WEB-BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge of another language is an advantage and it gives people to look at the world and in particular to the world's cultures with a broader perspective. Learning English as a second language is the process by which students learn it in addition to their native language. Today, internet is an important part of our lives as English. For this reason, we can say that learning via internet is an alternative way to learn English. Web-based learning is a general term used to refer to computer-enhanced learning. It is used in so many contexts that are critical to be clear what one means when one speaks of "e-learning". Web based technologies and powerful internet connections provide various new possibilities for the development of educational technology. The aim of this study is to review e-learning, while learning English, in a general perspective and to give brief information about web-based learning. On the other hand, it is aimed to guide learner how to use web while learning English language. The study is conducted on the base of literature survey. The study is divided into 4 parts, and all parts are entirely based on literature review. In the first part it is mentioned about the theory of web-based learning, in the second part objectives of web-based learning, in the third part some information about online students' and teachers roles on the web are given and in the final part types of teaching-learning activities on English learning via the web are shown. This study is an attempt to give as complete a description of learning English language through the internet. There are a number of courses online which teach foreign languages. Courses usually offer a learning environment online, such as chat rooms, net meetings with the entire class, pen pal search engines and the like. In conclusion this study gives us brief information about English language learning through the internet. We can say that; this paper includes information that enables the users who want to learn English languages via the internet.

Keywords: Web-based learning, web-based English Language learning, internet and language, online courses, e-learning.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge of another language is an advantage and it gives people to look at the world and in particular to the world's cultures with a broader perspective. Learning English as a second language is the process by which students learn it in addition to their native language. Today, internet is an important part of our lives as English. For this reason, it can be said that learning via internet is an alternative way to learn English. Web-based technologies and powerful internet connections provide various new possibilities for the development of educational technology. Web-based learning is currently one of the major applications of the internet. Generally distance education has been delivered by the technology such as videoconferencing, videotape, satellite broadcast, TV broadcast, internet, and so on (Cavus, 2007). In 1996 participation in web-based higher education courses was estimated to be 1 million students and projected to be 3 million by 2000 (Edelson, 1998). Current researches show us that educational institutions are increasingly embracing new technologies and software to aid instruction. The use of IICTs has often good reasons in terms of the positive impact of those technologies on learning. But recent research show that there is still challenge between computer use and learning outcomes.

WWW (World Wide Web) is a new technology which is the most popular and used Internet tools, serves increasingly as a communication facilitator. Web-mediated communication is a powerful interaction medium. (e.g., e-mail, group conferencing, internet relay chat) that enables students to communicate with peers, teachers, and experts and conduct collaborative work (Mioduser et al., 2000). The web also serves as an instructional delivery medium. Numerous web sites provide digital educational activities and network based courses for all grade levels in a large number of subjects. Web-based learning is an important medium for designing and delivering instruction by addressing a variety of learning strategies (Khan and Vega, 1997). The learners in web generally are responsible for their own process of learning and results (Reeves and Reeves, 1997). This gives them the freedom of moving everywhere all over the world whenever they want.

The range of uses to which computers have been put in the service of language teaching and learning is remarkable. Students can learn grammar and vocabulary from basic keyboard-input programs; they can access sound and video on CD-ROM; they can record their voices and compare their pronunciation with that of a native speaker; they can use word-processing programs such as WordPerfect to do writing and editing exercises, or presentation programs dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopedias and the resources of the Web to help them. Many such systems attempt to serve learners interacting with the learning source at different chronological times. Web-based learning, then, is often referred to as those delivery modalities that seek to reduce the barriers of time and space to learning, thus the frequently used phrase 'anytime, anywhere learning'. A Learning Management System (LMS) is a software system to deliver web-based education. An LMS provides the platform for the web-based learning environment by enabling the management, delivery, and tracking of learning. LMS are often viewed as being the starting point of any web-based learning program.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to review e-learning while learning English as a second language, in a general perspective and to give brief information about web based English language learning. This study is an attempt to give as complete description of learning through the internet. In order to reach this aim the authors followed the sections which are theory

of web-based learning, objectives of web-based learning, and some information about learners' and teachers' roles are given and in the final part types of teaching-learning activities on English learning via web are shown. In addition to these, a couple of activities were added in order to show an online course. Teachers should use benefits of web in order to make courses more enjoyable.

