

Online Self-Study English Course on Moodle: Focus on Students' Evaluations

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Abstract

This study investigates university students' evaluation of a newly implemented Online Self-study English Course delivered via the Moodle platform. It aims to explore learners' perceptions, experiences, and suggestions regarding the course structure and content. Data were collected through two distinct questionnaires: one administered online and the other conducted in the classroom. Both instruments included multiple-choice questions and open-ended prompts, designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative insights from participants. This dual approach facilitates a comprehensive analysis of students' responses and provides a nuanced understanding of their experiences. By examining this feedback, the study seeks to generate insights that can inform and improve pedagogical practices in English language instruction, especially within technology-mediated, autonomous learning environments.

Keywords: course evaluation, ESP, online self-study, Moodle, distance learning

1. Introduction

Recent developments in online education, combined with the growing role of digital tools in pedagogy, have brought about notable changes in language teaching and learning practices. As the field seeks to keep pace with ongoing technological advancements, there is a growing need to consider not only the experiences of learners but also those of the creators—educators, researchers, instructional designers, and developers. These stakeholders are actively investigating the most effective strategies for delivering engaging and pedagogically sound courses. This collaborative effort signals a significant shift toward immersive, learner-centered approaches that prioritize autonomy, interactivity, and personalization in the language learning process. However, educators need to strike a balanced between encouraging independent study and incorporating interactive learning strategies and activities (Anderson, 2003), particularly when Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is involved. Virtual learning environments, when underpinned by sound pedagogical frameworks, facilitate meaningful interactions between learners and between learners and content (Reinders & Benson, 2017). These interactions, informed by Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (1990), provide valuable scaffolding and support the internalization of linguistic structures. Nevertheless, the transition to remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored critical limitations in online pedagogy, particularly when digital environments are not systematically designed according to evidence-based instructional principles.

The evolving landscape of language education—shaped by digital innovation and global mobility—necessitates the development of adaptable operational models that can respond to the complex interplay between pedagogical theory and technological practice (Diadori, 2009). Translating theoretical constructs into implementable, context-sensitive instructional frameworks thus becomes a key challenge for language educators and instructional designers alike.

Learning Management Systems (LMS), such as Moodle—acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (Brandl, 2005, p. 17)—have become central platforms for delivering such courses, which increasingly rely on learner autonomy and digital interaction. Evaluating their effectiveness from the students' perspective becomes pivotal for informing pedagogical improvements and enhancing learner engagement (Ngoc, & Phung, 2021).

Accordingly, this paper aimed to answer the following research question: *How do students evaluate the design and*

effectiveness of an English self-study course delivered through Moodle? It reports students' evaluation of an online English course offered in self-study mode via Moodle, focusing on (i) learners' perceptions, (ii) levels of engagement, and (iii) suggestions for improvement.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The significance of technological tools in supporting language learning is now broadly recognized (e.g., Chun, Smith, & Kern, 2016; Kakembo, 2024). In the EFL/ESL context, its use creates an engaging environment for students to learn English, and it plays several fundamental roles in language education: it serves as a resource, a delivery mechanism, and a productivity-enhancing tool. Computer-based applications effectively support student-centered instruction, and more broadly, technological integration can facilitate language acquisition and introduce new forms of learning experiences for students (Pedersen & Liu, 2003).

In recent decades, online learning (OL) has become a key modality of educational, particularly due to its affordances in promoting learner autonomy, temporal flexibility, and personalized pacing (Appana, 2008; Shopova, 2014). Within this framework, learners assume greater responsibility for their cognitive and metacognitive regulation (Clarke & Hermens, 2001), indicating a transition from traditional teacher-led approaches to models that prioritize learner autonomy (Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2004). This decentralization of instructional control requires the development of self-regulated learning (SRL) competences, including goal setting, self-monitoring, and strategic planning (Artino & Jones, 2012; Chang, 2013), which are essential for cultivating learner autonomy, a core tenet in constructivist and sociocultural approaches to second language acquisition (Whipp & Chiarelli, 2004).

