# Teaching Maritime English to ESP Learners Through Moodle Platform

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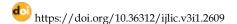
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## Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of Moodle as a virtual learning platform on oral communication skills of Iranian seafarers as ESP (English for Specific Purposes) learners. The study collected quantitative data using a quasi-experimental design. Participants in the study were 30 Iranian seafarers, divided into two groups of 15 people in the control and experimental groups. As part of their job requirements, as mariners, participants were required to practice maritime English. The researchers used Moodle as a virtual learning platform and compared participants' pre- and post-treatment results to determine the impact of the platform on their learning outcomes. To help seafarers improve their oral communication skills at sea or offshore, participants in both groups were taught a few chapters of standard marine communication phrases. During the first week of the five-week course, students learned how to use Moodle. Treatment was done in three weeks and evaluation was done in the last week. The results showed a significant improvement in participants' maritime English oral communication skills via Moodle. The study suggests that Moodle can be an effective tool for ESP learners. Due to its practicality, easy accessibility and versatile functionality, the researchers propose using the Moodle virtual learning environment for the development of fully online-based ELT courses.

**Keywords**: Online learning; virtual environment; English for Specific Purposes; Moodle; Maritime English

## INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was developed at the end of World War II as a phenomenon arising from overlapping tendencies rather than a conscious and unified movement. ESP learners have unique needs, interests and attitudes that can motivate them to specifically learn a foreign language. The importance of maritime communications is clear to anyone who works as a seafarer at sea or has a career related to shipping and ports. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) believes that for safe navigation, seafarers must learn both general and specific English (International Maritime Organization, 2000). IMO has developed some specific course modules for seafarers coming from different educational systems and cultural backgrounds. English has been recognized by the IMO as the standard language for

maritime communication, therefore all seafarers should have a good command of the English language.

Effective land and sea communication, such as ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore communication, is essential for seafarers (International Maritime Organization, 2000). To identify potentially valuable insights that can be gained for further use, the IMO examines accident records. The IMO has recommended that seafarers around the world use Standards Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP), a simplified and modified version of maritime English. It contains numerous references in regard to standard communications in ports and offshore operations during emergencies. These SMCPs are intended to provide guidance on how to overcome language barriers at sea and reduce misunderstandings that can lead to accidents. Planning and implementing maritime English courses is essential. The IMO's guidelines for ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore operations require that seafarers communicate effectively with each other. Key factors that influence teaching in marine courses include interaction models, cultural differences, and understanding of maritime topics (International Maritime Organization, 2000).

As a learning management system, Moodle provides teachers, administrators and learners with a powerful, secure and integrated system to design individual learning environments. The Moodle platform includes certain notable features that can be used for course creation. It allows teachers to assess what learners have done on the Moodle platform, student activities and tasks are tracked and recorded digitally. Through their Moodle log reports, teachers can also see how much time students spent on an exam or quiz. Moodle also provides helpful tools for teachers to socially interact and collaborate with their students, such as forums, chats, blogs, and workshops.

## Statement of the Problem

The IMO has recognized Standard Maritime English as an essential requirement for all seafarers. As the de facto language of the seas, maritime English is crucial in the modern shipping profession. Maritime English must be understood and used by experienced seafarers. Iranian seafarers face major challenges in maritime English and their actual needs for effective communication are not met by traditional training. There is still a need to address maritime English language proficiency, specifically in oral communication, despite the International Maritime Organization's strong emphasis on safe maritime English communication. Addressing the difficulties Iranian seafarers face with maritime English in the ESP context necessitates taking a need-based approach (Raeesi, Ganji, Beikian, & Yarahmadzehi, 2022).

Therefore, knowledge of maritime English is crucial for Iranian seafarers to ensure safety by preventing miscommunications at sea. Both naval personnel and seafarers are required to have proficiency in maritime English in order to work efficiently. This study analyzes the impact of the Moodle virtual learning platform on the development of seafarers' oral communication skills as ESP learners.

