teachers. This has also been shown in past studies (Male et al., 2020). Additionally, these results support Tubaishat and Lansari's (2011) Model of E-learning, in which they posit that learners can learn better with the help of more proficient peers, teachers and experts, and artifacts (e-learning setting).

The findings propose that blackboard technology seems to be more real in supporting less experienced writers. This group of EFL learners can get more learning prospects from more proficient peers, teachers, and e-learning techniques through scaffolding and modeling in this blackboard medium. Such results largely support Tubaishat and Lansari's (2011) Model of E-learning and research on the advantages of the blackboard. Blackboard technology offers full prospects to develop linguistically and emotionally interactive sociable e-learning settings that can contribute to developing EFL learners' basic writing skills.

Thus, blackboard technology has been confirmed most successful and positive in developing linguistic and sociocultural connections amongst an online community consisting of peers, teachers, and the blackboard implements. It can be established that learning and academic knowledge development happen via constant involvement in the online interaction and presentation of basic writing tasks. Blackboard, mostly in the use of online debate and online peer review practices happening synchronously and asynchronously with peers and teachers, simplifies the collaboration and supporting learners within blackboard-based learning surroundings. Thus, the blackboard assists as a mediator in learners' development of academic knowledge. Though, it should be observed that blackboard does not substitute face-to-face learning among learners and teachers at the higher education stage. The inference that is most obvious from the results is that the best preparation is a blend of face-to-face and computer-mediated interaction.

5. Conclusion

The objectives of the study showed that there are statistical differences in the efficiency test of the EFL undergraduates in favor of the experimental group learning basic writing skills using Blackboard. This is an indicator that the use of Blackboard increases the efficiency of undergraduates, as presented by the experimental group, who showed greater efficiency compared to control group faculty members. Also, the findings showed that undergraduates were less tense in their tests when using Blackboard to perform basic writing assignments and tasks. This may relate to t audio-visual effect of Blackboard that results in the excitement of undergraduates and recalling information. To be more specific, Blackboard helps the students genuinely interact with the material. It also helps them consume less time, effort, and space through the use of video motions.

The findings of the second research hypothesis indicated that there use of blackboard affects undergraduates' attitudes towards learning basic writing skills. It also showed there are differences in the responses of undergraduates to the questionnaire items in favor of the experimental group. The researcher concluded these differences by comparing the means and standard deviations related to questionnaire items for both the control and experimental groups. This also was confirmed by the findings of the independent t.test. This may relate to the advantages of Blackboard and its effect in attracting undergraduates in facilitating the learning process in the classroom for science subjects due to audio-visual effects and other options that make learners move freely around the learning materials. This study recommends that further future research be conducted in this field.

This study recommends that future investigation can examine the contribution of related options of e-learning tools in learners' achievement of academic knowledge in a synchronous and asynchronous environment. This study mainly investigated and examined the blackboard discussion platform. In future investigations, synchronous implements, such as computer-generated classrooms and online discussion, or asynchronous techniques, such as email interaction, can be examined. The role of computer-assisted learning in basic writing classrooms needs further consideration.

Based on the outcomes of the study, computer-assisted learning should be adopted in learning other language skills, such as reading, listening, and speaking, to enable the process of learners' achievement of academic knowledge. Also, and most significantly, the future investigation that is anticipated to arise from the present study should survey the contribution of other forms of e-learning tools to learners' accomplishment of academic knowledge by adopting samples of learners with varying levels of language proficiency and across diverse classes. In further research, synchronous techniques in Blackboard should be investigated in longitudinal research. The contribution of blackboard interaction to learners' reviews of basic writing tasks should also be investigated further. Using blackboard delivered chances for EFL learners to contribute to discussion platforms. Problems

of inadequate spoken proficiency and cultural subjects that did not allow learners to engage in face-to-face interaction in the teaching space were not the main problem.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest
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