A. Theory of Web-Based Learning

It can be described for web-based learning theory as; education that occurs only through the Web, that is, it does not consist of any physical learning materials issued to students or actual face to face contact. Purely online learning is essentially the use of e-learning tools in distance education mode using the Web as the *only* medium for all student learning and contact. The importance of communication technologies, e-learning and flexible education in contemporary universities cannot be denied. It is estimated that, in 2004 over 2.6 million students will be studying online courses at United States (US)-based universities and add that over 50% of institutions agree that online education is critical to their long-term strategy. The questions about web-based learning have become how, why and with what outcomes.

Web-based learning allows students and teachers for flexibility of access, from anywhere and usually at anytime-essentially, it allows participants to collapse time and space. However, the learning materials must be designed properly to engage the learner and promote learning. According to authors online learning must be done right because it has many promises but it takes commitment and resources. "Doing it right" means that web-based learning materials must be designed properly, with the learners and learning in focus, and that adequate support must be provided.

B. Objectives of Web-Based Learning

Web-based language learning lessons are generally designed to guide students through information or to help students perform in specific tasks. Communication technologies are generally categorized as asynchronous or synchronous. *Asynchronous* activities use technologies such as blogs, wikis, forum, e-mail. The idea here is that participants may engage in the exchange of ideas or information without the dependency of other participants' involvement at the same time. *Synchronous* activities involve the exchange of ideas and information with one or more participants during the same period of time (chat, discussion board).

Balancing the "Web" with "Learning"

When web-based learning occurs, we need to explain the "web" and the "Learn"– here are some attributes of web-based learning that includes the "Learn" side.

Table 1. Balancing the "Web" with "Learning"

The Web	The Learning
Anytime, anywhere	Monitoring the learning process
Content is delivered via internet	Giving feedback
Enables accountability of learning	Representations of knowledge
Internet communication tools for participants to connects with each other	Repertory of online activity structures
Archive of each learner's work and interactions is kept	Prompts, Hints, Guidance
One-to-many or one-to-one	Human interaction

Advantages of Web Based Language Learning

The advantages of web-based learning can be listed as follows:

- Ability to link resources in many different formats
- Can be an efficient way of delivering course materials
- Resources can be made available from any location and at any time
- Potential for widening access
- Can encourage more independent and active learning
- Can provide a useful source of supplementary materials to conventional programs

C. Roles of the Online Teacher

Collins and Berge (1996) categories the tasks and roles of the online teacher into four areas:
1. pedagogical,
2. social,
3. managerial, and
4. Technical.

They described pedagogical as function and task that revolves around educational facilitation. Social function is described as the promotion of friendly social environment which is needed in the process of online learning. The managerial aspects of online learning involve setting agenda, objectives, rules and decision making norms. The technical aspect focuses on the teachers' proficiency with the use of the technology. The teacher in an online course must ensure that they themselves are comfortable with using this technology to transfer knowledge to students.

In addition, teachers are the main communicator to establish interaction with students. They should ensure that the learning environment provided takes account of learners' needs. Teachers should help the self developments and responsibility of the students with their guidance in this case teachers are not "teachers" here they are the facilitators of web-learning environments.

The role of the facilitator as the "knowledge" authority or as the transmitter of information is in danger when using extensively sources of information different from that provided by the facilitator.

The predominant facilitator roles identified were:
- *Facilitator as learner in the classroom*: Quite often roles were exchanged between facilitator and student, for example a teacher cannot understand the new technology used in classroom.
- *Facilitator as tutor*: The tutor's role is not just the subject matter expert who facilitates learning activities, solves problems, and updates the contents.

