Exploring Iranian efl teachers' attitudes toward the use of learning management systems in English classes

Una exploración de las actitudes de los docentes de inglés iraníes frente a los sistemas de gestión de aprendizaje en las clases de inglés

Une exploration des attitudes des enseignants iraniens d'anglais langue étrangère vers les systèmes de gestion de l'apprentissage dans leurs cours d'anglais

Uma exploração das atitudes dos professores de língua inglesa iranianos diante dos sistemas de gestão da aprendisagem nas aulas de inglês

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Abstract

This research was set to uncover Iranian English-as-a-foreign-language (efl) teachers' attitudes toward the use of learning management systems (lms) in English classes. Employing a mixed methods research design, the researchers recruited 168 Iranian efl teachers from several schools and language institutions as research participants and sent them a valid self-report questionnaire to gather quantitative data. Simultaneously, they conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 teachers to collect qualitative data. Findings revealed that Iranian efl teachers adopted both positive and negative perceptions of lms use. The positive perceptions included ease of access, knowledge sharing, suitability for crowded classes, variety of learning tasks, and more advanced assignments and feedback. In turn, negative views comprised inadequacy of teacher training programs, inappropriacy for productive skills, complexity of functions, and students' unfamiliarity with the systems as well as lack of interest. These results may offer significant insights into efl practitioners' perceptions of a variety of measures that can be taken by teacher development programs to encourage the use of lms in efl contexts.

Keywords: efl teachers, learning management systems, teachers' attitudes, teachers' perceptions

Resumen

Esta investigación se propuso mostrar las actitudes de los docentes iraníes de inglés como lengua extranjera (ile) frente al uso de los sistemas de gestión de aprendizaje (lms) en sus clases de inglés. Mediante un diseño de investigación de métodos mixtos, los investigadores reclutaron a 168 docentes iraníes de ile de diversas instituciones educativas y centros de enseñanza de lenguas del país y les enviaron un

cuestionario válido de autorreporte con el fin de obtener datos cuantitativos. A la par, realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas con 15 docentes para recopilar datos cualitativos. Los resultados muestran que los docentes iraníes de ile adoptaron percepciones tanto positivas como negativas respecto al uso de lms. Las percepciones positivas incluyeron la facilidad de acceso, la puesta en común de conocimientos, su adaptabilidad a grupos numerosos, la variedad de actividades de aprendizaje, y lecciones y retroalimentación más avanzados. A su vez, las opiniones negativas incluyeron insuficiencia de programas de capacitación de docentes, destrezas productivas inadecuadas, complejidad de las funciones y falta de familiaridad de los estudiantes con los sistemas de gestión de aprendizaje, además de la falta de interés. Esos hallazgos ofrecen claridades importantes sobre las percepciones de los profesionales de ile en cuanto a diversas medidas adoptadas por los programas de desarrollo profesional docente para promover el uso de los lms en contextos de ile.

Palabras clave: docentes de ile, sistemas de gestión de aprendizaje, actitudes de docentes, percepciones de docentes

Résumé

Cette travail de recherche vise à montrer les attitudes des enseignants iraniens d'anglais langue étrangère (ale) envers l'utilisation des systèmes de gestion de l'apprentissage (lms) dans leurs cours d'anglais. À l'aide d'une méthode de recherche mixte, les chercheurs ont recruté 168 enseignants iraniens d'ale issus de divers établissements d'enseignement et instituts des langues du pays et leur ont envoyé un questionnaire d'auto-évaluation valide afin d'obtenir des données quantitatives. Dans le même temps, des entretiens semi-structurés ont été menés avec 15 enseignants afin de recueillir des données qualitatives. Les résultats montrent que les enseignants iraniens d'ale ont adopté des perceptions à la fois positives et négatives de l'utilisation des lms. Parmi les perceptions positives, citons la facilité d'accès, le partage des connaissances, l'adaptabilité aux grands groupes, la variété des activités d'apprentissage, ainsi que des leçons et un retour d'information plus avancés. Parmi les points négatifs, citons l'insuffisance des programmes de formation des enseignants, l'inadéquation des compétences productives, la complexité des rôles et le manque de familiarité des apprenants avec les systèmes de gestion de l'apprentissage, ainsi que le manque d'intérêt. Ces résultats offrent un aperçu important des perceptions des professionnels d'ale concernant les différentes mesures qui ont été adoptées peuvent être prises par les programmes de développement professionnel des enseignants pour promouvoir l'utilisation des lms dans les contextes ale.

