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				QR – Issue	Q	R – Article
SOI: 1.1/ International S Theoretical & p-ISSN: 2308-4944 (print) Year: 2020 Issue: 04 Published: 30.04.2020	Applied So e-ISSN: 2409-008	urnal cience 35 (online)				

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SPECIFIC FEATURES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION FOR ESP STUDENTS

Abstract: Distance education is a term certainly worth exploring as a mode of education that facilitates and encourages the production of autonomous lifelong learning skills, essential to keep up with rapid changes and growth in today's society. It is very difficult to teach a foreign language in a distance education program, especially in terms of addressing the key difference-lack of direct communication between teachers and learners. This article reflects on the dimension of the instructional materials in a distance learning program used by ESP.

Key words: *distance learning, ICT, information and communication technology in education, teaching materials.*

Language: English

Citation: Suleymanova, G. N. (2020). Specific features of distance education for ESP students. *ISJ Theoretical* & *Applied Science*, 04 (84), 1020-1023.

Soi: <u>http://s-o-i.org/1.1/TAS-04-84-189</u> Doi: crossed <u>https://dx.doi.org/10.15863/TAS.2020.04.84.189</u> Scopus ASCC: 3304.

Introduction

The rapid technological growth has affected all facets of our lives. This has revolutionized the way knowledge is shared, processed and used, as well as the way we know. The amount of information and expertise are growing rapidly, and this demands new instructional approaches that will allow the development of lifelong learning skills for life-long learning [1]. As the idea of life-long learning is gaining popularity, so too is the number of people working in the student community searching for versatile and successful educational opportunities. This led to the diversification of the student in terms of age, education and prior experience, as well as the need for a versatile approach in the interpretation of the curricula that should be meet the constantly changing requirements of students [2]. Standard school programs are inadequate to fulfill contemporary society's demands sufficiently. Teaching materials for ESP distance learning models prioritizing skills acquisition needed in today's society [3].

Discussion

New generations of students are growing up using modern technologies and we need new teaching modalities to be created. Advances in technology and science, especially in the fields of artificial intelligence and psychology, as well as a better understanding of learning strategies, allow the creation of new techniques for adapting the learning process and requirements of learners. Using technologies ensure greater versatility in knowledge and learning organization. Successful incorporation of information and communication technologies into the education system are dynamic mechanism requiring not just the application of technologies, but also other considerations such as appropriate curriculum and pedagogy, ability to use emerging technology, teacher competency and etc.

The definition of distance learning has been studied from different viewpoints, such as preparation of teachers and students to consider this type of education, assessment of digital systems to be used for distance learning, contact between teachers and students, drop out levels in the distance learning program. There has been a trend to suggest that the emphasis of this education program is on technology, but educators with some experience in distance



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education allow that technology is not the most important element and that other considerations, such as student motivation and other pedagogical aspects, knowing the distance education program, and the criteria enforced by this system on those participating in it [4].

Although a general assumption is that distance education is mostly present in the field of information technology, studies [15] show that this system can be efficiently applied to various education fields. Research related to distance education, analyses and considerations regarding to the foreign language teaching and learning are marginal. The main reason for that is not only the complexity of integrating all language skills in a virtual environment, but teachers' widespread skepticism about whether students can develop linguistic competences in the distance education system. Such doubts are mainly related to the lack of direct, face-to-face contact between teachers and students, and the idea that technology can be successfully used in the teaching material design and delivery, but that it can not influence the results students need to achieve. However, the increasingly of intensive integration information and communication technology in education has had a major impact on the approaches to learning and teaching foreign languages, as well as the teachers' motivation to define new models and strategies for teaching. The number of higher education institutions choosing the approach of distance teaching of foreign languages and the use of computers for interaction, cooperation and access to information has been on the rise. Modern technology has brought changes in the form and design of teaching materials, as well as the way student access and use these materials.

In order to ensure that the advantages of information and communication technology are most efficiently used in the process of learning foreign languages, teachers must be aware that their role has changed in comparison to the traditional system. They now lead students through the process of learning by planning, organizing, interacting with students, providing support in the learning process and defining teaching strategies to ensure the optimal use of advantages of distance education. Teachers in distance education are facing the challenge of evaluating and defining which teaching materials are adequate for this system, making necessary modifications in materials, and structuring teacher-to student and student-to-student interaction. Distance education provides ways to overcome some of the limitations typical for in-class environment, such as a large number of students, different levels of language proficiency, lack of time for direct contact and providing personalized information to all students. The distance education system can be used by a high number of students at the same time. This system enables various types of flexibility in the learning process. Students work at their own pace and can have

access to multimodal documents (text, visual elements, video, audio) [16]. Finally, distance learning system enables personalized approach to learning, as well as activities for different learning styles and levels of language proficiency, by offering teaching materials in different forms.

The integration information of and communication technology in the process of learning foreign languages is not related to only one specific learning theory. Each theory offers a different insight into a complex process of learning a foreign language. According to many theories about a foreign language acquisition, the main elements required in the process of acquiring a foreign language are understandable to input information adequate for a specific level of knowledge, two-way communication interaction [14], and opportunities for production to output information. Output information refers to language production, testing of rules and developing of communication skills. In order to produce output information, students must have opportunities to interact in a language being acquired, so that they could come to conclusions about meaning, get feedback information, and recognize a need to make modifications in a language, with a goal of achieving successful communication. Considering the aforementioned assumptions, two most important aspects in distance education are teaching materials and interaction among participants in this system.

