

The Degree of Applying E-Learning in English Departments at Al-Balqa Applied University from Instructors' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at identifying the degree of applying e-learning in Al-Balqa Applied University from instructors' perspectives so the researcher designed a questionnaire of 20 items which is applied on a sample of 48 lecturers. The study showed that the percentage of (64.0%) out of 48 participants apply e-learning in English departments at Al-Balqa Applied University from instructors' perspectives so it is moderate; therefore, there are some negative perspectives towards using e-learning in the EFL environment from the viewpoints of instructors in English departments.

Keywords: E-learning, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Al-Balqa Applied University (AAU)

INTRODUCTION

Because of the advantages of using technology in education, the public and private Jordanian universities adopted the use of computer and Internet in education. In today's changing world, there is a need for employing modern technologies and approaches like electronic learning (E-learning) so Al-Balqa Applied University started applying e-learning at the beginning of 2017.

E-learning is defined by Liaw, Huang, and Chen (2007) as “the use of Internet technologies to deliver a broad array of solutions that enhance knowledge and performance” (p.1067). E-learning is one of the modern methods which contributes in expand educational opportunities (Salmon, 2011) and makes the teaching and learning process more effective. Also, it corresponds to the organizational needs. E-learning provides teachers and learners with useful recourses to obtain information easily and it makes learning interesting because it is suitable for the students' ability. In English teaching and learning, e-learning offers students with appropriate materials to develop English skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) and its components (grammar and vocabulary).

From the researcher's experience, the lecturing method fails in developing English language among learners. He believed that the instructors can engage the learners to become skilled at English language by using e-learning so the research was conducted to explore the degree of applying e-learning in English departments at Al-Balqa Applied University from instructors' perspectives

The problem of the study

Most of the universities in Jordan use traditional ways in teaching, but Al-Balqa Applied University tried to improve their educational system by using e-learning in the class. However, the university still struggles with integrating e-learning into teaching. The researcher believes that the instructors should play a significant role in applying e-learning in teaching so the present study sought to discover if the instructors' practice in using e-learning inside their classes effective.

Objective of the study

This study aims at investigating the degree of applying e-learning in English departments at Al-Balqa Applied University from instructors' perspectives.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it places attention on the instructors at Al-Balqa Applied University to determine if they use e-learning effectively and seriously or not. The study also shows the advantages of using e-learning in English teaching to improve the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) particularly. In addition, to the researchers' knowledge, this is the first study which has been conducted on the degree of applying e-learning in English departments at Al-Balqa Applied University from instructors' perspectives. Finally, the study provides researchers with a supporting study for use in future research.

The limitations of the study

- E-Learning in this paper refers to the use of e-learning tools such as e-learning site (which is designed by Al-Balqa Applied University), e-mail, using mobiles, and Face-book.
- The sample of the study consists of (48) English instructors who selected randomly from 4 colleges at Al-Balqa Applied University.
- The study was applied in the summer semester in the academic year 2017.
- The study is dependent upon the level of understanding, and skill level each instructor has in the use of E-learning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

E-learning based on three learning theories: behaviorism, cognition, and constructivism. Firstly, the behavioral school says that learning is observable behavior caused by external stimuli in environment (Skinner, 1974) so e-learning focuses on concepts related to the principles of behaviorism such as drilling, practice, and external feedback.

In contrast, cognitivism focuses on the process of thinking that occurs in the mind (Atkin, 1993) so it considers learning as an internal process that involves memory, thinking, reflection, abstraction, motivation, and meta-cognitive as mentioned by (Ally, 2004). Based on this theory, e-learning focuses on the individual differences by using a variety of e-learning tools and strategies to encourage students to think, remember and develop their problem solving skills.

Finally, the constructivism school suggests that learning construct personal knowledge from the learning experience itself as stated by (McLeod, 2003). So, learning is active process and the students construct knowledge themselves not from someone else. Thus, by adopting e-learning, students fulfill their needs and interests through using interactive learning activities.

THE RELATED STUDIES

The related studies have been classified into three categories; 1) the first one includes studies about teachers' attitudes towards e-learning, 2) the second one is about students' attitudes towards e-learning and 3) the third one is about the effect of different e-learning tools on English foreign learners' achievements.