Mots-clef : enseignants d'ale, systèmes de gestion de l'apprentissage, attitudes des enseignants, perceptions des enseignants

Resumo

Esta pesquisa visou mostrar as atitudes dos professores iranianos de inglês como língua estrangeira (ile) em relação ao uso de sistemas de gestão de aprendizagem (lms) em suas aulas de inglês. Usando um projeto de pesquisa de métodos mistos, os pesquisadores recrutaram 168 professores de ile iranianos de várias instituições educacionais e centros de ensino de idiomas do país e enviaram-lhes um cuestionário válido de auto-relato para obter dados quantitativos. Ao mesmo tempo, foram realizadas entrevistas semi-estruturadas com 15 professores para coletar dados qualitativos. Os resultados mostram que os professores de ile iranianos adotaram tanto percepções positivas quanto negativas do uso dos lms. As percepções positivas incluíram facilidade de acesso, compartilhamento de conhecimento, adaptabilidade a grandes grupos, variedade de atividades de aprendizagem, e lições e feedback mais avançados. As opiniões negativas incluíram programas insuficientes de treinamento de professores, habilidades produtivas inadequadas, complexidade das

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funções e falta de familiaridade dos alunos com os sistemas de gestão de aprendizagem, além de falta de interesse. Essas descobertas oferecem importantes clarezas sobre as percepções dos profissionais do ile e sobre várias medidas a serem adotadas pelos programas de desenvolvimento profissional de professores para promover o uso dos lms em contextos ile.

Palavras chave: docentes de ile, sistemas de gestão de aprendizagem, atitudes de docentes, percepções de docentes

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Introduction

Recent advancements in technological devices along with more learner-oriented methodologies in the educational arena have paved the way for the expansion of novel instructional techniques (Benkovic & Dobrota, 2012; Lenkaitis, 2020; Rahimi & Fathi, 2021, 2022). Parallel with such developments, online instruction has gained momentum and has turned into a necessary element of traditional face-to-face classrooms (Mayer, 2019). As a result, the amalgamation of online learning with the traditional approaches to pedagogy has been introduced as blended learning, which is argued to cause active and effective learning and teaching (Fathi et al., 2021; Knutzen & Kennedy, 2012).

In the meantime, the wide recognition of information and communication technology (ICT), accompanied by convenient access to mobile technology devices, has led to the ever increasing popularity of e-learning as a global movement in learning and instruction. E-learning is usually conceptualized as employing technology tools either synchronously or asynchronously for pedagogical purposes. One of these tools is a learning management system (LMS) which provides a Web-oriented instructional context. The emergence of LMS has boosted the need for the internet and the use of a blended mode of instruction in educational contexts (Mohammaddokht & Fathi, 2022; Park et al., 2016; Turnbull et al., 2019). Taken together, a LMS allows practitioners to develop and disseminate content, supervise learners' participation or involvement, and evaluate their performance (Cheng & Yuen, 2018; Eraslan Yalcin & Kutlu, 2019). In addition, it provides learners with the opportunity to employ interactive functions including threaded discussions, conferencing, and forums (Cheng & Yuen, 2018).

With regards to the EFL context, a LMS can provide great potential in terms of content integration, delivery, and evaluation at the same time (Pina, 2010; Terzioglu & Kurt, 2019). This platform can provide students with authentic audio-visual content and give them a variety of tasks, presentations, as well as hyperlinks. Plus, more reciprocal online interactions are possible via LMS (Terzioglu & Kurt, 2019). In addition, the latter provides the opportunity of having both real-time synchronous and asynchronous communications. Lastly, more objective assessments can be carried out by requesting students to construct electronic portfolios and take online exams (Emelyanova & Voronina, 2014). Concerning administrative issues, a LMS can offer many benefits. For instance, practitioners can trace the attendance of learners, monitor their assignments, and provide them with feedback (Erben et al., 2009). As far as the announcement and organization of tasks are concerned, teachers can have more effective cooperation with pupils and also help them to feel a sense of agency (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003).

Additionally, it is also claimed that teachers' attitudes toward online education significantly contribute to the real use of technology in the classroom. Employing social constructivist approaches, several researchers have investigated teachers' and students' perceptions of online teaching (Cole et al., 2021; Woo & Reeves, 2007). Although a significant bulk of empirical studies have suggested that teachers generally hold positive attitudes toward online instruction, many of them are reported to face shortcomings in online teaching (Appana, 2008; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). These limitations include lack of technical support for online courses, teachers' inadequate digital literacy, inappropriate teacher training programs for online teaching, and low interaction between teachers and learners (Dashtestani, 2013).

Regarding LMS, some studies have investigated the attitudes of both teachers and students toward LMS in EFL contexts (e.g., Basal, 2015b; Cheok & Wong, 2015; Dogoriti et al., 2014; Holmes & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2018; Ushakov, 2017). However, these studies have not led to conclusive results and few of them have focused on teachers' attitudes vis-a-vis such systems. Overall, it seems that less empirical

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research has been devoted to uncovering teachers' attitudes toward online language instruction (e.g., Al-Zaidiyeen et al., 2010; Başöz, 2016; Banas, 2010; Canals & Al-Rawashdeh, 2019; Hismanoglu, 2012). More particularly, the attitudes of Iranian EFL teachers towards the use of LMS in English classrooms have remained relatively unexplored. Therefore, employing a mixed methods study, the present study set out to explore the perceptions of Iranian English teachers toward the effectiveness of LMS in EFL classrooms.