## Significance of the Study

The future of training and further education lies in online learning. Online training plays a unique role in the current professional market for large companies and organizations as a cost-effective way to train their employees. This does not

require employees to take a leave of absence from their work and duties. Training seafarers in maritime English by the organizations and companies they work for is important. It is challenging for seafarers to take time off to participate in training projects that require their presence and online training can be a viable solution.

This study provides empirical data regarding the application of the Moodle virtual learning platform for teaching maritime English to ESP learners. Seafarers on ships must learn standard maritime communication to avoid incidents that could occur due to a lack of maritime English proficiency. Students can participate in this study as virtual class students via the Moodle platform. If they miss a session, they can access it later as all sessions are recorded and saved for later use. Organizations such as port and maritime organizations (PMOs) and shipping companies can use online courses to train their employees in person with less budget compared to traditional learning environments.

## *The Purpose of the Study*

In recent years, educational institutions and large companies are increasingly using distance learning. Modern technology is successfully used by academics, business owners and corporate managers. To help users and designers achieve their goals, the web-based open-source Moodle has been used and developed in a variety of ways.The main objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the virtual education platform in teaching oral communication skills of maritime English to Iranian seafarers using Moodle.

Considering the previous background information, this study aimed to answer the following research question: Does the application of Moodle virtual learning environment have a significant impact on improving the oral communication skills of Iranian seafarers as ESP learners?

## Literature Review

### *English for Specific Purposes (ESP)*

According to Paltridge and Starfield (2012), the term English for Specific Purposes (ESP) describes the process of learning English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) when the learners' goal is to use English in a specific environment. Initially, the main reason for teaching English for specific purposes was the need for interlingual communication in areas such as technology and business. A critical component of training and research is believed to depend on ESP's receptivity to knowledge from other fields (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

As part of the ESL/EFL movement, ESP has developed into a significant and progressive initiative since the 1960s. Teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) made up a large part of ESP's early years. Most of the resources, course descriptions, and research papers were created for EAP. EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) played a significant but still small role in the development of ESP. However, English for Business Purposes (EBP) has increased significantly in recent years due to the enormous development of world trade. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), Business English is currently the ESP area with the most published resources, and companies, publishers and teachers are showing increasing interest in this area.

ESP course designers concentrate on students' needs to establish tailored goals. For example, when creating an ESP course for a group of business learners, the

instructor or course creator typically conducts a needs analysis to identify the tasks and skills the learners will need to fulfill their role in the environment and their implications to meet the required language understanding skills. The instructor or course developer may also conduct a target situation analysis to determine the learner's current ability to assume roles and responsibilities in goal setting. This generally involves comparing the learner's current level of competence with the level required to successfully pursue their chosen field of study or career. An ESP course can be designed using the findings from research. Another research area of needs analysis is language testing of learners (Basturkmen, 2021).

According to Paltridge and Starfield (2012), ESP teaching has traditionally benefited enormously from technology in two distinct ways. It served two purposes: first, as a platform for creating various forms of communication and second, as a complement to traditional methods of language teaching. The constant development of new technologies has positively impacted every aspect of ESP pedagogy. For example, oral English teachers can use programs like Audacity to produce their podcasts or recordings and give students visual examples of how they use the language.

In several ESP courses, additional technologies were used to promote students' attitudes towards speaking, reading and understanding text, image and audiovisual forms of discourse. These include synchronous forms of discourse such as chat, where participants interact simultaneously, and asynchronous forms such as Twitter, email and blogging. Other technologies such as Facebook also allow readers and writers to communicate using different types of discourses (Paltridge & Starfield, 2012).

Incorporating information and communication technology (ICT) into ESP instruction has proven advantageous for ESP students. ESP students with low language proficiency face difficulties that are addressed by the use of ICT in ESP classes. Additionally, it helps students become more active and enhances their communication abilities. In EFL contexts such as Iran, where teachers teach ESP courses using a traditional method, this approach is effective (Keshtiarast et al. 2022). ESP students' learning outcomes have improved as a result of the incorporation of AI technologies into ESP courses. ESP students can benefit from individualized learning experiences thanks to AI tools. Nevertheless, there are drawbacks to using AI tools, like learners becoming overly dependent on them and the effect on writing quality, which should be carefully considered during the integration process (Šimonová et al. 2020; Ozola and Sinkus, 2024).

