

## Using Learning Management System (LMS) to introduce Collaborative Language Learning at Tertiary Level in Bangladesh

Colonel K M Amirul Islam\*

### Abstract

*The main objective of this article is to examine the applicability of Collaborative Language Learning through the web based Learning Management System in Bangladeshi Higher Secondary Level Education system. In Bangladesh, particularly for teaching-learning English a number of approaches and methods have been applied since independence. However, English teaching-learning is not getting the desired pace in spite of investing a handsome amount of resources from different sources (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Chowdhury & Le Ha, 2008; as cited in Power & Shrestha, 2010). Thanks to the explosion of ICT and Web Based Learning approaches, and introduction of Language Management System (LMS) which not only supplements the Language Learning Process, but also offers an endless opportunity to build interconnectivity among the learners as well as teachers. Under a collaborative learning approach, this LMS could be introduced in Bangladeshi HSC level students to enhance their language skills development process. In this context, relevant documents will be analyzed and necessary recommendations will be made.*

**Keywords:** Language Management System, Collaborative Language Learning, English Language Teaching (ELT), EDMODO.

### Introduction

With the revolution in invention of technology, information technology, in particular has brought a tremendous change in the nature of teaching learning at this new century. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (Waits & Lewis, 2003), in 2000-2001 more than 56% of four-year colleges and universities only in the United States offered distance education degree programs for their learners. Along with that, many classroom based higher education courses, which meet in person regularly throughout a semester, use online technologies as well.

English Language Teaching (ELT) approach, methods and techniques, in particular, have changed over the years, moving from a teacher-centered approach to learner-centered ones (Richards, 1985). To develop the quality of teaching-learning process, ELT projects have been introduced throughout different parts of the world (Markee, 1997; Rea-Dickins and Germaine, 1998) and innovations have brought changes in materials (supplementary, self-study, authentic, etc.) and technology devices (language laboratories, tape recorders, video players, computers, etc.). More recently, the use of technology as a tool to develop the different language skills has received great attention (Dudenney, 2000; Chapelle, 2001; Young, 2003; Melor Md Yunus, 2007) from the ELT

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\*Head, Faculty of Languages, Bangladesh Military Academy, Chittagong

practitioners throughout the world and ELT teachers are frequently experiencing new practices and ideas.

In this paper, the prospects, possibilities, rationale and the applicability of introducing a LMS (Learning Management System), in a Bangladeshi university will be discussed briefly. This proposal is made as a sample proposal to meet the requirements of the course ICT in ELT for MA in TESOL degree.

## Overview

LMS which refers to Learning Management System, is a software application that automates the teaching-learning process, giving instructions and notifications, administration, tracking, and reporting of any course offered by a university. However, according to Ellis (2009), a dynamic LMS should provide the following services to the academic institution:

- Allows synchronous and asynchronous communication among students, teachers and guardians.
- Automates teaching learning process and provides support to the administrative staff to maintain a smooth operation.
- Supports portability of content/instructions and ensures access from the furthest corner.
- Personalizes content and enables knowledge to reuse.
- Offers the option of editing and saving materials

More importantly, an LMS should have the capacity of integrating with other enterprise application solutions used by HR and accounting, enabling management to measure the impact, effectiveness, and overall cost of training initiatives.

Being one of the most flourishing and updated university in Bangladesh, BRAC University should have a learning management system to provide better learning opportunity for its teachers and students. According to BRAC University website (2013), “BRAC University has been established to provide a high quality of education to meet the demands of the modern age”. It is further mentioned that providing “an excellent broad based education” and “professional development for students” is the main goal of the university. At present, the university offers undergraduate degrees, postgraduate degrees along with post graduate diplomas in various subjects. Among the private universities in Bangladesh, BRAC University has the highest number of institutions apart from different departments. These institutes offer higher level of academic research and teaching learning environment.

Among the six institutions, BIL started its journey with English Language Program (EL-Pro) in 2005. The intention of the program was to enhance the students’ English language skills as well as to enable effective oral and written communication. Over the years, as EL-Pro met with increasing success, it was updated into the Centre for Languages (CfL) in 2008. Later on, CfL became BRAC Institute of Languages (BIL) in 2012. At present, BIL offers well-designed, comprehensive courses ranging from the pre-intermediate to the upper-intermediate level in order

to facilitate the English language requirements of the university students. Of these, the pre-university course is an exceptional 'first' among the universities in Bangladesh. Recently BIL introduced MA in TESOL degree for the future English language teachers of Bangladesh.