Results

The development of effective online teaching resources involves a range of learning strategies, ensuring that chosen approaches have a positive effect on student involvement, respecting individual preferences, encouraging interaction, providing constructive feedback, promoting collaborative learning and giving support during the learning process. Teaching materials are an essential element in the teaching process [11]. The starting point in the process of designing electronic teaching materials and environment for distance learning should be pedagogical principles that define the choice of technological options [12]. Distance education should not limit teachers in the process of choosing teaching strategies, but, on the contrary, should open new options for enhancing the process of education [13]. Teaching tools used in distance learning must promote and facilitate independent study and, at the same time, offer guidance in various stages of study [5]. Students vary in their abilities to learn individually, based on their temperament, level of motivation and prior involvement in the learning process [6, p. 51]. Electronic training tools will also include activities for different styles of instruction, meaning students could pick activities that match their preferred style. Scholars believe students with patterns of conduct have varying different expectations for support. Materials may be done in a



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variety of thematic modules in order to get not only diversity, but also versatility, allowing direction [7, p. 77].

Teaching resources for English language courses follow the same pattern, as this is expected to help students develop a common learning environment. The unit consists of the following elements: reading text, grammar section, listening section, and activities (written and spoken). Students can also take part in events coordinated on the website and related to the nature of the classes. This dimension is very critical as it allows students to socialize and engage in written and spoken manner, to build a sense of belonging to the society and to increase the motivation of students. In order to ensure student engagement in platform discussions websites should work clear. Online courses include listening, hearing, communicating and writing, as well as grammar and vocabulary. This lessons allow contact between teachers and students. It allows students the ability to ask questions, get the appropriate clarifications, take more information and make recommendations.

When it comes to writing skills, one of the benefits of the online world is the likelihood of storing and exchanging written texts in various stages of writing, which has a positive influence on the motivation of students. Distance education offers more options for the completion of listening tasks compared to in-class environment. Listening tasks in a distance education system can include not only audio and video content, but also different hypertextual elements (e.g. transcripts or additional information that can be shown on screen during listening), electronic dictionaries that can be easily accessed, etc. In comparison to in-class environment, in distance education students are much more actively engaged in listening tasks. One of the significant advantages of distance education for the development of a listening skill is that resources and content can be accessed as many times as students consider.

Participation of online courses have a positive effect on the lab. In addition, the teaching materials are used in distance learning must provide clear and specific instructions and guidelines for work. It is very difficult to prepare and design instructional resources that would provide sample instructions and input details and that students will use individually. Many items that are normal and "ordinary" in the in-class teaching cycle must be treated very carefully [8]:

• A great deal of instructional content is "in the mind of a instructor" and not on paper

• the role of an instructor as a motivator can often be overlooked in the context of modifying educational resources for use in a distance learning environment

• the opportunity to offer input as a solution to possible issues and concerns from students.

• a great deal of teaching content is very often "in teacher's head" and not on a paper

Use of computers, Internet, television, radio, projectors and mobile phones, e-mail, online audio and video conferencing as well as new applications has made the *teaching learning* process and training attractive and convenient. It is also helpful in saving time, energy and money [10]. The Internet provides a wide variety of material which can be used for teaching and learning a foreign language, but which requires careful filtering and potential changes in order to facilitate the correct and efficient use of these material in the distance learning program. Furthermore, teachers of a foreign language in a distance learning program, particularly those who teach a language for a particular professional. With respect to the development of online resources for teaching a foreign language in a distance learning program, the following factors should be considered: basic characteristics of the distance learning method, guidelines for teaching and studying a foreign language, importance of content, needs of learners and their studying types. Such elements describe a variety of strategies to be implemented in the process of developing teaching materials. Taken approaches will enable efficient processing of information, promote effective learning and engagement, and inspire students. Materials need to be organized and presented in such a way that they can be adapted to different needs and requirements, as well as to language proficiency levels. Electronic materials for teaching a foreign language in a distance learning system can be structured by skills, with sections for reading, writing, listening and speaking.

With respect to the development of reading skills, online teaching resources allow students to concentrate on various tasks of text, recognize specific elements and use additional associated assignments and resources. Teaching materials for distance learning ESP together with graphical, audio and video resources that enable students to activate previously learned skills and apply a technique of presumption. What may be benefit, particularly for beginner-level students, is the combination of simultaneous listening and reading and the use of digital devices for repetitive listening, text marking or translation.

The biggest benefit of the distance learning program with respect to the improvement of speech skills is the ability to produce a recording that can be listened to, evaluated and re-recorded before a suitable standard is reached. In this way, students can admit the details and identify acceptable and relevant language types and components. Many benefits of distance learning in terms of speaking skills development include: the provision of tools for the development of comprehension and speech output, processing time, and the potential for all students to take part in conversational activities that are not the case in an in-class setting where more experienced and knowledgeable individuals are influential in this sense.



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Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that the majority of students had a favorable opinion on the substance, nature and arrangement of teaching materials for English language courses. It is important to remember that the disparity in answers to questions about the consistency of teaching materials, based on the status of the course of study, was not statistically relevant. This means that both distance learning and in-class students analyzed teaching materials in a

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in a similar way to the issue of the adequacy of teaching materials. A vast majority said that they did not require any external tools other than instructional materials to study for the test. With relation to the motivational aspect, there is a certain disparity between distance learning and in-class students, which indicates that in-class students are more inspired to study English. However, this disparity is not statistically important.

similar way. The two groups of students both replied

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