The integration of digital technologies into instructional design and curriculum development has been shown to increase learner motivation, enhance digital literacy, and contribute to improved academic achievement (Badia, Martin, & Gomez, 2018). Furthermore, empirical research suggests that the adoption of advanced e-learning platforms can yield measurable improvements in student performance and engagement (Carr, Crocco, Eyring, & Gallego, 2011; Aikina & Bolsunovskaya, 2020). In the context of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), such technological mediation can amplify language exposure, facilitate authentic communication, and support individualized feedback, thereby reinforcing the principles of interactionist and input-processing theories of language learning.

Building on prior research (Sanchez & Hueros, 2010; Daniel, 2012; Ayan, 2015; Mayer, 2014; Geri, Winer, & Zaks, 2017), LMSs are increasingly recognized as effective platforms for Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL). Their modular design allows instructors to curate multimodal input, design collaborative and task-based activities, and differentiate instruction based on learners' cognitive styles, affective factors, and multiple intelligences (Caon & Serragiotto, 2012). As Ziad (2016, p. 314) observes, Moodle has the potential to "transform the learning environment into a site of interactivity, connectivity, and extensive learning opportunities." Integrated online modules for English courses can thus provide students with opportunities for practice, review, and feedback (Bush, 2008; Rosell-Aguilar, 2005).

Despite some reported drawbacks—such as lower writing performance among students who received TELL instruction instead of traditional face-to-face teaching methods (Sanders, 2005)—several studies indicate that even limited integration of TELL, as exemplified by the self-study online course discussed in this paper, can provide a positive experience for learners, particularly in terms of comfort and enjoyment. Optimal use of technology in classes, particularly through computer-mediated communication and automated online exercises, has shown to produce beneficial outcomes (Nguyen Viet, 2017). Research further demonstrated the effect of TELL on increasing motivation (e.g., Chenoweth, Ushida, & Murday, 2006) and on assisting students with mastering basic skills, i.e., grammar, vocabulary, listening, pronunciation, reading and writing (Chun, 2007; Gascoigne, 2006).

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

As a complement to the 'English Language and Communication' course offered to undergraduates in Administration and Organization Sciences at Sapienza University of Rome, a self-paced Moodle module was developed to enhance students' language learning through structured, progressively sequenced activities aligned with the course syllabus. The module targeted the development of the four main language skills within an ESP framework, integrating general English with discipline-specific competences. Designed to prepare students for corporate and potentially international settings, the course included 12 structured units that combined thematic content (e.g., professional scenarios reflecting sociolinguistic and discursive competence) with grammatical components (grammatical competence). Interactive resources included H5P-based tasks, Quizlet sets, AI-

generated videos (Heygen), and progress assessments. Each unit was conceived as “a work unit endowed with its own completeness and coherence, which, however, connects to the preceding and subsequent units” (Freddi, 1994).

The course also featured short audio and video materials to enhance interactivity, in line with studies demonstrating that interactivity improves learning outcomes (Cherrett et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2006). Interactive videos, in particular, have been shown to increase both completion rates and viewing times (Geri, Winer, & Zaks, 2017, p. 108). Grounded in a communicative approach (cf. Freddi, 1994), the course was organized around key phases designed to support progressive language development:

- i. Exposure of learners to a linguistic text (‘pivot’) and its contextualization
- ii. Consolidation of the pivot text and its linguistic components (pronunciation, linguistic-communicative mechanisms, grammatical structures, vocabulary, etc.)
- iii. Reuse of these materials through communication activities and subsequent reflection
- iv. Examination and reflection on the ‘grammar’ of communication and language, including reinforcement exercises
- v. Learner assessment and evaluation
- vi. Correction
- vii. Transition to the next work unit.