Theoretical Framework

Parallel with rapid advances in technology in recent years, online learning has been the target of much interest by many researchers (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Godwin-Jones, 2018; Lin et al., 2017; Salmon, 2013). E-learning has been recognized as an effective educational technique since its emergence at the end of the 20th century (Mijatovic et al., 2012). Regarding the growing use of online tools, this new learning paradigm is a shift from teacher-fronted towards student-centered education (Emelyanova & Voronina, 2014). A large body of work on virtual learning environments (Van Raaij & Schepers, 2008), factors influencing e-learning adoption (Kanwal & Rehman, 2017), information technology (Latchman et al., 1999), and teacher acceptance of e-learning (Teo, 2010) has been reported.

Investigations in this line of inquiry have indicated that computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is constantly growing (Basal, 2015a). According to Park and Son (2020), digital technology plays an influential role in FL/L2 education given the rapid progress of the internet. Further research on technology-enhanced teaching has shown that online learning has gained popularity in traditional classes (Lim et al., 2008). It is also claimed that computers are widely used in educational settings and teachers make use of computers for various purposes (Nim Park & Son, 2009).

Along with rapid progress on the internet, significant changes have occurred in the constructs of learning and teaching (Greenhow et al., 2009). Using a LMS to support the process of learning and teaching is considered one of the important innovations regarding ICT in the last decades (Coates et al., 2005). Tsai and Talley (2014) state that adopting a LMS to enhance the quality of instruction is more common at universities. Given that teachers are on the frontline of educational regeneration, their perceptions play a crucial role in using computers inside the class (Fathi & Ebadi, 2020). In addition, Redmond et al. (2005) maintain that teachers' interests in utilizing technology and their motivation and tendency to try various things lead them to use technology for teaching. Likewise, Abrahams (2010) emphasizes the importance of teachers' willingness in adopting new educational technology for e-learning success.

From this perspective, teachers' perceptions of using technological contents affect the way they make use of these resources. In addition to teachers' attitudes, research on self-efficacy has shown that teachers' perceived efficacy of using technology for teaching is a powerful correlate of their technology uses in the classroom (Chen, 2010).

In light of the significance of teachers' attitudes concerning language teaching with technology, numerous researchers have probed teachers' perceptions towards technology integration to clarify how teachers perceive technology implementation (Ertmer et al., 2006; Fathi & Ebadi, 2020; Mollaei & Riasati, 2013). As an example, Arkin (2003) attempted to uncover efl teachers' attitudes toward the use of technology-based resources in language teaching. Specifically, the focus was on teachers' points of view with regard to using online resources such as a vocabulary frequency profiler, vocabulary level tests, and word as well as text concordance to teach vocabulary. Semi-structured interviews were administered to elicit data from English-medium university teachers.

As findings indicated, teachers believed that computers could help them complete tasks in their daily life and work easier. This suggests that, generally, they held positive attitudes toward computers. Most of the teachers used computers frequently for different purposes, including typing lesson plans, storing materials, browsing the internet, and sending emails. However, teachers' responses regarding their opinions using technological resources varied. A lot of teachers had positive attitudes towards making use of computers for pedagogical purposes. On the other hand, a large number of teachers were not certain about employing online resources for instruction. That is to say, teachers believed that they could use computer technology tools as supplementary materials rather than as the main resources for teaching.

Teachers also reported some factors that hindered them from integrating technology into their instruction practice: a) limited teacher training programs, i.e., training courses are inadequate in equipping teachers with expertise and support on how to use various online tools; b) time constraints, i.e., given that teachers are burdened with time-consuming loads of course contents to cover based on the syllabus, they cannot use online vocabulary resources; and c) inadequate integration of supplementary resources into the curriculum. Moreover, they were not sure about taking risk of using computers in class. The lack of training courses for teachers is also supported by Yıldırım (2000) who argues that pre-service teachers are not provided with enough support and guidance to acquire the necessary digital knowledge for integrating technology into their teaching practice. An increased number of studies have confirmed that teachers' lack of digital training is the major impediment to using lms in efl classrooms (e.g., Jeong, 2017; Terzioğlu & Kurt, 2019).

With respect to examining how the use of ICT could improve teaching and learning processes, Fox and Henri (2005) explored teachers' perceptions of the effect of ICT on their instructional practices. The participants of this study were several schoolteachers who were undertaking a master's in science in ICT at a university in Hong Kong.

Findings revealed that lack of time, inadequacy of proper professional development, lack of vivid systematic leadership assistance, tight curriculum requirements, and inflexible assessment processes were the main causes for the restricted influence of ICT on the teachers' teaching practices inside the class. However, Chen (2010) argued that teachers' attitudes about the teaching resources (time, support, technological equipment) known as Context had an average effect on pre-service teachers' technology use. As a result, the relationship between Context and training suggested that preservice teachers' education experience and the degrees of their technology skills were correlated with their perception of school resources and support.

Within this line of inquiry, Ertmer et al. (2006) tried to investigate teachers' perspectives on the factors that affect their technology integration success. Data were collected through an online anonymous survey from exemplary technology-using teachers involved in technology teaching environments. As findings indicated, teachers believed that intrinsic variables, including commitment to and confidence in using technology, had a stronger influence on their ability to become effective technology-using teachers as opposed to extrinsic variables such as time and technological resources. This is to say, even when teachers faced limited time and technological resources, they could make effective use of technology due to their personal commitments to utilizing technology and beliefs regarding the influential role of technology in enhancing student learning.