### *Maritime English*

According to Havifah and Khosiyono (2021), all seafarers should be able to speak English at a basic level based on IMO training, certification and watchkeeping standards. This has implications for the security of ship-to-ship or ship-to-shore communications as well as the maintenance and improvement of working conditions, personnel, ships and cargo in the maritime domain. Seafarers must have a good command of English in order to be prepared for the maritime challenges aboard motor ships. To enable seafarers to communicate in the international maritime workplace, the International Convention on Standards for the Training, Certification and Watchkeeping of Seafarers (STCW) 2010 defines and develops proficiency in maritime English through communication skills.

Maritime English is used for routine communication between members of the global maritime community and benefits the security of trade and sea routes. Maritime English is a mix of many subdomains based on industry or subject area. Routes, shipbuilding, maritime communications, maritime trade, and a variety of situations and places are all included in the concept of maritime English, which is an established subject area of English (Havifah & Khosiyono, 2021).

Dacwag (2018) notes that the communication skills which allow seafarers and seafarers to exchange important information are presented in a creative and distinctive way in Maritime English. This is done practically and effectively to ensure the safety of people, ships and the natural environment. Communication and interactions in maritime situations are distinctive. In order to prevent communication problems, specialization is required due to the way it works. Seafarers from all over the world use different languages and cultural backgrounds to communicate. This resulted in the creation of SMCP, which led to minor errors.

Since its founding in 2000, SMCP has helped eliminate barriers and challenges to onboard communications. The introduction of codified and simplified English among seafarers greatly facilitated the communication of important information affecting the operation of ships. Human factors, particularly poor communication, continue to play a role in accidents. These communication problems don't just occur between seafarers; They also occur in other professions, for example between nurses and their patients who speak different languages.

Learning standard English is necessary and crucial for all seafarers to be proficient in the language. The aim is to give seafarers worldwide the opportunity to learn the required level of English. Seafarers' skills and competencies would differ if there were no English-language standards, training, certifications or qualifications. Due to the universality of the maritime sector and its unique characteristics, as well as the fact that English is a widely used maritime language of communication, seafarers operating on an international ship may come from different countries with different knowledge, skills and dialects of English (Dirgeyasa, 2018). ESP supports students to develop their competency-based talents and meet their needs in the context of a specific job or course of study, as suggested by Tahang et al. (2021). Teachers need to think about different aspects of the teaching and learning process to benefit from the ESP course.

*Moodle as a virtual learning platform*

Moodle is an all-in-one learning management system (LMS) platform with learner-centric features and a versatile tool to ensure consistency, advanced and collaborative methods. The supported tools and activities include the Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM), databases, blogs, communications, engagement, and forums. Due to its ease of use and expanded communication options, Moodle offers a forum for discussions and group work. Moodle is also an open-source solution, which is critical for organizations with limited resources and other financial challenges. Due to its simplicity and expanded communication options, Moodle offers a platform for debates and group work (Al-Hamad, 2022).

According to Ally (2022), Moodle supports a wide range of educational settings at all levels, with students of all ages, from all backgrounds, and in classrooms of all sizes. This is possible because Moodle is a virtual learning environment with well-

documented materials, a user-friendly software interface, and drag-and-drop features that transfer information from student to student and teacher to student.

Like traditional courses, online courses created with the Moodle platform demand active and effective learning. The learning support system of educational institutions can therefore be used both synchronously and asynchronously. With this strategy and the use of e-learning, students can learn when and where they want without being present in class. According to several previous studies, e-learning can increase learning effectiveness. Several research projects show that Moodle-based learning management systems make it easier to adapt technological learning. E-learning can also significantly increase the creativity of teachers and learners (Makruf et al., 2022).

### *Previous Studies about Moodle*

Gamede, Ajani, and Afolabi (2021) assessed the use of Moodle as an LMS in South African universities using a discursive approach in response to the Department of Higher Education and Training's decision to replace online learning with in-person curriculum creation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They concluded that Moodle LMS is the best way to fully engage students in teaching and learning activities. This study underscores the importance of considering technology to improve the quality of education, especially considering unusual circumstances such as the COVID-19 epidemic. The findings of this study revealed that Moodle has the potential to make the learning process efficient and motivating.