Each unit followed a consistent pattern intended to help learners manage their activities effectively and manage time appropriately:

- *Unit Overview*: An audio and text introduction presenting the topic and outlining the unit’s linguistic and grammatical objectives.
- *Warm-up*: A preparatory activity designed to help students familiarize with the topic, acquire new vocabulary to expand their lexicon, and strengthen oral communication skills.
- *Reading*: A reading and comprehension section accompanied by vocabulary exercises aimed at enriching vocabulary, understanding complex concepts, improving foreign language comprehension, and preparing students to engage with more advanced texts.
- *Lesson #1*: An introduction to the topic, including grammar explanation supported by a variety of activities.
- *Lesson #2*: A continuation or extension of Lesson #1, covering an additional grammatical topic.
- *Grammar*: An AI-supported video paired with a concise written grammar explanation providing quick reference and clarification.
- *Practice*: Exercises focused on applying the grammatical topic covered in the unit.
- *Feedback*: Video-corrections

Each unit included correction videos (in Italian) for one or more exercises. Assessment consisted of 12 unit quizzes and 4 progress tests (one every three units) to help students monitor their learning. A final exam followed at the end. All assessments used the same format: information transfer and fill-in-the-blanks.

2.2 Participants

The population of this study consists of $n = 13$ undergraduate students (100%) enrolled in an English Language and Communication Course at the University of Rome “La Sapienza”. All participants were attending this compulsory course, which forms an integral part of their degree program in Administration and Organization Sciences and aims to enhance linguistic competence in English, with a particular focus on communicative skills, grammar, and vocabulary development.

The group included both male and female students, aged between 19 to 24 years old. All 13 students shared Italian as their mother tongue. The participants were at a beginner (A2) to intermediate (B2) level of English proficiency (CEFR), as determined by a placement test administered at the beginning of the course, with $n. 2$ students at A2, $n. 8$ at B1, and $n. 3$ at B2. Their shared linguistic and cultural background—namely, Italian as their L1—provides a cohesive context for examining language acquisition patterns and challenges related to L1–L2 transfer.

Students took part on a voluntary basis, having been informed of the study’s objectives and procedures and having consented to the anonymized use of their data.

2.3 Data Collection & Analysis

Two complementary data collection tools were employed to gather the necessary information: an online form and a paper-based questionnaire. The online form consisted of three sections: (i) participants' profiles, (ii) course evaluation, and (iii) general evaluation. The paper-based questionnaire, administered in class by one of the researchers, included 17 items structured on a 5-point Likert scale. These items were grouped into three sections: (i) unit introduction and objectives, (ii) unit materials—general, and (iii) unit materials—specific. Furthermore, the questionnaire featured a final section titled “*Feedback/Comments*”, featuring three open-ended questions designed to elicit qualitative insights (Note 1).

To analyze the retrieved data, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted. Quantitative data were examined through median analysis to identify central tendencies and highlight general response patterns. Open-ended responses were thematically examined to identify common ideas and enhance understanding of participant input. Combining different data sources allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the survey results.

3. Results

In line with previous research showing that response rates tend to be lower for online instruments compared to in-class, paper-based ones (Kulik, 2001; Nulty, 2008), only n. 9 students completed the online questionnaire, whereas n. 13 responded to the paper version administered in class (Note 2). This discrepancy supports the literature and highlights the continued effectiveness of in-person data collection methods in ensuring higher participation rates.

3.1 Recruitment

The recruitment and the evaluation took place during the second semester (February–May) of the 2024–2025 academic year.

3.2 Online Forms

The pie chart (Figure 1) illustrates the types of devices used by students (n. 9 = 100%) to carry out course activities, based on responses to a multiple-choice question (Q1. *Which device did you use for the activities?*). The data provides insight into students' technological preferences and access, identifying the most and least commonly used tools for engaging with the course content.

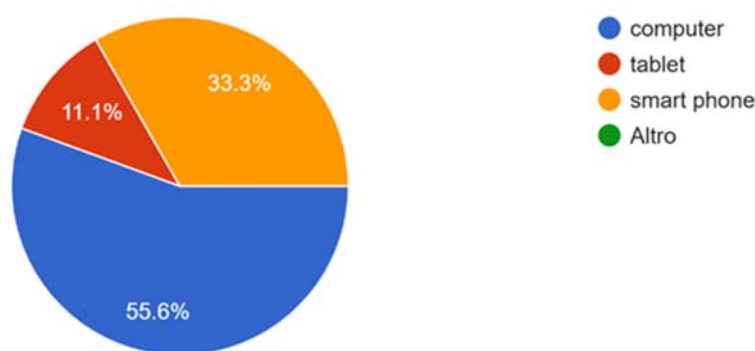


Figure 1. Participants' device preferences

Computers were the most commonly (55.6%) used device, suggesting that most students either preferred or had access to a more stable and versatile device, possibly for better performance during language learning activities. Smartphones ranked second (33.3%), indicating that a considerable share of learners relied on mobile technology, which may reflect convenience and portability, especially for quick access to materials or on-the-go participation. Tablets were used by 11.1% of respondents, reflecting a lower level of preference or availability. Their limited use may be attributed to smaller screen sizes or reduced functionality compared to computers. No participants selected 'Other', implying that only the listed mainstream devices were employed for course-related tasks.

