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## **ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING**

*Анотація.* У статті проаналізована проблема дистанційної освіти. Незважаючи на зростання можливостей дистанційного навчання, а також прагнення використовувати ці можливості, галузь дистанційного навчання залишається недостатньо дослідженою.

*Ключові слова:* дистанційна освіта, електронне навчання, вивчення мови, типи викладання, переваги, недоліки.

*Аннотация.* В статье рассматривается проблема дистанционного образования. Несмотря на растущие возможности дистанционного обучения, а

также стремления пользоваться этими возможностями, область дистанционного обучения остается не достаточно исследованной.

**Ключевые слова:** дистанционное образование, электронное обучение, изучение языка, типы преподавания, преимущества, недостатки.

**Abstract.** *The article faces the problem of distance education. In spite of the growing presence of distance learning opportunities, and the eagerness to participate in these opportunities, the field of distance learning remains little known and little understood.*

**Key words:** *distance education, e-learning, language-learning, types of teaching, advantages, disadvantages.*

It is not a secret that distance education is becoming more and more popular nowadays. Distance education, e-learning, open learning are generally used in combination with other types of teaching, such as face-to-face teaching in a class or mail correspondence. In 2013, more than 6 million students took at least one online course in the world. 60% of four-year private colleges and universities offer online classes as well [1].

However, the problem of distance learning is now one of the most controversial issues in colleges and universities. And this problem should be examined in terms of real facts and results of it. Therefore let's look at the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning.

Actually there are a lot of advantages of distance and open learning. First of all, students can study at their own pace. They can spend time over something that puzzles or intrigues them before they proceed. That's something they cannot do if the teacher controls the pace of students' learning or the pace of a class group.

According to the NIME report in 2006, for that reason, 80.1 percent of the e-learning institutions (including faculties) have adopted e-learning only as a supplement to face-to-face classroom teaching. Only 15.7 percent of them provide the entire coursework through e-learning [1].

Students can arrange their week to suit their work and family commitments. That means they can schedule the studies at times that would be awkward or unsuitable for teachers or their fellows students. Contrariwise they can always delay their studies by a week, month or even more.

By the way, e-learning, with rich flexibility and large capacity for the interaction between students and teachers, has thus gradually taken the place of TV and Radio as a preferred educational media in the Open and Distance-learning in Japan [2].

Once learners have discovered the options that their control over pace of their learning makes possible for them, they should begin to

realize that they can now control the way in which they learn. On the one hand, if you are the kind of person who likes to commerce study from the end, rather than from the beginning, then they may do so. For these students such ‘retrospective chaining’ does prove effective. On the other hand, if they find it more effective to make two swift passes through the materials, rather than one long and thorough progression (or vice versa), then again these options are open to them.

It should be mentioned that the positive sides of the commercialized popularity of foreign language e-learning in Japan are, as Toshiya Kawame suggests, that the process of producing teaching materials has been shared not only by teachers concerned, but also openly by non-specialists, and that students are expected to develop their own individual styles of learning, since e-learning expects users to activate and make best use of it [2].

Nevertheless, the open sharing and tailor-making of the materials do not necessarily lead to the improvement of the quality of learning resources.

As students explore the freedom that distance makes possible, they begin to realize that they control the content and emphasis of what they study, to a lesser if not a greater extent. This one is probably the most important advantage because only the only students decides what he would or would not do [2]. For example, if there is a part of the course that bores them, or which they cannot master, or for which they can see no purpose (for them, at least), or in which they are already competent, then they can skip past it without a second thought — and transfer the time saved to parts of the course that they deem more worthy of their attention. They could not do that in a course where the pace and progression are controlled by the teacher.

It should be mentioned that in distance learning individual learners (students) think deeply because they control the situation. They have no assistance from classmates or teacher. In this case they are forced to use their own mind.

It is not a secret that ISC schools in Great Britain use technology very successfully, but figures from the ISC Annual Census show that IT investment has fallen by 11.2% in real terms since 2007. This fact proves that nowadays students even have to be deep in the subject for the purpose to know enough about it [3].

Also, in a distance learning, it can also be much easier to arrange for learners to draw on resources available in the world outside of the classroom. Moreover, they can use resources according to their convenience.