Planning, implementation, and evaluation were the three aspects of Moodle-based online learning with which the quantitative study by Makruf, Rifai, and Triana (2022) attempted to asess the degree of implementation of learning management. 718 students from various faculties took part in this study. The results showed that Moodle, an e-learning platform, had not yet reached its full potential in delivering and assessing learning content. The study recommends greater focus on improving the design, implementation and assessment of online learning with Moodle. The use of Moodle in online learning can be improved and further research can be carried out to identify the barriers that may prevent optimal use.

To determine how Moodle-integrated learning environments impact general pedagogical knowledge and student and teacher performance, Yuksel (2022) conducted quasi-experimental research. In the study, 87 prospective teachers were randomly assigned to control and experimental groups. Participants in the experimental group significantly outperformed participants in the control group, as evidenced by the proficiency test conducted after the intervention. The results showed that Moodle's comprehensive pedagogical knowledge building strategy effectively prepared learners for learning. As a result, the use of Moodle in teacher training programs could help teachers become more knowledgeable and effective, which would ultimately improve student learning outcomes.

Numerous research has been conducted to examine the learning styles of Moodle users. In their study, Kargiban and Kaffash (2011) examined English learners' perceptions of Moodle. The study was conducted in a secondary school in Tehran. The study involved 24 female students selected from 50 classrooms at the school. They had access to an archive of audio files. The website included additional listening activities for students. The students discussed it via email and in the chat room. The teacher

answered each student's questions in writing and gave explanations. A survey served as the research instrument. Based on the results of the study, most students had a positive attitude towards Moodle. The study also showed the importance of the teacher's role, especially in the initial stages of teaching and tool use. Several academic contexts have used Moodle.

Several studies have examined how teachers use Moodle as an online platform. For example, Kok (2008) conducted a study of the Camp Rumi Technology Literacy Group in Istanbul, Turkey to analyze teachers' approach to Moodle as an e-learning tool. 20 EFL teachers took part in the study. The interviews were conducted in groups of three or four people. Both structured and unstructured interviews were conducted to learn more about teachers' experiences with Moodle. During the interview, three questions were asked about the advantages and disadvantages of Moodle and the challenges of using Moodle. According to Kok (2008), teachers were willing to participate in a virtual learning environment in addition to traditional teaching methods. Although most teachers indicated that they liked the Moodle environment and that it was an essential tool for achieving their teaching goals, yet some showed concerns about the amount of time they spent using Moodle. Teachers recognized Moodle as an effective platform for online collaboration.

### Context of the Study

Maritime English is required by Iranian seafarers for safe shipping and maritime tasks. Iranian seafarers often have great difficulty mastering maritime English due to limited resources for professional English teaching in the maritime sector and insufficient access to native English speakers. The specialized maritime English courses sometimes offered by the Port and Maritime Organization do not meet the needs of applicants.

Seafarers need to improve their English seafaring skills using modern technology and available training resources. Participants in this study were at the intermediate level of English proficiency. Many of them had taken maritime English courses. Some of them had studied special maritime courses in English at maritime universities. However, these seafarers were required to use Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) to better perform the associated maritime duties.

This study was an attempt to solve the problem of seafarers in learning maritime English in Chabahar port, which is one of the port cities of Iran and has a special position among Iranian ports. The participants in this study came from departments such as Chabahar Port Maritime Search and Rescue Coordination Center, Chabahar Radio Station, Marine Traffic Service and tugboat personnel. The purpose of this study was to find a method for teaching maritime English to seafarers who, due to their work, were unable to attend face-to-face courses despite their immediate need for maritime English.

## METHOD

### Research Design

A quasi-experimental design was chosen for this study as it was not practical to implement a full experimental design with random participants due to the limitations of the study setting. In line with the real training circumstances of the

seafarers in this study, this approach enables the evaluation of Moodle's effects in a natural environment.