Considering lms in teaching, Emelyanova and Voronina (2014) probed teachers' and students' perceptions and their commitment to using lms. For data collection, one section of the questionnaire

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administered to students was designed to find out whether students had used a LMS or heard about it. The second part of the questionnaire was used to ask the opinions of those who had experience employing LMS. Another questionnaire was used to explore teachers' points of view and willingness to introduce LMS for learning purposes. Findings showed that both instructors and learners were at ease with computers and LMS. Students were confident with using computers and reported no difficulty surfing the internet to search for information for their studies. Moreover, the majority of them frequently used the internet (almost every day). Nonetheless, some learners believed that the convenient accessibility of LMS does not mean that it is a useful learning tool. It was also revealed that, although some teachers considered LMS as an effective medium for learners' achievement, some could not trust the results from LMS regarding students' progress.

Employing a case study, Dogoriti et al. (2014) explored EFL students' attitudes toward employing Moodle as a LMS. Data were collected via administering a questionnaire. Findings revealed that the participants held positive attitudes towards LMS and maintained that these could enhance their communicative competencies and involvement in the learning process as well as they could foster collaborative learning.

In the same vein, Putri and Sari (2020) uncovered EFL learners' perceptions of LMS for English learning. A number of 33 undergraduate English major students in Indonesia participated in this study. Questionnaires and interviews were used for data collection. Results indicated that the participants held positive perceptions toward LMS. They considered LMS as an effective platform for improving their four skills in English. Nevertheless, some EFL learners mentioned some technical problems such as the occurance of bad gateway connection when using LMS software.

In another study, Mijatovic et al. (2012) investigated the predictors of students' adoption of

LMS As well as the effect of students' interactive usage of lms and active student participation on their achievements. The participants of this study were 169 students from the largest university in Serbia, who used LMS for the first time during their studies. The students' active participation in the classroom was observed over the 13-week semester. After the semester had been finished, the students were offered a questionnaire associated with their perception toward using lms. The results indicated that students' active participation in class is a stronger predictor of achievement than their interactive usage of LMS. It was also revealed that e-environment could be an effective extension of classical learning environment. This suggests the positive role of using e-learning system in students' achievements.

As far as language teaching is concerned, proper use of technology is thought to be an integral part of this field as it supports the learning process. According to Warschauer and Meskill (2000), teachers' competence in designing and implementing different activities for taking advantage of technology in language teaching is key to effectively using technology.

Regarding the impact of LMS on teaching, Basal (2015b) conducted mixed-method research to examine English language teachers' attitudes toward LMS integration into their curriculum. For gathering qualitative data, semi-structured interviews and two-open ended questions were administered. The required data for the quantitative phase was collected through a questionnaire. The participants were 122 pre-service English teachers from a state university in Turkey. The English teachers used LMS to design activities for their face-to-face courses, namely Teaching Language Skills and Contextual Grammar. Findings indicated that pre-service English teachers had positive perceptions about integrating LMS into their on-site instruction by using various web 2.0 tools. The results of this study were ratified by Kapranov's (2020) study in which pre-service

EFL teachers showed positive perceptions toward using LMS. The participants of this study were asked to write a reflective essay regarding the use of Canvas as an LMS in their EFL courses. The results obtained from the qualitative framing analysis indicated that the pre-service EFL teachers' positive perceptions toward LMS were reflected in the frames such as Canvas is helpful, easy to use, and environmentally friendly.

In another study, Park and Son (2020) aimed at exploring pre-service EFL instructors' attitudes toward adopting CALL in Hong Kong. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with six pre-service EFL teachers. As confirmed by the qualitative data, participants reported positive perceptions about integrating technology into the classroom. Some teachers believed that technology integration plays a significant role in teaching because it is correlated with affective and pedagogical aspects. For example, using technology increases students' level of motivation, the interaction between teachers and students as well as students and students' interaction, and autonomous learning. On the other hand, a few claimed that teacher-student interaction is lower while using technology.

Some factors that influenced teachers' technology integration were pointed out. First, teachers' own experiences of teaching with technology. Second, teachers' observations of other experienced teachers using technology for instruction. Several barriers regarding technology integration were also identified. First-order constraints were external barriers including inadequate support from school principals and senior teachers and lack of time. Second-order limitations were internal barriers such as teachers' willingness, beliefs, and competencies. Most participants considered external factors as the main barriers to integrating technology into teaching practice. Overall, EFL teachers were not willing to use technology for teaching although they felt confident when integrating technology.

In the similar vein, Fathi and Torabi (2019) suggested that EFL teachers' satisfaction with the features and functions of LMS affects their success in using it for educational purposes. Cheok & Wong (2015) developed a theoretical model of the factors determining e-learning satisfaction in learning and teaching among school teachers. The model was based on reviews of the past studies regarding satisfaction in the usage of information technology systems. These results of study categorized variables affecting LMS success into three categories, namely: user-related variables (i.e. anxiety, self-efficacy, attitude), organization-related variables (i.e. training, technical support, management), and e-learning-related variables (i.e. perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, interaction, flexibility). Holmes & Prieto-Rodriguez' (2018) study focused on the perceptions of staff and students at a School regarding LMS accessibility and interactivity. The relevant data were collected through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The two groups had similar views regarding the effectiveness of LMS tools to enable interactivity. However, the students rated the contribution of LMS to their learning higher than the staff. This study also revealed that teachers' inability to induce and trace the interaction of students with course materials existing on the LMS resulted in a sense of dissatisfaction among instructors.