## Literature Review

In BIL of BRAC University, the teachers practice a high standard of collaborative learning approach. This approach requires continuous communication with three involved parties - teachers, students and their guardians. Along with them, the access of expert educationists and their valuable feedback will be helpful for the learners' development. Remes (2005) claimed that LMS provides students their personal virtual learning environment, to find courses, tests or instructions to study. Also, they become able to participate in discussions on various topics or consult some subjects, with their teachers, as if they were in a real classroom. In this context, LMS operation necessitates specific planning and attention. Different institutions have advanced LMS consumption and incorporation differently. There are different types of LMS available currently. Among them, there are: open source LMS (moodle, canvas, authors etc.), Cloud LMS (DoceboLMS), Proprietary LMS (Blackboard, eCollege, edmodo etc., Historical LMS (click2learn, Learn.com, Geolearningetc). Some researchers take a pedagogical-theoretical point of view. For example, Papastergiou (2006) discusses and assesses LMS usage from a social-constructivist structure, highlighting the increase in workload on faculty and the restriction in terms of assessment and cooperation that such a theoretically-driven approach claims.

Other researchers have reported problem-solution approaches. For example, Gibbons (2005) discusses general versus individual strategies for the integration of library resources into an LMS, discussing the benefits and negative impacts of each. A wider approach was taken by Ulmer and Leech (2005), who explained how to address university policy, country guidelines, end user requirements, and technical potential within a single LMS solution. Nevertheless, successful long term LMS implementation depends on addressing certain critical success features.

McPherson and Nunes (2006) addressed this aspect of LMS implementation, and using focus group interviews, identified leadership, structural and cultural issues, design issues, technological issues and delivery issues as being most significant. They concluded that stakeholders are prepared to welcome LMS introduction, but not if it negatively impacts their profession and their careers. They argue that if LMS execution is to be successful, the university "must manage the change process by proposing and agreeing goals through consensual debate, supporting strategies appropriately and then realizing these through common commitment" (2006, p. 1). This finding was supported by the work of Doherty and Honey (2006), who gave importance to the key role that lecturers play in the LMS integration process.

On the other hand, some researchers have pointed to the lack of clear driving policy in LMS integration. Pratt (2005), for example, discusses the introduction of LMS system into Australian universities in terms of the lack of critical examination of their merit to these institutions, leading in some cases to wasted resources, unfulfilled expectations, program and organizational failures"

(p. 1). Pratt describes the introduction of LMS platforms unbelievably as an example of “management fashion”. In reality, many countries which do not have fully developed internet infrastructure, services or educational facilities face definite problems related to LMS deployment. At the University of the South Pacific, for example, the 12 member countries have differences in socio-economic conditions, and thus in terms of the availability of technical proficiency and competence, ICT infrastructure, policy advancement, learner support, management competency. Thus, the deployment of an LMS takes place across one institution but in a dozen very different contexts. More importantly, as Ellis (2009) claimed, an LMS should have the integration capacity with other enterprise application solutions used by HR and accounting, enabling the university management to measure the impact, effectiveness, and overall cost to run the project.

The term learning management system is now used to describe a wide range of applications that track student training and may or may not include functions such as Authoring, which means tools that offer the option of editing and saving materials in or transform documents into a Web format. It can also produce multimedia and tools for site management or publication; it is also used in layout management. Classroom management is another important category LMS should have which will provide the users the ways of organising the resources, pupils and helpers in a classroom, so that teaching and learning can proceed. Another feature can be knowledge management, which refers to the distribution, access and retrieval of unstructured information about human experiences between interdependent individuals.

### **Background Information**

At BRAC University, BIL is the most vibrant institute offering a specially designed English language course for the students of undergraduate level. They are taking care of almost one thousand students who get admission into the university regularly. With those one thousand new students, a good number of old students are also benefitted directly from BIL. There are more than fifty teachers who are conducting courses of different modules. Firstly, there is pre-university course, unique in its nature and type in Bangladesh. This course is offered to the students who are eligible for getting university admission but needs improvement in their English language skills. For one semester, this group of students were taught English language under the constant guidance of the teacher and the successful completion of this course allows them to get on with the regular courses of the university. Besides this, another course is Module -091, which is a non-credit course for the student who needs a little improvement in their English language ability. They get the regular university course, but attending this course enables them to perform better in their academic life. With these courses, there are academic and credit courses like Eng 101, Eng 102, Eng 202, Eng 203 and Eng 204. Among the other foreign languages, BIL offers Chinese, French, Spanish, Arabic and Bangla as a language to learn. Students get a lot of opportunity to learn these languages by direct interaction with the teachers. Sometimes teachers also give them direct feedback about their errors and mistakes in speaking or writing in English or in any other languages they prefer to learn.