The experimental group and the control group were formed. Oral communication skills were taught in both face-to-face and online groups using practical elements of Maritime English such as vocabulary, SMCPs, pronunciation and sentence structures. The students in the experimental groups practiced their English in the virtual learning environment Moodle. They participated in forums and chat rooms, completed tasks, submitted audio and text files, and more.

## Participants

Thirty male Iranian seafarers working in different departments of Chabahar Port participated in this study. Tug crew, Maritime Rescue Coordination Center (MRCC), Chabahar Radio Station (CRS) and Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) required basic maritime English, whether on land or at sea. The age range of the participants was between 20 and 35 years. Before starting the course, they were not familiar with the virtual learning environment of Moodle.The participants were divided into control and experimental groups. All participants had registered for the maritime English course at the Hafez Language Center. To identify the homogeneity of learners, the Language Centre conducted a standardised paper placement test in all subjects. To do this, the researchers first gave students the Longman English Language Test. This was to ensure that the two groups were on the same linguistic level.

## Research Tools

The following tools and materials were used to achieve the objectives of this study. SPSS software was used to analyze the data collected at the end of the study.

### *Pre-test and Post-test*

The researchers used tests at the beginning and end of the study to measure progress in each group. The tests were intended to measure the oral communication skills of the seafarers. IMO standard marine communication phrases were used in the tests. The test considered the ability of the learners to apply the SMCP in scenarios where they interact with other seafarers. Researchers asked two experts to review test items to make sure they aligned with study objectives and to increase the study's validity.

### *SPSS*

SPSS software was used to analyze: 1) Spearman correlation to check the internal consistency of the test and scoring criteria; 2) independent sample t-test to control for intervening variables and measure statistical mean differences between the two groups based on the study variables; 3) Paired samples t-test to check group improvement.

## Procedure

The study took place at the Hafez Language Center. All participants were informed about the maritime English course via social networks such as WhatsApp and Telegram. Interested seafarers were asked to register for this course. Some participants came to the Hafez Language Center to enroll. Some of them filled out the online application as they had a busy work schedule on tugboats at the time. Participants completed a Pearson-Longman placement test to assess their English proficiency. 30 out of 37 participants were selected based on their pre-intermediate

scores. The participants were then divided into experimental and control groups. A pretest was then carried out for both groups in the first phase of the study. The participants in the control group came to the language center three times a week during the five-week course. During the study, they used a textbook consisting of five SMCP chapters. The participants in the experimental group were introduced to the Moodle virtual environment and then taught using Moodle.

An account with a username and password was created for each student on the Moodle website. They also had to install the Moodle application on their mobile phones. All course lessons were shared on the Moodle learning platform for experience groups. They could download the files, work on them, answer the questions and send their answers to the tutor. Moodle users in the experimental group were encouraged to log into their accounts and increase their availability.

**Data analysis**

The eclectic method was applied to both control and experimental groups. The main difference between the teaching methods used in both groups was that the experimental group used the Moodle virtual learning environment to evaluate the effectiveness of Moodle in teaching maritime English to seafarers, while the participants in the control group received the lessons in person.

Participants in the experimental group used forum discussions and chat rooms to interact with other members and the teacher. All participants in the experimental group were encouraged to be online three evenings a week from 9:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. until midnight. The learners always had access to the course content. The lecturer recorded the language files and uploaded them to the Moodle website for the students. Students completed the tasks their teacher shared on their Moodle pages and stayed in touch with other participants via instant messaging.

As most of the participants were colleagues, they could practice their common material together during their work on the boats. The same teaching materials were used in both groups. The course duration was five weeks. At the end of the course, participants in the control and experimental groups completed the posttests independently. To statistically compare the means of the two groups, the independent samples t test was used. The evolution of each group was assessed using the paired samples t test. The paired sample plus t test was used to evaluate the evolution of each group.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Results of the Pre-test**

The performance of the experimental and control groups was compared. To confirm that all participants were homogeneous, a language test was administered to all participants. The mean language proficiency score and standard deviation for the control group were 12.20 and 1.90, respectively, as shown in Table 1. The mean and standard deviation of the experimental groups were 12.44 and 1.64, respectively.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for the Results of the Pre-test of Both Groups

|         | Group        | N  | Mean  | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---------|--------------|----|-------|----------------|-----------------|
| Pretest | Control      | 15 | 12.20 | 1.90           | .49             |
|         | Experimental | 15 | 12.44 | 1.64           | .42             |

Table 1 shows the results of the oral communication skills of the two sample groups in the pre-test using mean values. Table 2 shows that there was no significant difference between the means of the two groups, showing the homogeneity of the study participants.