Regarding Q2 (*Did you have free access to the internet?*), slightly more than half (55.6%, n. 5) of the respondents reported having unrestricted access, while 44.4% (n. 4) did not. Nevertheless, all students confirmed that they used their own personal devices, showing a good level of technological autonomy.

Responses to Q3 and Q4 (*How many units have you completed?—How many tests have you completed?*) revealed a heterogeneous distribution of completed units among participants. The bar chart (Figure 2) compares the number

of units and quizzes completed by each students, visually illustrating the varying levels of engagement across different types of tasks.

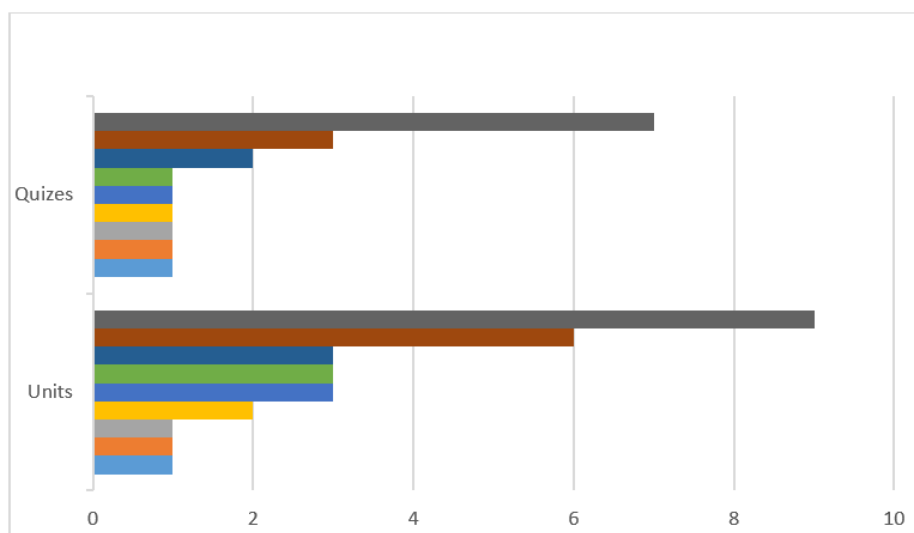


Figure 2. Number of Units and Quizzes completed

Regarding Q5 on *Learning modalities*, among the 9 respondents, n. 7 (77%) reported having previously attended an online course, n. 5 (56%) had engaged in self-study, and n. 6 (67%) had combined both modalities by participating in online self-study courses.

As to the course evaluation, participants rated their experience on a five-point scale, where 1 indicated 'not at all positive/satisfied' and 5 represented 'very positive/satisfied'. The overall results are summarized as follows:

Table 1. Median values for course evaluation

Items	Median value
1. Purpose and objectives of the course	
How positive and useful do you think attending this course was for learning English?	3
Do you think your initial knowledge was sufficient to understand the topics covered?	3
2. Content	
How do you evaluate the duration of the units in relation to the topics covered?	3
How do you evaluate the depth of the topics covered in the units?	4
How do you evaluate the increase in your knowledge and skills?	3
3. Organization	
How do you evaluate the overall organization of the course?	4
How do you evaluate the units presented?	3
How do you evaluate the progression of the activities?	3
4. Overall satisfaction	4

The course evaluation results (Table 1) indicate an overall neutral-to-positive perception among participants. Regarding the course purpose and objectives, the median values for both the usefulness of the course in learning English and the adequacy of prior knowledge were 3, indicating a moderate appraisal of their relevance. With respect to the content, students rated the duration of each unit and their knowledge gains at a median of 3, whereas the topics themselves were considered somewhat more thorough, earning a median score of 4. As for organizational features, both the overall organization of the course and the presentation of units, received median values of 4 and 3, respectively. The progression of activities was evaluated with a median score of 3, while overall satisfaction reached a median of 4, suggesting a generally favorable view of the course.

