TEACHING ENGLISH ONLINE FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: A CASE OF THE MONGOLIAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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В статье излагаются результаты анализа эффективности применения электронных технологий в процессе онлайн обучения иностранному языку, обсуждаются возможные трудности и предлагаются пути их преодоления.

Ключевые слова: электронное обучение, технологии обучения, онлайн платформы.

The purpose of this study is to reveal some problems facing with students while learning English online and measure students' attitude toward e-learning. The study was conducted for undergraduate students involved in the e-learning process for a semester (16 weeks) at the Mongolian University of Science and Technology. The students participated in the survey completed 3 credit courses of Engineering English offered in the Bachelor's Degree Program of the university. At the end of the semester, we developed a study on the difficulties encountered in learning English online for undergraduate students. The study indicates that there are several problems with online access for students such as living in remote areas with no internet service, difficulties with communicating with teachers and skills with using technology. The study emphasizes that using the internet and new technology educators and learners can achieve their learning objectives. The study summarizes that focusing on the content development of the English course, improving the online platform of the university, and developing students' knowledge of the technology can be the part of our work in the future.

Keywords: e-learning, attitude measurement, technology usage, online platform.

With COVID 19, pandemic, schools and universities in the world have offered e-learning for students. In fact, it was difficult for educators, students and parents, because not everyone has perfect experience with the technology and e-learning. In past years, the rapid revolution of the Internet and wireless communication technology has resulted in the emergence of various interactive multimedia networks, such as mobile learning, mobile voice, and instant messaging. Using the Internet for applying digital teaching materials and achieving the objective of national competitiveness would replace traditional teaching. For this reason, a lot of research on mobile learning is proceeded in order to offer higher transmission performance and universalutilization. Nowadays everyone has smart phones which help to involve in different e-learning process. It means that students can browse the Internet, and can select proper digital teaching materials for the learning. Moreover, they can test their knowledge. Accordingly, practical teaching strategies could be developed by combining with current teaching trend and extracting the advantages of digital learning to achieve the teaching effectiveness (Lai et al. 2012).

Mason (2006) claims that social networking sites have enough capacity for a good "official" education matching the social contexts of learning and promoting critical thinking in learners (Mason, 2006). There are even researchers contending that social networking sites have potential to change educational system radically, motivating students for better learning rather than being passive attendees of a classroom (Ziegler, 2007). Given that the Internet facilitates communication remotely, ensuring transmission of all types of information needed for learning, including systems for testing and evaluation of knowledge gained, is becoming more prominent the concern to integrate e-learning as common learning environment of students. E-learning can be defined from different perspectives. J. Yoon, S. Kwon, & J. E. Shim (2012) stated that digital learning (E-Learning) was first proposed by Jay Cross in 1999. Basically, computers and network technology media were applied to learning situations, including synchronous and asynchronous network learning, to break through the restrictions on time, location, and schedule, and to achieve the learner-centered individualized learning (Kaklamanou et al., 2012). Nichols (2003) defines the concept as ,, the use of various technological tools that are either Web-based, Web-distributed or Web-capable for the purposes of education." As noted, in the centre of Nichols' perspective, lies as a main component of the phenomenon of e-learning, Internet and web technologies, which allow the transfer of information at any time in any location, to as many people as needed. The American Society for Education and Development defines e-learning as "any form of information transmitted, facilitated or provided by