Students' attitudes towards e-learning

Ja'ashan (2015) conducted a survey at University of Bisha on a sample of (130) English learners by using a questionnaire to measure the students' attitudes towards blended learning. The result of this study indicates that students' attitudes were positive. Another study was conducted by (Kargiban & Kaffash, 2011) aimed at determining the effectiveness of using E-learning on foreign language students' attitude and he concluded that the students' perceptions were also positive.

E-learning and English foreign learners' achievement

Several studies (Alshehab, 2013, AbuSeileek, 2004, Alzu'bi, 2013a) have been published in international specialized journals and conferences that applied in Jordan in the recent years about the effect of using different e-learning tools on English language skills and its components. The results of the previous studies showed that using e-learning devices had positive effects on reading, writing, and translation ability. Alzu'bi (2012, 2013a,) investigated two studies that supported the positive effectiveness of using e-learning tools on improving English skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). Moreover, he conducted three studies about the effect of using e-learning tools on English language components (vocabularies and grammar) and found out positive influence (Alzu'bi, 2010, 2013a, 2013b). Also, (Alzu'bi, 2015) claimed that e-learning is a good way to evaluate students' achievement and increase learners' motivation.

Teachers' attitudes towards e-learning

Although using e-learning in teaching has positive effectiveness, it faces some obstacles and challenges that relate to the teachers. Hersh, Muflih, and Aldhoon (2010) conducted a study to investigate the obstacles that hinder the application of the e-learning system and they found that teacher-related obstacles ranked first. In addition, (Husamo and Alabdullah, 2011) conducted a study aimed at identifying the e-learning nature at Tishreen university in Syria. After preparing and applying the instrument of the study on a random sample of (113) teachers and (774) students, the study concluded that the instructors were careless while using e-learning. The study showed some negatives of e-learning like decreasing the load of instruction, diseases caused by the long period of time while sitting in front of computer and unavailability of special places for e-learning.

The previous studies formulate an important data base that the researcher obtains benefit from; all of the previous studies approve the positive influence of e-learning on teaching EFL so the researcher is sure that using e-learning in English departments affects positively on learning EFL if the instructors use e-learning inside their classes so he investigated the present study to discover the degree of applying e-learning in Al-Balqa Applied University from instructors' perspectives to be sure if e-learning is used by the instructors or not in order to solve the problems. The present study is different from the previous related studies because it has different purposes, samples and procedures.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is a descriptive that used the survey method to collect information from the participants.

Population and sample

The population consists of English instructors in Departments of English (male– female) at Al-Balqa Applied University in the summer semester in academic year 2016/2017. The researcher selected (48) English instructors at four Departments of English in Ajloun University College, Irbid University College and Queen Alia University College. All four departments are part of the Al-Balqa Applied University system.

Instrument of the study

The questionnaire was designed and used to collect data from (48) instructors. The questionnaire was distributed in the summer semester in the academic year 2017. It consisted of close-ended Likert scale statements. The scoring for the questionnaire was five Likert scale (Very high, High, Moderate, Little- Very little). The purpose of questionnaire was to know the degree of applying e-learning tools such as Al-Balqa e-learning page, Facebook, different websites, YouTube etc., (see Table1) in Al-Balqa Applied University from instructors' perspectives.

Validity and reliability of the instrument

The questionnaire was given to experts from different universities to ensure its validity and they provided written feedback so the researcher can change and modify some items to achieve the purpose of the study.

The reliability of the questionnaire has been determined using Cronbach’s Alpha. The value was 0.85, which indicates a high level of internal consistency for the scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

(Table 1) provides the details regarding the questionnaire items (1-20) about the instructors' perspectives towards applying e-learning tools as follows:

Table 1: The instructors' perspectives towards applying e-learning tools

No	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	%
1	I use Microsoft Word to prepare the academic works	48	4.21	.967	84.2
2	I use e-learning page to prepare home works for my students	48	2.56	1.029	51.2
3	I use my official e-mail to contact with my students	48	2.52	1.072	50.4
4	I use my official e-mail to exchange experience with my colleagues	48	2.48	1.255	49.6
5	I use prepared programming to teach my courses	48	2.46	1.414	49.2
6	I use e-examinations to assess my students	48	2.46	1.288	49.2
7	I apply e-learning web page in the instructional activities	48	2.44	1.253	48.8
8	I use e-libraries to find books and sources related to the courses	48	3.67	1.059	73.3
9	I use official group via Facebook to contact with my students	48	3.65	1.062	72.9
10	use e-learning page to produce instructional tools for my students	48	3.63	1.003	72.5
11	I have a special group via Whats to contact with the staff at my department	48	3.63	1.003	72.5
12	I urge my students to use mobiles to improve English skills	48	3.50	1.072	70.0
13	I use multimedia programs at the classroom	48	3.44	.987	68.7
14	I use the data show or smart-board in the teaching and learning process	48	3.40	.962	67.9
15	I use You Tube videos in my classroom	48	2.98	1.246	59.6
16	I encourage my students to contact with each other by using different e-learning tools	48	2.88	1.248	57.5
17	Iam skillful in dealing with technology	48	2.75	1.263	55.0

18	I use Web browsers to acquire new knowledge about the subject I teach	48	3.83	.781	76.7
19	I get benefits from the topics and researches that are published in the internet in English teaching process	48	3.79	.944	75.8
20	I encourage my students to use the site of Al-Balqa Applied University to know academic and administrative issues	48	3.73	.939	74.6
	Total	48	3.20	.580	64.0

It is observed that (84.2%) out of 48 respondents use Microsoft Word to prepare their academic works highly. And about (76.7%) of students strongly respond that they use Web browsers to acquire new knowledge about the subject they teach. About (75.8 %) respondents answered that they get benefits from the topics and researches that are published in the internet in English. Also, (74.6%) of the respondents said that they encourage their students to use the site of Al-Balqa Applied University to know academic and administrative issues.

However, only (48.8%) of respondents apply e-learning web page in the instructional activities so their responding to this item is very little and (49.2%) of the participant use e-examinations to assess my students and prepared programming to teach my courses. Finally, about half of respondents (49.6%) agreed that they use the official e-mail to exchange experience with my colleagues.

The total percentage (64.0%) indicates that the degree of applying e-learning in English departments at Al-Balqa Applied University from instructors' perspectives is moderate so there are some negative perspectives towards using e-learning in the EFL environment from the viewpoints of instructors at English departments.

Based on the previous percentages, the instructors' responses about applying e-learning are slightly negative. For the researcher knowledge, the instructors may face some obstacles while applying e-learning such as slow internet connectivity, using e-learning needs more time than traditional class, and e-learning instructions are difficult. In addition, there is not enough training on using e-learning tools like using the e-page of e-learning on Al-Balqa Applied University. Also, the equipments are not enough and the load of instructors' hours is too much.

The result of the present study comes in consonant with some previous studies as (Hersh, Muflih, and Aldhoon, 2009 and Husamo and Alabdullah, 2011) that emphasized existence of some obstacles and challenges that relate to the teachers like carelessness, diseases caused by the long period of time while sitting in front of computer and unavailability of special places for e-learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the present study, the researcher three suggestions: in the first hand, although Al-Balqa Applied University urges the instructors to use e-learning, the e-learning is still in its developmental stage. Studies should be conducted in the future to find out the reasons why instructors do not use e-learning tools especially e-learning via web-page in teaching inside English departments and others. On the other hand, more research and development are needed to address tools of e-learning from different aspects; for example, training of both instructors and learners with efficient skills in teaching and learning. Moreover, the researcher recommends another study about the effect of different types of e-learning as modern methods of teaching and learning of EFL in Jordanian Universities on English skills and its components.

CONCLUSION

In this century, it is essential to adopt technology in teaching and learning at our universities in general and in the English departments in particular so the recent trend in teaching EFL is the use of modern e-learning tools to improve English language teaching methods. However, it is noticed that the instructors at English departments in AAU do not use different tools of e-learning in the learning and teaching process so it affects on the level of English students at English departments in Al-Balqa Applied University negatively, so the instructors should change the pedagogical strategies, by using e-learning tools inside the classes.

To conclude the paper, a moderate percentage of (64.0%) indicates that the instructors at AAU apply e-learning tools in teaching EFL at Al-Balqa Applied University from their perspectives.

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