For instance, in on-line discussions, the tutor facilitates communication, and it is possible to distinguish these tutor roles: (Barajas, Scheuermann and Kikis, 2003).
- *The tutor as modeler*, which implies someone who stimulates the learner by creating materials and situations for active learning.
- *The tutor as coach*, consultant, referee, assessor and 'helpline'.
- *The tutor as scaffold*, which is more of a guide and monitor, bringing parties together as manager, provider or broker (Barajas, Scheuermann and Kikis, 2003).
  - *Facilitator as collaborator with students*: There are many activities in which the facilitators tend to participate as peers together with the students.

- *Facilitator as developer:* The facilitator develops learning materials mainly in electronic format, or provides input to professional developers.
- *Facilitators' and students' roles are interdependent*: If the roles of the facilitator are moderator, tutor, etc., learners need to become self-reliant, active searchers for relevant information (Barajas, Scheuermann and Kikis, 2003).

C. Roles of the Online Learner

A successful learner should be active in an online learning environment. The roles of the online learners include
1. knowledge generation,
2. collaboration, and
3. process management (Palloff and Pratt, 1998).

In web-based learning environment, the learner is responsible for actively seeking solutions to problems confined within the knowledge area being studied with guidance from the teacher. They are expected to view problems and questions presented by the teacher and those of other students. Students in the web-based learning environment are also expected to learn collaboratively and cooperatively (Khan, 1997). Students are expected to work together in order to generate deeper levels of understanding of the course material. Students are also expected to share the resources and other materials that they are finding with other learners. In the role of process management, students are expected to participate with minimal guidelines, interact with one another and speak up when the discussion are moving into an uncomfortable zone. Students must be willing to speak out when they are offended or simply have an opinion on something (Palloff and Pratt, 1998).

The roles of students appear to depend on:
a) the pedagogical approach used in classroom,
b) the roles played by the teacher, and
c) the classroom peers.

Some of the roles identified include (Barajas, Scheuermann and Kikis, 2003):
- *Student as facilitator:* Social and active learning can be encouraged by the use of ICTs; new pedagogical concepts enable students to understand the role of the facilitator as more actively integrated into the teaching/learning process.
- *Student as collaborator*: Students collaborate with other students and the facilitator in project-based educational activities. This is an important aspect to take into account in web-based learning if the tutor wants to break the isolation of online students working individually.
- *Student as cooperator:* Students cooperate in team work where they may undertake various team roles (for example leader, expert, moderator, affective supporter, record keeper, etc).

In general, students tend to accept a more active, motivated, deep and self-regulated learning role. Providing facilitator with educational designing skills could be an interesting avenue to promote and to explore. It could be the appropriate way to reconsider teacher role viewing not as passive actor. The role of a self-reliant student is the corollary to a less directed role of the facilitator. This raises the level of students' responsibility in learning.

D. Types of teaching-learning activities on English learning via web

IICTs are changing and structuring new information and these changes create a challenging, complex content of communication and interaction. So learners are experiencing a new kind of control on their own. In this respect teachers should be always there with the learner in order to provide a more confidential learning area and process. However few research, data and tools are now available to help teacher to assume this guidance role.

The learning activities in technology-based environments play a fundamental role in determining learning outcomes Contemporary thinking suggests that the activities must be active and engaging (Wild and Quinn, 1997). But the point is that; the activities must provide the purpose and the context for learners to deal with the content and information (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996). Characteristic of these approaches to learning are settings and activities which see learners assuming much of the responsibility for them in terms of what is learned and how it is learned (e.g. Duffy and Cunningham, 1996).

English can be grouped as 4 basic skills which are :
i. reading,
ii. writing,
iii. speaking and
iv. listening.