3.3 Paper-based Course Evaluation Forms

N. 13 students submitted their questionnaire in class. However, one participant provided responses marked as 'Not Applicable' (NA) for all items and was therefore excluded from the final analysis. Thus, the results and subsequent inferences are based on the responses from the remaining n. 12 (100%) students. Participants responded to the

questionnaire using a five-point evaluation scale, ranging from 1 for complete agreement to 5 for complete disagreement.

3.3.1 Overall Evaluation

Table 2 reports the median values of the participants' responses to the course evaluation, as collected through the paper-based questionnaire administered in class by one of the researchers.

Table 2. Median values of overall course evaluation

Items	Median value
Section 1 – Unit introduction & objectives	
1 Easy identification of objectives	1
2 Clear content and order	2
3 Clear progression of activities	2
4 All activities completed	1.5
Section 2 – Unit materials - general	
5 Appropriate selection of material	2
6 Varies material selection	2
7 Interesting material selection	2
8 Effective communication of ideas	2
9 Attractive design/presentation of material	3
10 Easy instructions	2.5
11 Clear exercise answer	3
Section 3 – Unit materials – specific activities	
12 Warm-up useful	3
13 Clear and informative readings	2
14 Clear and comprehensive grammar focus	2
15 Completed grammar sections	2
16 Useful short video	2.5
17 Useful end unit quiz	1

In Section 1, focusing on the unit introduction and objectives, responses indicate a highly positive perception regarding the identification of objectives, with a median score of 1, reflecting strong agreement that the objectives were clearly stated. Clarity, organization, and sequencing of the learning materials were evaluated with median scores of 2. The activity completion rate showed a median of 1.5, reflecting consistent engagement and task fulfillment across units.

In Section 2, which addressed general unit materials, responses were predominantly moderate. The appropriateness of the material selection received a median score of 2, indicating that students generally agreed the materials were suitable. In a comparable manner, the materials' variety, level of interest, and communicative effectiveness were all evaluated with a median score of 2. The design and presentation of materials received a median score of 3, reflecting a neutral perception; students found the design attractive but not exceptional. Instructions were rated at 2.5, suggesting that, while mostly clear, some students may have found them slightly ambiguous or challenging to follow.

In Section 3, concerning unit materials—specific activities, median scores were as follows: the warm-up activity received a median of 3, reflecting a neutral response. The readings' clarity and informativeness, the clarity and comprehensiveness of the grammar focus, and the completion of grammar sections all received a median of 2, indicating that students generally found these aspects clear. The short video was rated with a median of 2.5, showing a slightly neutral perception, while the end-of-unit quiz received the highest rating, with a median of 1, indicating strong agreement on its usefulness.

3.3.2 Students' Final Feedback

The final section of the in-class questionnaire included three open-ended questions designed to gather participants' reflections on: (Q1) the aspects of the unit(s) they found most enjoyable or useful, (Q2) elements they would modify, add, or remove, and (Q3) reasons for not completing the activities. Of the n. 13 students (100%), n. 4 (30.77%) provided feedback in response to Q1; n. 5 (38.46%) offered suggestions regarding potential changes in Q2, and 3 students (23.08%) explained their lack of participation in Q3.

For Q1, a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013) identified three overarching themes: (i) useful learning

activities, (ii) course organization and structure, and (iii) challenges with assessment. Students positively evaluated the organization and structure of the course, highlighting the well-structured design of the units. Specific learning activities, such as the grammar section and gap-fill exercises, were also noted as particularly valuable. However, concerns were expressed regarding the difficulty of the final test.