electronic technologies in order explicitly to support the process of learning."
A different approach in terms of participation in the process of e-learning is found in Jackson (quoted in Partridge, 2005) who talks about two secondary concepts: technologically distributed e-learning and e-learning facilitated by technology. The first situation arises in the case of distance education, while the second describes the process of traditional education using various technical means. From the student point of view, e-learning is a form of education which implies involvement, motivation and efficiency in communication. The lack of human interaction strongly influences his performance in education. The student must communicate frequently with his colleagues and teachers so as to be able to accomplish all assignments, he has to find internal resources as stimulus to overpass the difficulties of a socially isolated environment. The impact of e-learning development and its introduction as an educational system can be assessed in the light of students' characteristics. Thus, we speak primarily of a separation of "serious" students from the "passive" ones. The first category are those who will use online resources to develop its knowledge, taking advantage of the benefits of e-learning, while the "passives" will take advantage of the benefits of new educational establishment to obtain diplomas that might help them get a better job. The successful e-learner must have, according to a study conducted at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, qualities such as self-motivation, patience, self-discipline, easiness in using software, good technical skills abilities regarding time management, communication, organizing. Of these the largest share was registered by self-motivation -39% and communications skills -23%. Other studies have found records that experience in computer use is another success factor in adopting e-learning. These factors have a direct impact on students' Students' attitude towards e-learning is influenced by its perceived advantages and disadvantages. The schedule flexibility is, without no doubt, an important advantage, the student having the opportunity to learn no matter his location, no matter the time as long as he has an Internet connection. Reducing costs is another benefit together with time saving, in case of students who are commuting. E-learning is a solution for students hired during their studies, allowing them to adapt their learning schedule to their job program. So, the student has the possibility to choose how he organizes his activities. This way he is encouraged to take full responsibility for his future, being the only one responsible for assessing the knowledge and the abilities required for professional development. Still, there are disadvantages which are connected to technical aspects of the e-learning system, meaning the availability of certain technologies not only for learning institutions, but also for students. Moreover, an important disadvantage concerns students' abilities to use it efficiently the technology. The

basic abilities needed by a student entering an e-learning program refer to use of writing software, internet browsing, and email communication. If these are missing, learning efficiency through e-learning diminishes, the student having to face a stressful feeling, which can turn into frustration and insecurity. These emotions influencing the student's attitude toward e-learning usually appear due to the lack of human interaction with colleagues and especially with teachers who can induce a certain discipline of working for students establishing rules, deadlines, evaluation systems throughout the whole period of learning. That is why students with low motivation, not being constraint by the presence of a teacher, by a strict program as in the traditional system, cannot adapt to e-learning.

As we mentioned earlier in the study, the purpose of this paper is to measure students' attitude towards e-learning and to discover some problems with e-learning. This research was conducted through a questionnaire developed through exploratory research in which the questionnaire was structured in parts having as objectives: analyzing the availability of e-learning platform usage, the content of the English course, and measuring students' attitude towards e-learning.

The study was carried out at MUST (Mongolian University of Science and Technology), lasted for one semester from February to May in 2020 and surveys were administered electronically. The participants were 51 intermediate level students, aged between 18-23 who were taking compulsory English for Engineering from engineering field of different majors like mining and geology, power, civil and architecture of the university.

In this study, to teach English online to students, and to communicate with them daily, researchers used the online platform of MUST and Facebook. The researchers created a closed-group on Facebook besides the official web of e-learning of MUST and posted basic and supplementary activities on daily basis. Both teachers and students used a wall on which they could discuss their opinions and share any educational and interesting photos, videos and links to useful websites. At the end of the semester, the researchers distributed a questionnaire and interviewed students to investigate their attitudes toward the activity.

The data show that online platform of MUST and Facebook were mainly used for e-learning for undergraduate students and they were satisfied with them. In addition, students considered that the English materials provided to students were clear enough with them. According to the study, there were several problems with accessing online class. For example, remote areas with no internet access, studying English online requires much time, difficult to communicate with teachers. Moreover, the results of the study show that in the future we need to focus on the online platform development. The survey indicates that students want videos which can be dedicated to develop their listening, speaking, and

writing skills. Finally, students must learn some skimming and scanning skills to complete the tasks in the given period of time.

The study emphasizes that using the internet and new technology educators and learners can achieve their learning objectives. Based on the results of the study, we can develop online platform and the content of English teaching material in the future. The study summarizes that focusing on the content development of the English course, improving the online platform of the university, and developing students' knowledge of the technology is a part of our work in the future.

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