Method

To meet the objective of this study, a sequentially explanatory design (Ivankova et al., 2006) was employed, that is, quantitative data were first gathered and analyzed, and then qualitative data collection and analysis were conducted to prove the findings of the previous phase.

Participants

The participants were 168 English teachers teaching at various schools and language institutes in Iranian provinces. Convenience sampling was used to select the participants as the researchers did not have access to a wider range of institutes,

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schools, or universities. The sample was comprised of male (N=74) and female (N=94) teachers with ages ranging from 21 to 38 (M= 24.12; sd=76.22) and their teaching experience varying from eleven months to 15 years (M= 8.024; sd=2.99). Furthermore, 15 teachers volunteered to take part in semi-structured interviews. All teachers had participated in teacher training/education courses before their employment and had been students of English majors at B.A., M.A., or Ph.D. levels. They had the experience of teaching different levels varying from beginner to advanced levels. It is worth noting that for the sake of anonymity and research ethics, pseudonyms were used in reporting the excepts in the qualitative section.

Data Collection

To collect quantitative data, a questionnaire on teachers' attitudes toward lms developed by Alshorman and Bawaneh (2018) was used. This self-report scale was designed and validated by the researchers after reviewing the literature related to e-learning and the lms. The scale includes 26 items which are measured on a five-point Likert scale constituting 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree). The construct validity of this scale, investigated via confirmatory factor analysis (cfa), was set for this research context [$X^2/df = 2.09, p = 0.03, cfi = 0.93, tli = 0.92, rmsea = 0.05$]. Additionally, the alpha coefficient for the total questionnaire was high (*0.82*), suggesting that the internal consistency of the items was relatively high.

The lms scale was first distributed among a sample of Iranian efl teachers from different parts of the country. Data collection was carried out during the fall semester of 2020. As access for teachers was not easy because of the pandemic, the electronic version of the lms questionnaire was constructed through Google Docs. Afterward, the link to the questionnaire was shared in Telegram and WhatsApp groups including efl teachers from various provinces in Iran. Since some respondents did not have

access to these social networks, the online link to the questionnaire was emailed to them.

In addition, to investigate the participants' attitudes toward the use of lms in Iranian English classrooms, one of the researchers conducted individual semi-structured interviews (see Appendix) with 15 volunteers. In order for the participants to verbalize their attitudes more easily, they answered the interview questions both in their L1 and in English.

The questions for semi-structured interviews were raised so as to uncover teachers' attitudes toward the use of lms in English classrooms. To this end, fifteen interviews were digitally recorded. The interview questions (see Appendix) were verified by the experts' opinions with regard to their face, content, and appropriateness. The interviewees were notified of the objective of the research before carrying out the semi-structured interviews.

In order to enhance the trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004) of the qualitative data, some techniques such as member checking and peer debriefing (Thomas, 2011) were employed. More precisely, peer debriefing was performed by explaining the protocols of the study and checking the data analysis with another researcher who was an expert in qualitative data analysis.

Data Analysis

As for the data analysis, quantitative and qualitative analytical procedures were used. Descriptive statistics (i.e., mean and standard deviations) and a one-sample t-test were utilized to analyze the quantitative data. For the qualitative data analysis, the recorded interviews were transcribed and thematically coded using content analysis techniques (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). For the quantitative data analysis, spss 24 was used.

Results

The results obtained from the analyses of the quantitave and qualitative data are presented

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for LMS Questionnaire

N.°	Items	Mean	SD
1	LMS help the learner to learn without coming to the institute/school.	4.52	1.02
2	LMS help to deliver the information to students quickly.	4.32	0.95
3	Using LMS contributes to clarifying the content of the material.	4.19	1.25
4	I feel that the use of LMS develops the teaching process.	4.15	0.98
5	I like to get more training on how to use a learning management system (LMS).	4.12	0.98
6	Learning by using the LMS will gradually replace normal education.	4.12	1.03
7	I expect that - in the future - the use of LMS will become a necessity for all teachers.	4.10	0.65
8	Using LMS increases student achievement.	4.08	0.82
9	LMS help to achieve effective and active teaching.	4.06	0.99
10	LMS encourage to change the competitive criteria of the educational environment.	4.02	1.52
11	LMS increase the capacity of educational institutions.	4.02	1.13
12	Using LMS facilitates teacher's role.	4.02	1.12
13	I see that LMS reduce the role of the teacher in the classroom and increase the role of the student.	4.01	0.68
14	I feel joy when someone talks to me about the uses of LMS in teaching.	3.99	0.88
15	Using LMS offers a great benefit in teaching.	3.95	1.08
16	LMS contribute to integrating educational resources effectively.	3.95	0.91
17	LMS help the teacher to organize his courses.	3.94	0.72
18	LMS increase the flexibility in educational institutions systems.	3.89	0.78
19	Learning by using LMS increases the chances for cooperation between educational institutions.	3.85	0.87
20	I asked for help from others in case I faced a problem while using the LMS.	3.85	1.12
21	Using LMS provides interesting learning.	3.85	0.95
22	LMS lead to a new change in course practices.	3.77	0.90
23	I discuss with my colleagues how to use the LMS.	3.75	0.74
24	LMS offer better results than normal education.	3.44	1.02
25	LMS make it easy for teachers to provide students with an individual learning environment.	3.25	1.20
26	Using LMS increases the interaction between teachers and students.	3.14	0.98
(Overall)		**4.10**	**0.89**

below to uncover Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes toward the use of LMS in English classes.