These skills should be thought by the professional teachers. The activities for them have to be different from each other. Teachers should pay attention to the issue while in teaching process. For instance pen friends or native speakers can be found in order to do speaking and writing exercises. Internet communication tools can be used such as chat, forum, wikis, and discussion boards. It is suggested that doing reading, writing, speaking, and listening exercises are available on the web and it gives students the chance to move everywhere if they have internet access. Here are some activities available on the web, and according to authors there are some useful web sites are given below:
- http://www.livemocha.com/languages/view/1/1
- http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/extras/index.htm
- http://www.webenglishteacher.com/esl.html
- http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/330/grammar/pres 1.htm

i) Writing (grammar) Activities on the Web

As it is shown in the figure 1 learner can have the chance to reach a vast majority of exercises on the web. In this exercise learners are filling the gaps by using the words that has given. If teachers or facilitators use this kind of exercises and they can bring a different point of view to the classroom because it is easy to explore. Learners do not have to use pen or pencils to write or erasers to clean. Assessment is also easy here because online learners are responsible for their own process of learning.

Figure 1. Writing activities on the web

In the Figure 2 sentence building exercise is shown; by typing the appropriate words in the box students can check their answers at the same time. This also gives students to evaluate themselves on their own.

Figure 2. Sentence building exercise on the web

i) Reading Activities on the Web

Reading is an important part of language learning. If students read much they can understand everything and comment on a subject easily. In this exercise students are reading the passage first and then answering the questions. They can also get help by clicking the 'help' button.
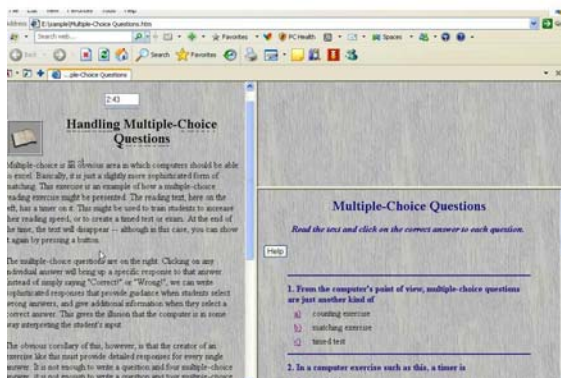

Figure 3. Speaking activities on the web

iii) Speaking Activities on the Web

Most users are familiar with their own electronic mail systems and, in the case of a conference that extends over many sites; there are personnel at each site who can provide training and support for their site's users. Participants are expected to be proactive in sorting and storing the messages themselves. The advantages of computer conferencing include interacting at a distance with other students and the instructor, rather than studying alone. Computer conferencing can be independent of time and independent of distance. Moreover, videoconferencing enables students to speak other peers, mentors; who are native speakers, this gives them the chance of comparing their pronuciation with that of native speakers. Guest "lecturers" can be invited into join the conference, so students can interact directly with experts in their fields (Cotlar and Shimabukuro, 1995). Videoconferencing is also providing a face to face interaction to students.A virtual community can be built that provides support and encouragement and promotes sharing among the participants and can help overcome the isolation of remote areas (Singletary and Anderson 1995; McAuley, 1995).

Figure 4. Speaking activities on the web

iv) Listening Activities on the Web

In this activity, students are listening what the tutor says and then do the exercises. This kind of activities is beneficial for students because they can develop their pronunciation when they hear.

Figure 5. Listening exercise on the web

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Learning through the web is an alternative, even very useful way of English learning. In recent years, students have the chance to learn English on their own by using the web. This opportunity should be taken into account by teachers because new technologies and changing learning styles are forcing teachers to change their teaching styles, as well. The use of internet for learning language and web-based education requires more positive attitudes than found among the sample of students whose attitudes towards language. Learning by using the web was quite positive. Increasing opportunities for students on the web could positively influence students. So, teachers should use more technological tools in their courses than before. Moreover, university students expect to learn or use web technologies in their classrooms and courses. In this study some pieces of guidelines and recommendations are given which can be helpful for students and facilitator.

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