**Results of the Post-test**

The post-test results for both the experimental group and the control group are shown in Tables 2 and 3. The mean and standard deviation of participants in the control group were 14.31 and 1.65, respectively. Moreover, the mean and standard deviation of participants in the experimental group for oral communication skills development was 16.22 and 1.37, respectively. Regarding the oral communication skills, a comparison of the means showed a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. Furthermore, an independent sample t-test showed that this difference was statistically significant (p=0.60). Since there were significant differences between the control and experimental groups in the post-test, it is fair to say that these differences tend to favor the experimental group.

**Table 02.** Descriptive Statistics for the Results of the Posttest of Both Groups

|          | Group        | N  | Mean  | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|----------|--------------|----|-------|----------------|-----------------|
| Posttest | Control      | 15 | 14.31 | 1.65           | .42             |
|          | Experimental | 15 | 16.22 | 1.37           | .35             |

**Table 03.** Independent Samples T-test Results for the Post-test of Both Groups

|               |                              | F   | Sig. | t    | df    | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower | Upper |
|---------------|------------------------------|-----|------|------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------|
| VAR0 0 001    | Equal variances assumed      | .27 | .60  | 3.43 | 28    | .00             | 1.91            | .55                    | 3.05                                             | .77   |
|               | Equal variances not assumed  |     |      | 3.43 | 27.11 | .00             | 1.91            | .55                    | 3.05                                             | .77   |

As shown in Table 3, the results support the argument that using the free, open-source Moodle can significantly improve the communication skills of Iranian seafarers who were pre-intermediate-level EFL learners. Given that the experimental group outperformed the control group, the data supports this claim. To determine whether there is a significant difference between two related data sets, a paired-sample test is performed. It can be used to compare participant scores from the same group on a specific test or measurement before and after a research intervention. In this study,

the pre-test and post-test results of the experimental group are examined using the paired-sample test.

**Table 4.** Paired t-test result

| | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pair Pre-test and Post-test | -2.11 | 2.28 | .58 | -3.37 | -.84 | -3.5 | 14 | .00 |

*Paired-Samples T-test Results for the Pre-test and Post-test of the Experimental Group*

**Comparison of Pre- and Post-Test in the Experimental Group**

It can be assumed that the mean values of the experimental group in the pre- and post-test with regard to overall communication ability change statistically significantly in favor of the post-test. Paired sample t-tests were used to compare the pre- and post-test results of the experimental group and to assess the relative magnitude of change caused by the implementation of the Moodle virtual environment. These t-tests compared the mean pre- and post-assessment communication skills ratings for the experimental group. Table 4 shows detailed interpretations of the tests.

**Discussion**

The research question aimed to determine whether there was a significant difference between Iranian EFL seafarers using Moodle and those who regularly attended face-to-face courses. The results of this study showed that the experimental group performed better than the control group based on the comparison of the results of both groups after the test. This may be because of the features of Moodle, such as adaptability and customisation for specific courses. Other features such as discussion forums, quizzes, interactive learning environment, and tracking of student time spent on Moodle platfrom can have an impact on the engagement of learners and their performance in learning communication skills.

The results of the study by Gamede, Ajani and Afolabi (2021) show consistency with the results of this study. Both studies prove the effectiveness of the virtual learning platform Moodle in the successful and effective implementation of online courses. In their study, the researchers found that Moodle LMS is an effective tool that allows students to be actively involved in the learning process. Moodle has been found to improve the quality of education, especially in exceptional conditions such as Covid-19, when teachers and students have no option other than online.

The current study also shows some compatibility with the research of Jayashanka, Hettiarachchi, and Hewagamage (2022). In their study, researchers found that the TELA dashboard and Moodle are user-friendly and effective learning tools that can improve student learning outcomes and have the potential to create an engaging learning environment.