Quantitative Phase

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that the mean score for attitudes of EFL teachers towards LMS is generally high (4.10), revealing that Iranian EFL teachers hold positive attitudes towards employing them in English classrooms.

The items have been presented in descending order based on their mean scores. The items with the highest mean scores were the first four items. More particularly, the teachers maintained that LMS could help students to study the materials without coming to the institute/school. They also believed that LMS could help them to deliver the information to students more quickly. In addition, employing LMS could contribute to clarifying the content of material more effectively. Finally, the teachers expressed their willingness to receive further training on how to use such systems.

On the other hand, the items with the lowest mean scores indicated negative attitudes. More specifically, teachers were not very certain about the fact that LMS could enhance the interaction between instructors and learners. Likewise, they did not

Table 2 Themes Uncovered about EFL Instructors' Attitudes Toward LMS

Positive perceptions	Negative perceptions
Ease of access and knowledge sharing	Inadequacy of teacher training programs
Suitability for crowded classes	Inappropriacy for productive skills
Variety of learning tasks	Complexity of functions
Additional assignments and feedback	Students' unfamiliarity and lack of interest

agree with the idea that LMS could provide instructors with the ability to create a personal learning context for learners. Also, they were skeptical about the fact that LMS could offer better results than normal instruction.

Moreover, as a follow-up analysis, the whole LMS questionnaire was analyzed by using a one-sample t-test to explore the general direction (i.e., positive or negative) of the EFL teachers' attitudes towards employing LMS in English classrooms. The analysis allowed for comparing Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes with answers of 3, i.e., the neutral point in the five-point Likert scale, regarding their experience of using LMS. Overall, results demonstrated that Iranian teachers' attitudes towards their experience of using LMS were positive and significant ($M=4.10$; $SD = 0.89$; $t = 13.36$; $p < 0.001$).

Qualitative Phase

The purpose of this phase was to draw upon the qualitative findings to elucidate and clarify the understanding of the data obtained from the quantitative phase. In doing so, semi-structured interviews were carried out with 15 English teachers selected through purposive sampling. Taken together, the thematic analysis of qualitative data revealed both positive and negative perceptions toward the use of LMS in English classrooms. The uncovered themes presented in Table 2.

Positive Perceptions

The analysis of the qualitative data showed that most teachers held positive perceptions towards LMS. These positive perceptions were divided into four categories, each of which is explained below.

Ease of Access and Knowledge Sharing

The vast majority of teachers believed that LMS could provide them with the opportunity to share knowledge with their students more easily and conveniently. For example, Mina stated,

I think LMS was useful and comfortable for the learners. I could share materials very easily without consuming time or cost. I could provide them with extra materials and resources very easily. (Mina, interview, translated)[1]

The teachers contended that LMS are particularly effective for absentees because they could access the offline link to the recorded classes. For instance, Mehran said,

I could teach and provide students with knowledge without any need to visit them and attending the class. Even if they were absent, they could access the recorded classes and watch them wherever and whenever they wished. (Mehran, interview)

Suitability for Crowded Classes

Another uncovered theme pointed out by the participants was the appropriateness of LMS for more crowded classrooms. They asserted that these online classes could save time for them and handle bigger classes more easily. Sara, for example, claimed,

I prefer LMS for more crowded classes. I used to have less time for more crowded classes because much of the class time was devoted to answering their questions or other issues. But LMS helped me to manage such classes much better. (Sara, interview)

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1   The interviews not originally stated in English language were all translated.

Mina also noted,

> there was no disruption that I used to have with the so-called back-row distractors in my crowded classrooms. (Mina, interview, translated)

Variety of Learning Tasks

The English teachers also believed that LMS could provide them with further use of various learning activities. In addition, they could share relevant and useful materials with their pupils in the classrooms. For instance, Sepideh stated,

> In some topics, I could search the net and share the relevant page or resources at that moment. Therefore, I can say that LMS helped me to give extra resources to my students and add variety to the class. Different learning tasks can be used at that moment. (Sepideh, interview)

Reza added,

> I could give my students a bundle to choose from because I could share different pages and materials available online. (Reza, interview)

Additional Assignments and Feedback

The last theme uncovered for the positive perceptions of Iranian English teachers towards LMS was its convenience in giving assignments and proving feedback. For example, Shahla mentioned,

> LMS is useful for assignments. I can collect the assignment of students more easily. (Shahla, interview, our translation)

Saeed added,

> I could give them the necessary feedback in my convenient time. (Saeed, interview)

Referring to quick teacher feedback, Sara mentioned,

> The very good point was that I can give further feedback and I also can access the archive of the assignments. (Sara, interview)

Negative Perceptions

In addition to the positive perceptions, some teachers held negative attitudes towards the use of LMS in English classes. These negative views are explained below.