For example, The Open University provides countless examples of autonomous distance learners who pursue their studies while visiting art galleries, architectural masterpieces, botanical gardens or theatrical performances [4].

*While observing the problem of e-learning we can encounter some disadvantages of it as well. Only 29% of the public says online courses offer an equal value compared with courses taken in a classroom [4]. So, what are the reasons?*

First and foremost disadvantage is, of course, lack of communication. This inevitably suffers when teacher and learners are in different places. We have a reasonable repertoire of equipment that assists us to minimize this disadvantage nowadays. Through video-conferencing, it is possible for groups to see each other, on two or more sites. Through teleconferencing, many isolated students have been able to join in group work and in exchanges with a tutor that prove invaluable to them.

In France, for example, there are schools that did invest in the equipment to stay in touch with their partner schools via video-conference, take part in online competitions. This way, technology was clearly viewed as a component of language-teaching rather than its core [5]. Also, few learners would describe contact at a distance, compared with face-to-face contact, as less than second-best in terms of communication. Actually, it inhabits corporate activity.

Most of e-learning materials in English language education are designed to develop only students' basic grammatical knowledge and elementary communication skills.

In fact, learning at a distance can be very isolated experience. One consequence of that isolation is the absence of social links, whose importance in learning is surely under-estimated in conventional situations.

As far as we know, e-learning for language is not quite the same as e-learning of other subjects. Learning a foreign language includes not only the mastering of grammatical knowledge and comprehension skills, but the development of interactive communication ability. Of course, e-learning can possibly create a virtual reality in which we can develop communication skills.

However, few proper assessments have been yet made in Japan as to the quality of e-learning resources for foreign language studies. According to the report by the National Institution of Multimedia Education, many of those e-learning institutions attempted quality assurance through face-to-face tuition, essay assignment, and computer-based or non-computer-based exams, but they do not

necessarily guarantee the progress of students' studies [5]. The surprising 22.7 percentage of them have not even made quality assessment.

Because everything happens at a distance, it follows that sharing, borrowing, returning, issuing and other such functions involving books, paperwork and assignments, take time. The interruptions to learning which that delay introduces can be frustrating and demotivating. E-learning, for that reason, has not entirely offered a solution to the problems that Japanese universities have faced in foreign language education. It has made them more complex, and even chaotic [5].

When learners are at a distance, teachers cannot do things that they took for granted in the face-to-face situation. For example, it is impossible at a distance for the teacher to keep a casual eye on the learners performance and progress. Distance is furthermore a severe constraint on the development of a relationship, perceived or otherwise, between the teacher and the learner. And a distance is a disincentive to corporate activity, and the learning together which often happens naturally and informally in a class.

An analysis of such a circumstance of e-learning in Japan is made by lecturers at Mukogawa Women's University. They experimented with the e-learning programmes for English language studies, *University Voices* and *Bridge*, which have been developed by Prof. Hiroshi Ono for NIME and widely shared by different universities. Their primary purpose was to examine the most effective support system for e-learning students. The researchers conclude that, even though interactions between students and teachers were conducted in a massive scale with 633 e-mails from students and 704 e-mails from teaching staffs, the e-learning material has not contributed to the improvement of students' English proficiency, especially of their speaking and communication ability [6]. It has become clear that students need more interactive support in terms of the use of e-learning materials, and that more examinations need to be made regarding the quality of the e-learning material itself.

These examples show that successful language-teaching is built on a strategy that aims at creating an interest in a language and culture and then uses technology as a means of allowing pupils to communicate with others, use interactive resources and exercises and be creative in the target language. Just like anywhere else, distance learning has created new methods of language teaching; it has promoted new attitudes to the acquisition of foreign languages; and it also has opened up new possibilities of language education. But

technology cannot replace other means of language-learning and is not a panacea to pupil engagement. It is a tool that comes with challenges and risks, but these are worth taking to create an active and fun learning environment.

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## **СУЧАСНІ ІНФОРМАЦІЙНІ ТЕХНОЛОГІЇ ТА ІННОВАЦІЙНІ МЕТОДИ ВИВЧЕННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ**

*Анотація. У статті розглянуті сучасні інформаційні технології та проаналізовані інноваційні методи навчання англійської мови в контексті модер-*