For Q2, four themes emerged: (i) test and exercise difficulty, (ii) audio and clarity issues, (iii) vocabulary challenges, and (iv) grammar learning. The first theme indicates that students found certain task, especially the final exercises, more challenging than anticipated and suggested simplification. The second theme reflects difficulties encountered with the audio materials, with one participant recommending the addition of a dictionary section to clarify difficult or uncommon terms, which could enhance comprehension. Opinions regarding grammar learning were mixed: one student felt the grammar instruction was ineffective, while another praised it as one of the most useful or enjoyable components of the course.

Finally, for Q3, only two participants offered comments, both indicating limited time as the main factor preventing them from completing the activities.

4. Discussion

The data indicate that students demonstrate a significant degree of autonomy in their learning, as the majority had prior experience with online self-study, suggesting familiarity with this modality. This background likely contributed to their ability to critically evaluate the course. A clear preference for traditional computing devices (laptops/desktops) was observed, whereas mobile technologies such as smartphones and tablets were used less frequently, likely due to usability and accessibility factors. These findings are valuable for planning digital resource and ensuring platform compatibility for future course activities.

Regarding units and quiz completion, participant engagement varied considerably. Three students completed only 1 unit, reflecting lower involvement, while one student completed 2 units, and three others completed 3 units, indicating a moderate pace. Notably, one participant notably completed 6 units and another completed 9, reflecting a substantially higher level of engagement or capability. This variation may be influenced by differences in work pace, time commitment, or prior knowledge. Similarly, quiz completion varied: six students completed only 1 quiz, showing minimal engagement, while one completed 2 and another 3, indicating moderate participation. Remarkably, one student completed 7 quizzes, demonstrating exceptional dedication. These differences likely reflect variations in interest, time availability, or proficiency among participants.

The data obtained from the online course evaluations indicate a generally positive but nuanced student experience. Median scores of 3 for both the usefulness of the course in learning English and the adequacy of students' prior knowledge suggest moderate satisfaction with the course's effectiveness, while also implying that some students may have encountered challenges in fully engaging with or benefiting from the content. The higher median rating of 4 for the depth of the topics indicates that students perceived the material as thorough and sufficiently detailed. Median scores of 3 for the organization of units and the sequencing of activities indicate that, while the overall course design was satisfactory, aspects such as pacing and coherence could be further refined. Overall, the median value of 4/5 for overall satisfaction reflects a generally favorable view of the course.

In "Section 1—Unit introduction and objectives", the course received a strong positive evaluation. Students consistently recognized the clarity of the objectives, the logical organization of content, and the progressive challenge of the activities. With a median of 1, responses on course objectives reveal a strong consensus that the intended aims were well communicated. Likewise, the course content and structure were generally deemed clear and well-ordered (median score of 2), though this result suggests minor opportunities for refinement in terms of content clarity or organization. The progressive difficulty of activities was also positively acknowledged (median score of 2) indicating that students appreciated the sense of progression, although a small subset may not have fully aligned with the perceived difficulty curve. Finally, a median score of 1.5 for activity completion underscores a high level of engagement, with most students actively participating and successfully completing the tasks. Overall, while the feedback demonstrates the course's success in meeting its objectives and engaging its participants, the areas with median scores of 2 point to opportunities for incremental improvements, which could further enhance the clarity, design, and effectiveness of the learning experience.

The evaluation of Section 2 indicates that students generally found the course materials appropriate and relevant, though with room for improvement. While the materials were perceived as somewhat varied and engaging, there remains potential to further diversify content and sustain student engagement more effectively. The clarity of communication received a median score of 2, suggesting that, although most materials were understandable, some students may have had difficulties with comprehension. The design and presentation of materials were rated neutrally, with a median of 3, indicating that students found the materials visually attractive but not exceptional.

Instructions (median value of 2.5) were mostly clear, though some students may have experienced minor ambiguity or difficulty in following them. Lastly, a median score of 3 for the exercise answers points to their general usefulness, though students might have found greater benefit from more explicit guidance. The findings underscore the value of using multiple input formats and multimodal materials to support different learning styles and facilitate comprehension. Providing clearer scaffolding and guidance that is more explicit could also better support learners in navigating autonomous study.