Inadequacy of Teacher Training Programs

Most teachers who did not favor the use of LMS in English classrooms maintained that the major obstacle is the fact that they had not previously received sufficient teaching training to use LMS. For instance, Shadi said,

> We should have been previously trained and got familiarized with how to use systems more appropriately. (Shadi, interview)

In this regard, Zahra added,

> The TTC courses that we had previously passed had not given us familiarity with LMS. And after the breakout of the pandemic, we got surprised and felt frustrated. (Zahra, interview, translated)

Some teachers also pointed out that, although they had attended technology-related teacher training courses, such courses failed to equip them with practical techniques and knowledge to use technology in the classroom. For instance, Mehran affirmed,

> I had previously received technology teacher training courses but such courses only provided us with theoretical knowledge and failed to give us adequate practical skills so that we can teach English with technology more effectively. (Mehran, interview)

Sara supported this assertion by saying

> I think LMS could have been much more effective if we had received a more proper teacher education and technical support. (Sara, interview)

Inappropriacy for Productive Skills

Some teachers questioned the appropriateness of LMS for productive skills in L2 learning and teaching. For example, Sina pointed out,

> Over the last years, I have used online classes using LMS. I doubt the usefulness of LMS for productive skills in general and writing in particular. At least, my own experience of teaching writing with this online system was not effective. (Sina, interview)

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Some others cast doubt on the effectiveness of LMS for L2 learning in general and maintained that L2 learning requires more authentic and natural contexts with face-to-face interactions. In this vein, Arash stated,

> Learning a foreign language requires face-to-face interaction and real attendance in classroom. So I don't believe in the appropriateness of LMS for English classrooms. (Arash, interview, translated)

Complexity of Functions

Another theme uncovered for the negative attitudes of Iranian English teachers towards LMS was the complexity of functions. Some teachers believed that LMS are not user-friendly and they had difficulty teaching with these platforms. Mina, for example, said,

> LMS is not very convenient to me. It is difficult to operate with LMS. I prefer more discussion-based classrooms. The discussion board of LMS could not be very useful if much explanation was required. (Mina, interview)

Sina also confirmed the inconvenient functions of LMS by pointing out:

> Some of our colleagues do not have computer literacy and cannot use LMS functions properly. I suppose both teachers and students need special training in this regard. Because the students also had problems with using LMS. (Sina, interview)

Students' Unfamiliarity and Lack of Interest

Finally, the last theme uncovered vis-a-vis negative perceptions towards LMS was students' unfamiliarity with LMS and their lack of interest in using this platform for learning purposes. For instance, Ali claimed,

> Some of the students are not accustomed to using technology for learning something. So they do not pay serious attention to the materials and assignments in LMS. It is like a big burden for them and they do not like to take the responsibility to self-study something. (Ali, interview)

Discussion and Conclusions

In line with research on students' perceptions of online learning (see Armstrong, 2011; Famularsih, 2020; Godwin-Jones, 2018; Ilgaz & Adanır, 2020; Smart & Cappel, 2006; Wei & Chou, 2020), the present research aimed at exploring the attitudes of EFL teachers towards LMS in English classes. Specifically, the present study focused on how Iranian EFL instructors perceive integrating technology into their curriculum in order to support student-oriented classrooms. Findings revealed that the majority of participants hold positive perceptions towards LMS. In other words, it might be concluded that EFL teachers evince their tendency to implement technology for teaching English in their classes. This finding is in line with the extant literature on teachers' perceptions of technology integration which has substantiated teachers' positive attitudes toward online instruction in general (Adnan, 2018; Arkin, 2003; Aldunate & Nussbaum, 2013; Dashtestani, 2012; Famularsih, 2020; Shin & Son, 2007; Teo, 2008).

As an example, Shin and Son (2007) sought to investigate Korean EFL instructors' attitudes toward the use of technology integration for teaching purposes. Results indicated that Korean EFL secondary school instructors showed positive attitudes toward adopting the internet for teaching purposes. A further study by Arkin (2003) suggested that EFL teachers had generally positive perceptions about technology resources for vocabulary teaching. As for the current study, the qualitative data revealed that most of the EFL teachers favor the use of LMS in English classrooms due to four reasons: (a) ease of access and knowledge sharing, (b) suitability for crowded classes, (c) variety of learning tasks, and (d) further assignments and feedback.

As for the advantages of LMS, the participants of this study believe that LMS could provide English instructors with a plethora of resources and materials by which they could help more struggling learners and monitor them more effectively. They

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regard LMS as useful teaching aids that offer a variety of presentation modes and online resources for practicing English in their classes. The increased access to experts and skilled teachers is another merit of LMS, as expressed by the interviewees. Since in the Iranian context there are deprived areas and provinces with less access to experts, LMS might be viable alternatives to further access to English learners who are distant from the center of the country. In addition, the EFL teachers hold positive attitudes towards the use of LMS because of their suitability for crowded classes, potential in providing a variety of learning tasks, and convenience for teachers giving further assignments and feedback to the learners. Moreover, they grant absent students access to the offline link to the recorded classes so that they do not miss the sessions.