The study by Makruf, Rifai and Triana (2022) proposes improvements in the design of Moodle-based online learning and shows researchers' doubts about the use of Moodle as an effective tool, indicating disagreement with the current study. Their study of educators' views emphasizes continually improving Moodle's capabilities to become more effective as an online learning platform.

On the contrary, Yuksel's (2022) study shows the effectiveness of the Moodle platform in improving students' learning outcomes and supporting teachers in teacher training programs. The above study highlights the need to integrate Moodle into educational institutions, which can be beneficial for both students and teachers. Similarly, the research by Kargiban and Kaffash's (2011) shows the positive attitudes of teachers towards the use of Moodle platform in helping students at early stages of their learning process. In contrast, the current study investigates the viewpoint of students on some features of Moodle as an effective learning platform for an ESP course. In summary, both studies show positive attitudes from two different perspectives regarding the effectiveness of the Moodle learning platform.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the Moodle virtual learning platform for Iranian ESP learners. The researchers recruited two groups of students to collect quantitative data through pre- and post-tests using a quasi-experimental design.

Thirty Iranian seafarers who took part in the study were divided into two groups of 15 people each, one as a control group and the other as an experiment. As part of their professional training, these seafarers learned maritime English. To determine how the platform affected participants' learning outcomes, the study used Moodle as a virtual learning environment and compared participants' test results before and after.

The results showed that participants' oral communication skills in maritime English improved significantly using Moodle. According to the study, Moodle can serve as a useful platform for teaching English to ESP students. The main conclusion of this study relates to the effectiveness of Moodle as a virtual teaching platform in the context of ESP. As previously mentioned, most studies on Moodle use have been positive. Although in some studies the participants, teachers or students, were uncertain about the functionality and practicality of the Moodle platform, the results of the present study showed that the Moodle application had a positive impact on teaching oral communication skills in the ESP context. When using Moodle, it is important to pay particular attention to certain factors that influence the learning experience.

## Pedagogical implications

The first implication of the study concerns organizations or institutions that are looking for convenient and cheaper ways to train their employees. For an organization or institution to achieve better performance and results, lifelong training is essential. Organizations like PMOs offer training programs for their employees, which are always costly and require a large budget. Online learning can save employers and employees time and energy. Most employees find it difficult to attend face-to-face courses due to their long working hours as they take up their time with the tasks

assigned to them. Even if they attend classes regularly, they may not achieve full training goals due to concentration or other problems due to lack of time or time conflicts with work responsibilities.

Second, the study has implications for language school administrators, teachers, and directors. Integrating modern technology into lessons by experienced teachers can motivate students to take control of their learning process. They do this by using their free time for the educational goals of these institutions. Teachers can provide feedback, collect feedback from students, and assign homework through the Moodle website. This allows students to practice outside of the classroom and apply what they have learned to achieve better understanding and more effective interaction than in the classroom. With its unique features, Moodle can be an integral part of the curriculum to facilitate teaching and help students.

The third implication of the study relates to international companies and organizations. Moodle partners are located all over the world and offer numerous services to their users. Large international organizations and companies can use the Moodle website to train their employees or share and promote their products or services worldwide. Moodle events are held by large organizations in different countries to introduce a range of different services to their customers. Therefore, the Moodle platform has been successfully developed to meet the goals and needs of its users on a small or large global scale.

**Suggestions for Further Studies**

The aim of this study was to provide insight into the usefulness of the Moodle virtual learning platform for Iranian seafarers as ESP learners. According to the findings of the current study, the study objectives were achieved. However, to evaluate the performance of the Moodle platform for e-learning, teaching and learning using different methods, additional research is required in different areas. It is important to note that only a small number of people were involved in this study. Therefore, with more participants, large-scale research is needed to generalize the results of this study. Since students are not familiar with such technologies, it is recommended that future researchers allow sufficient time in the preparation phase to acquire a basic understanding of LMS. Finally, the participants in this study were selected as ESP learners working in the maritime sector. Future studies could also examine whether ESP learners from other fields can benefit from well-designed courses in the Moodle virtual environment.

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