In Section 3, “Specific activities,” the core activities were generally well-received, though responses showed a tendency toward neutrality or moderate satisfaction, particularly regarding the warm-up exercises and short videos. The clarity and informativeness of the readings and grammar sections were considered adequate but not exceptional, suggesting potential for further refinement to better engage students. The end-of-unit quizzes received notably high ratings, underscoring their perceived value in the learning process. Hence, these results suggest that systematically integrating formative assessments throughout the course, rather than confining them to the final stage, could enhance learning outcomes. Embedding interactive comprehension checks and reflective prompts may help maintain student attention and encourage active learning. Moreover, diversifying input formats—especially in warm-up and grammar sections—could increase motivation, accommodate various learning preferences, and foster deeper engagement and retention.

The feedback/comments section aimed to collect suggestions for potential improvements. Although the number of responses was limited, which constrains the scope of insights, the feedback provided nonetheless offers valuable perspectives on students’ experiences and identifies areas for course improvement. Specific learning activities, such as the grammar section and gap-fill exercises, were highlighted as useful, indicating that students appreciate interactive and engaging tasks. Enhancing the clarity and accessibility of both audio materials and grammar explanations could further improve students’ understanding and engagement, especially for learners who face challenges with certain language components.

5. Conclusion

The growing use of LMS platforms and e-learning in universities has been investigated for some time (e.g., Smart & Cappel, 2006). In the wake of the pandemic, recent evidence suggests that successful integration of online modules into face-to-face courses requires careful material selection and instructional design tailored to learners and learning goals. Increasing attention has also focused on blended learning approaches, which can be most effective when online learning and in-class discussion are combined. This approach is particularly relevant for language education, offering opportunities to improve course design, enhance student engagement, and support more effective learning outcomes.

The Moodle-based English self-study course at Sapienza University highlights the benefits and challenges of using online modules in language instruction. The project provided valuable insights into how students engaged with digital materials, perceived the usefulness of specific activities, and evaluated the overall course design. Although the participant group was limited, the collected feedback offers meaningful indications of the course’s pedagogical strengths as well as areas for improvement. Students valued the clear structure, explicit objectives, and feedback-rich tasks, which supported motivation and reinforced learning. At the same time, they identified difficulties with comprehension support, grammar explanations, and the alignment between formative activities and summative assessment. Engagement patterns also varied, reflecting differences in study habits and prior language experience.

The results provide several actionable insights for online course design. Maintaining a transparent course structure with well-defined objectives enables students to navigate materials with greater confidence. Embedding formative, feedback-rich activities—such as quizzes, interactive tasks, and correction videos—can sustain motivation while reinforcing key learning points. From a pedagogical perspective, integrating these activities systematically throughout the course, rather than concentrating them at the end, may enhance engagement, comprehension, and self-regulated learning. Additionally, diversifying input types, including warm-up exercises, multimedia resources, and discipline-specific content, can better accommodate varying learning preferences and promote deeper interaction with language materials.

Overall, the study suggests that online self-study modules, when carefully designed and aligned with classroom instruction, can significantly contribute to higher education language programmes. By combining structured guidance, meaningful feedback, and diverse learning activities, such courses not only foster language acquisition but also enhance learner autonomy, engagement, and satisfaction, thus offering a promising avenue for both teaching practice and further research.

6. Limitation of the Study

The variation in student engagement with units and quizzes indicates that not all participants were equally invested in or committed to the course. Some students completed only a few activities, while others engaged extensively, reflecting a range of effort and capability. This discrepancy may affect the reliability of students' perceptions, as those who completed fewer activities may not have fully experienced the course, potentially limiting the accuracy and comprehensiveness of their feedback.

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Authors' contributions

While this paper is the result of a joint effort, Ellen Patat is responsible for Sections 3, 4, and 5, whereas Cinzia Giglioni is responsible for Sections 1, 2, and 6. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Obtained.

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The Publication Ethics Committee of the Canadian Center of Science and Education.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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Notes

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Note 2. Regarding the representativeness of the population, a study conducted by the University of Saskatchewan indicates that a small class size ($n = 25$ students) requires a response rate of 80% (i.e., 20 respondents) to achieve a margin of error of $\pm 10\%$. In our case, the response rates were 69.2% for the online survey and 92.3% for the paper-based version.

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