However, some teachers express contradictory beliefs on the effectiveness of LMS and maintained that English classrooms require face-to-face interaction. A similar finding was revealed by a few pre-service EFL teachers (Park & Son, 2020), who claimed that too much reliance on technology would decrease the interaction between students and teachers. It can be claimed that such discrepancies in attitudes might be attributed to teachers' digital literacy and their previous levels of experience in teaching online courses.

Furthermore, the results of the qualitative data indicated that a number of teachers doubt the usefulness of LMS for productive skills, especially writing. In addition, some EFL teachers are not inclined to use LMS because of its complexity and technical issues that could impede their effective use of this platform. The inadequacy of teacher training programs is the major obstacle perceived by Iranian EFL teachers. Some teachers believe that teacher education programs are not adequately supporting EFL teachers in using technology in general and LMS. More specifically, they consider that teacher development programs only provide pre- and in-service teachers with the knowledge or familiarity with technology rather than the practical skills of how to use technology

in classrooms. This finding has been previously confirmed in the literature (Comas-Quinn, 2011; Compton, 2009; Fathi & Ebadi, 2020; Habibi et al., 2019; Li & Ni, 2011). This finding also lends support to Arkin's (2003) and Yıldırım's (2000) studies in which teachers asserted that there were inadequate training courses to equip themselves with the necessary skills regarding technology integration. Likewise, Terzioğlu and Kurt (2019) identified the lack of teacher training as the most common barrier to implementing LMS in EFL classrooms. The final negative perception of the participants in the current study is students' unfamiliarity and lack of interest in using LMS. For this reason, some EFL students may prefer traditional face-to-face instruction.

Taken together, the findings of this mixed-methods research revealed that the overwhelming majority of the instructors held positive perceptions towards the use of LMS in English classes. This finding can be taken as evidence for some studies which have shown the same results (Basal, 2015b; Kapranov, 2020; Toland et al, 2014). Nevertheless, some EFL teachers do not favor using LMS due to some obstacles such as the inappropriacy for productive skills, complexity of functions, students' unfamiliarity as well a lack of interest, and more importantly, inadequacy of teacher training programs. Since a scant amount of information regarding teachers' attitudes towards LMS is at hand (e.g., Kapranov, 2020; Terzioğlu & Kurt, 2019), the findings of the present study enrich the existing literature on the barriers Iranian EFL teachers face while using LMS.

Pedagogical Implications and Future Research

Even though the findings of the present research seem to be promising with regard to LMS integration, implementing this type of instruction in the EFL classroom is not a straightforward matter. It implies the necessary skills/competence and adequate digital literacy and experience beforehand in order to use LMS in any EFL course. Given the

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overall positive perceptions of teachers towards lms, it may be implied that these platforms can be integrated into efl courses to increase the effectiveness of language development among learners. Yet, the successful integration of any kind of technology into the regular curriculum requires that both teachers and learners be equipped with technological competencies that are of great significance for the useful employment of technology for educational purposes (Baylor & Ritchie, 2002). Therefore, it might be necessary that teacher educators take the initiative to develop training programs in order to equip the pre-service efl instructors with requisite technological abilities as well as encourage them to integrate technology into their L2 instruction. Since Iranian efl practitioners basically apply traditional pedagogical techniques in their classes, the use of web 2.0 technology and lms in particular might be an effective alternative.

Undoubtedly, success in online learning, in general, is attributed to the competence in effective management and reconciliation of instructional approaches, course design, and technology acceptance of learners and practitioners. In other words, effective online instruction requires recruiting and training qualified English teachers through continuous teacher development programs in order to equip them with both positive attitudes and working abilities which they require (Desai et al., 2009). As Fathi and Yousefifard (2019) argued, efl policymakers and teacher educators should provide practitioners with pedagogical and technical support to employ technological devices in their classrooms. Moreover, students' acceptance of technology and technical support should be also taken into account as the provision of orientation for learners and technical technology support significantly affect teachers' adoption of technology in the classroom (Canals & Al-Rawashdeh, 2019).

Still, a number of limitations can be pointed out for this research. First, a cross-sectional survey may not be appropriate to delve into the attitudes of teachers toward lms in efl contexts. Hence, future research, such as a longitudinal study, might be needed to explore the teachers' perceptions in a longer period of time. In addition, since the participants of this research were limited in number and were not from a representative sample of Iranian efl teachers, future researchers are recommended to carry out similar studies with a larger sample size from various contexts and with various teaching experiences.

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Appendix. Interview Questions

1. Do you have the experience of teaching English using Learning Management Systems (LMS) during this coronavirus pandemic?

2. What is your attitude towards using LMS in the Iranian EFL classrooms?

3. Do you agree or disagree with the use of LMS in foreign language classrooms? Why?

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4. Do you believe that the use of LMS in English classrooms is limited by any impediment(s)? What are they?