

Implementation of electronic platforms in the process of teaching English as a foreign language

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Abstract. This research assesses the results of electronic platforms implementation in the process of teaching English at the University and effectiveness of this technology in facilitating English language learning. The paper reports the outcomes of the research targeted to evaluate the enforcement of the electronic platform Rosetta Stone (RS) and its role in terms of academic achievement. For collecting data, we used combined procedures including quantitative as well as qualitative. The quantitative method incorporated students' responses to statements by means of a paper-based questionnaire. The qualitative element comprised interviews, which the researchers had with their students. Students shared their points of view about their work with RS. Results suggest that the attitude of students towards application of e-learning platform can be taken into consideration as an important component for effective enhancement of the academic program. Special attention is given to personal learning environment (PLE). PLE is considered to be of great importance for developing teaching focused on individual learners. The current study proves integration of electronic platforms with language material can support students in language learning. It gives learners good chances to choose educational content taking into consideration their professional development and the level of foreign language skills and abilities.

Keywords: personal learning environment, e-learning, motivation, modern technologies, autonomous study, educational platforms.

1 Introduction

1.1 Rosetta Stone (RS) in E-learning

Electronic gadgets and tools play a great role in all aspects of life. The use of electronic platforms in education leads to more student-centered learning settings. Technologies should be deployed as the means to facilitate and support learning and instructional goals. Digital technologies provide better ways of curriculum delivery, new means of communication and interaction, good chances for having feedback [1]. Smart devices and the latest technologies

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are widely used in E-learning [2, 3]. Technologies are widely used to support learners to study more effectively [4]. The process of application of the latest technologies in the process of education may be called technology-supported learning (TSL) which provides flexibility [5]. The latest technologies can be used in TSL as media for accessing learning content [6]. Consequently, TSL provides good chances for implementation platforms such as Rosetta Stone (RS) used in e-learning. In this paper, the results regarding the use of the electronic platform in teaching English at the Financial University are provided. The objectives are to study the effective use of e-learning for education; students' autonomous work; learning motivation and learning environment. RS was implemented for teaching and learning foreign languages at the Financial University for students' autonomous work more than five years ago. The teacher's main tasks are to help students in the selection of content for autonomous study, to integrate personal learning environment and monitor technology-enhanced learning. The use of RS develops not only students' communicative skills, but also their abilities for autonomous work, self-control and proper time management. RS is supposed to increase motivation and improve the effectiveness of education.

1.2 Literature review

The review of the literature demonstrates interest among scholars and educators for the latest educational electronic technologies [7–9]. Technology in teaching English has been used for about sixty years. At the end of the last century the term Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was used for the first time [10]. E-learning was introduced in teaching foreign languages about thirty years ago. Implementation of new gadgets and tools has changed the teaching process. It means that students' needs and interests are taken into consideration and the teacher has become a tutor or a guide who is on the side ready to help [11]. Nowadays there is a tendency that there are fewer hours for language study in the classroom and there are more hours for autonomous work. In connection with the ongoing changes, e-learning is in demand [12]. According to researchers, using electronic technologies in language teaching can be effective if students have positive attitudes to technology integration and learners' autonomy of study and motivation are improved [13]. There are studies devoted to the latest technologies and their application in language instruction [14, 15]. However, studies regarding personal learning environment (PLE) and integration of electronic platforms in educational process are few. The target of a PLE is formation of such a system that reacts to learners' needs. PLE may be used for engaging students in the process of language study, for increasing their motivation and responsibility and providing autonomy. RS has been used for implementation of PLE for students' autonomous work at the Financial University for more than five years. RS is aimed at increasing the motivation and improving the effectiveness of learning.

2 Methods

The following methods were applied in this research: assessment of personalized learning integration in the process of language study, survey data analysis, evaluation of educational outcomes, systematization and categorization of facts and concepts. There were two stages of the research. First, we defined the goal, developed a hypothesis, formulated research objectives, defined methods of the study. Integration of e-learning platform was theoretically justified. Then we analyzed data of the survey, systematized the results and drew the conclusions. Quantitative and qualitative techniques were applied in data collection. Students gave answers to the statements in the questionnaire. The second part included teacher-student interviews. Students expressed their points of view about results of their work with RS. The quantitative analysis was conducted with 85 students. In the survey Likert scale was used.

Students were asked to evaluate a statement by giving it a quantitative value. Five ordered response levels have been used for the students' responses. After the questionnaires had been completed the responses were summed to create a score for a group of items.

3 Results and discussion

The study had such objectives: to investigate if students need help of their tutor in creating personal learning environment; to find out if students should be motivated; to find out students' opinion if they can control autonomous work without tutor's help. The hypothesis was as follows:

- there is no need for a tutor to help students to integrate language material for autonomous study as they have some experience of using the e-platform;
- students need to be motivated to work at regularly;
- language learners' autonomous work should be controlled by tutor.

Students expressed their opinions concerning such statements:

I can choose language material without my tutor's help; I have problems with time management, therefore it will be helpful for me to get emails reminding of deadlines; I can control my progress in autonomous work myself. Students could use a Likert scale for evaluating their points of view. On this basis, the following results were obtained. Answering the first question the main part of students (44.70%) answered positively. Students are sure that they can select language material and integrate it on the platform (fully agree 11.76% and just agree 32.94%). The majority of respondents, namely, 48.23% neither agree, nor disagree, 2.36% absolutely disagree. As a result, 7.07% of the respondents prefer to have tutor's support in integrating RS resources in PLE. As for the second issue, about motivation, the answers were various. The statement was like this: I am able to motivate myself for individual work on RS. Most students' responses were neutral- 37.70%, full agreement - 11.80% and simple agreement -20.0 % of respondents. As the survey reveals, only some students are able for self - motivation, namely, 24.70% do not agree with the statement and 5.80% expressed absolute non agreement (30.60 % all in all). As a result, motivated students who can study without reminders (31.8%) are less numerous compared with the students who take a neutral position on this issue (37.70%) and their total number is 69.50%. Nearly one third of the respondents needs motivation. Finally, respondents had to state whether they can monitor results of their individual work using RS. The greatest part of the students, namely, 48.20% of students, are neutral, 11.80% - absolutely agree and 32.90%- agree. A limited number of students (4.70%) do not agree. They believe they cannot monitor their work on their own. Results show that 2.40% of the total number of students absolutely do not agree with the last statement. 7.10% of students are ready for tutor's support in monitoring the process of individual work and its results.

Quantitative study presents the general findings that focus on students' responses during interviews. Most of the students expressed the positive feedback on the effectiveness of RS – 87,64% of respondents (37,56-strongly agree, 50,08-agree). Only few students (5,06%) responded neutrally and 7,30%-did not agree. They did not have clear ideas how RS could help them learn better. The results show that students perceive RS as an effective tool for acquiring language skills.

4 Conclusion

This study investigated students' views on effectiveness of RS platform. The hypothesis of the research that students do not need tutor's support for integrating study resources in personal learning environment has not been completely proved. The tutor's support is

necessary for some students. Most students are motivated to do autonomous work using RS. Nevertheless, about 30% of the students prefer to be reminded and tutors have to motivate, control and help them to integrate study resources. For designing PLE teachers are required to understand learners' needs, both professional and educational. Further research is needed to study how RS tools help learners to become more autonomous and allow them to monitor their learning.

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