

Learners' Views About E-Learning In Foreign Language Teaching: A Case Study

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine e-learners' views about e-learning in foreign language teaching. In this qualitative research, case study design was used. There were 9 learners in the working group 5 of whom were male and 4 were female. In analysis, Nvivo-8 computer package programme was used. According to the findings, it is understood that e-learning has more positive characteristics compared to traditional learning. According to the research results, the use of e-learning may be suggested more widely in education system benefiting from information and communication technologies..

Keywords: foreign language teaching, e-learning, learners' views

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Extended Summary

Purpose: Recently, information technologies have developed rapidly. This rapid development has affected internet technology and made information be quicker and more reachable. In addition, it helps to create well-organized, student-centred, interactive and flexible learning environments. After all these developments, a new learning method came into being which is called e-learning. E-learning has become a well-known method and started to be used commonly worldwide. A major number of institutions also use e-learning method with the aim to support life-long learning and distance education. In this respect, experts, researchers and educators are aware of its positive effect on education. Thus, this study aims to determine students' views towards the effectiveness of e-learning in foreign language learning.

Method: In the study, students learning through e-learning method in the city of Elazig are searched and after the first interviews, 9 students 5 of whom are male and 4 are female have been got appointed. Snowball sampling has been used in the study. As a data collection instrument, an interview form including open-ended questions developed by researchers has been used. The form has been developed after the literature review and with the help of experts' views. The questions in the interview form aim to determine the definition of e-learning, its positive and negative effects, the role of it in improving four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), the effectiveness of it on evaluation and differences between it and traditional learning. The interviews with 9 students individually have been recorded. These records (9 interviews) are saved as a document. Descriptive analysis has been made on the records. The data obtained from the interviews have been analyzed through NVIVO-8 Computer Package Program and for making models this program has been used again. Throughout the study, the participants have been coded as K4-E (P4-M) or K8-K (P8-F) which means "Participant and number-Gender." Lastly, by interconnecting each problem, modelling has been made.

Results: Through a qualitative method, six sub-problems have been considered regarding the questions in the interview form. Participants' views towards the definition of e-learning are striking. An individual learning made on the internet, a process of education reached at anytime and anywhere, audio visual learning methods are some of these definitions. From these participants' definitions, it is true to say that in general e-learning is a method in which technology is basically used. Moreover, participants in the research have stated the differences between e-learning and traditional learning. The economic aspects, variety of content and attainment to information are among the differences they have supposed. It can be inferred from the participants' ideas that e-learning is a more individual method than traditional approaches. In addition, the benefit sides of e-learning are also stated by the participants. In e-learning, it is expressed that students can easily reach at any information they want, can find chance to meet and communicate with people, have no limit of time or place and get immediate feedback from the system. On the other hand, the negative effects of e-learning are also indicated. Deficiency of face-to-face communication, anti-social behaviours and dependence to the Internet are some of these negative effects. It is a striking point that the use of technological instruments becomes a habit, even dependence. The role of e-learning in improving four language skills is another problem examined in the study. With this respect, audio visual presentations, animations, chat rooms, discussions, communications between student-student and student-teacher are effective on developing speaking skills. Besides, a rich content of e-learning such as inclusion of variety texts and vocabulary exercises can improve reading skills. In addition, the writings to each other, homework and performances, e-mails and messages are the activities developing writing skills- productive skills- supposed by the participants in the study. The final problem searched in the study is the effectiveness of e-learning in evaluation. The participants expressed that the evaluation in e-learning method is realistic and objective. It is also expressed that students are able to get immediate feedback from the system. These positive aspects of e-learning in evaluation insure that e-learning method has more benefits than traditional ones.

Discussion and Conclusion: From the research results, it can be suggested that with variety of audio visual materials in e-learning, especially listening and speaking skills should be improved in foreign language teaching. In today's technology, it is necessary to reach boundless information as quick as possible. Thus, in order to attain more effective and successful learning results, e-learning that provides students with education independent of time and place can be an alternative and remedial method beside traditional approaches. As a conclusion, it is suggested to make good use of information and communication technologies which means e-learning method.

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