Some of the students of BIL are weak in terms of their language performance; they need continuous feedback and support from their teachers or their fellow learners to develop their language skills. This kind of online learning management system will help them a lot to develop their language learning skills. They will be able to get instant feedback along with access to a wide range of materials to practice and develop their skills.

For the learners of other foreign languages, this learning management system will be a great source of materials accessible for practice from their own homes. Often teachers will be able to assign them some tasks and ask them to submit their assignments online on the given date. They can also enrich their assignments with website links, they need to use in writing their assignments. Teachers can also give them a planning about the course with this *Edmodo* websites, to know events going to take place, like quiz, presentation or examinations, etc.

### **Rationale of using *Edmodo***

The main reasons for recommending *Edmodo* as the most suitable LMS for BIL were based on its pedagogical fitness for the University's course delivery aims and objectives, the methods and approaches to teaching, the extensive adoption of the platform by educational institutions around the world, and the overall usability, reliability and functionality of the platform. *Edmodo* has been designed as an online learning delivery tool to support a full range of teaching and learning activities conducted by universities and educational institutions based on a social constructivism theory of education that integrates a host of tools for online content creation and collaboration with a varied set of social and communication tools that support teacher-student, guardian-student, student-student, teacher-guardian and teacher-teacher communication. Moreover, *Edmodo*, allows learners to contribute to and work together in the learning process, while also being flexible enough to support outcomes-based learning and teaching. The LMS supports flexible testing and assessment, and helps students and parents to access to grading and assessment information. *Edmodo*, in this way, provides a complete set of tools that will support the University's mandate to deliver high-quality education.

For explaining the rationale of this particular LMS websites *Edmodo*, I would like to explain an example of the usages. For this purpose, I have designed some materials. The objective of my task is to make my students able to write paragraph of any kind. For this, I have assigned them a task of writing paragraph. Also, I have given them some reading materials about paragraph writing with some power point materials. All these materials were designed interestingly and the steps of paragraph writing paragraph were explained clearly. Along with this, a large number of links was attached, from where students would also get an idea about the process of writing paragraphs.

With the materials, I have also added a quiz on writing paragraphs, which will be helpful for learners to clarify their understanding and concepts related to writing paragraphs. In this connection, I would like to follow the "Process writing" techniques where students are asked to submit their drafts from their teacher. After getting feedback on the first draft, they will submit

the second draft to further improvement. Whenever they will get their second feedback, they will be asked to submit it finally. Regarding this, a notification would be given mentioning the “turn on” dates in the calendar. Finally, for getting feedback, students will cast their vote on questions like whether they have liked the task or not. Their parents, as well the students will be able to check the every detail of the activities done by the students and their teacher.

## Conclusion

At the age of Information Technology and fast evolving society in economic context, day by day it gets more challenging even for students to be a Multitasked. To ease the burden and release the pressure from both the Learners and students, it is suggested that any sort of Learning Management System (LMS) could be more instrumental to maintain a better communication and sustainable learning. In Bangladesh, where generally teacher students ratio is usually high, an LMS could be more effective for distribution of learning. Students will also feel more comfortable to write to their teacher as it can be only one to one communication. Anytime, students may post their write up or they can simply make a speaking video and post it for their teachers feedback. Though at the early stage it may require money to set up the system, but any IT Professional could download lot more free templates available on the internet and customize them for their needs. As today’s students are mostly skilled enough to handle IT devices, they can easily operate them. Just a simple level of teachers’ training may be needed. Comparing to the investments, the outcomes will be tremendous.

Particularly, this very system EDMODO, even could be used by sharing together with different educational institutes. As in Bangladesh there are several Military governed schools, so the Military Board or their regulatory authority could purchase one and share with their different schools, as a result it could be even more effective and sharing knowledge would be proven as an additional advantage. A combined effort for teaching learning English as a foreign language needed to be given, not only by the teachers in the classroom but also outside the classroom, a sort of continuous learning process will be started which will not be traditional cliché learning method rather it would be more interesting and collaborative.

In the end, it can be claimed that in this world of science and technology, ICT can be a great support for teaching learning. To enhance this teaching-learning activity, *Edmodo* can be a great assistive device for the involving parties. A supportive hand of this particular LMS website can be helpful, even for the administrator. This will surely bring a new horizon in the teaching-learning experience of the BIL teachers and students.

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