

The Effectiveness of E-Learning in Foreign Language Acquisition: A Review Paper

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of e-learning in the acquisition of English as a foreign language, utilizing data from 28 research documents published between 2004 and 2024. E-learning has become increasingly popular due to its flexibility and accessibility. The study highlights the historical evolution of e-learning, particularly in the context of foreign language learning, and examines how digital tools have transformed language pedagogy from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach. The analysis revealed that 75% of the primary research papers reviewed indicated that e-learning is effective in enhancing foreign language acquisition, while 25% reported no significant impact. Despite the overall positive findings, the study acknowledges the challenges posed by the digital divide, which continues to hinder the widespread adoption of e-learning in language education. The study concludes that while e-learning is generally effective, there still exist barriers that need to be addressed to maximize its potential in foreign language teaching.

Keywords: e-learning, English, internet, foreign language.

Introduction

E-learning, or electronic learning, refers to the application of digital technology to facilitate learning and teaching outside of traditional classroom settings. It encompasses a wide range of online educational activities, including Online Courses, Webinars and Virtual Classrooms, Interactive Learning, Learning Management Systems (LMS), Mobile Learning, and Blended Learning. E-learning is flexible, allowing learners to access educational content at their own pace and on their schedule. It shows an increasing trend and popularity due to its accessibility and ability to reach a wide audience, especially with the rise of the internet and mobile technology.

The concept of e-learning, the delivery of educational content and instruction through electronic technologies, can be traced back to the early 20th century when innovative educators and technologists began exploring ways to leverage emerging technologies to enhance and expand the reach of learning (Sofi-Karim et al., 2022). However, the modern e-learning landscape as we know it today truly began to take shape in the latter half of the 20th century, spurred by the rapid advancements in computer and internet technologies. (Machado & Demîray, 2012)

The usage of technology in language learning has been a topic of growing interest and significance in recent decades, as the rapid advancements in digital tools and platforms have revolutionized how individuals can acquire and practice foreign languages. The origins of this phenomenon, commonly referred to as e-learning or technology-assisted foreign language learning, can be traced back to the late 20th century.

One of the earliest instances of technology being leveraged for language learning dates back to the 1960s, when computer-assisted language learning began to emerge as a field of study and practice (Melkonyan & Matevosyan, 2020). However, it was not until the mid-1990s that the term "e-learning" gained widespread usage, as the internet and associated technologies began to enable new modes of distance and asynchronous language instruction (Machado & Demîray, 2012)

The integration of technology into the education sector has revolutionized the way individuals acquire knowledge, and this is particularly evident in foreign language learning. The introduction of e-learning, which encompasses a wide range of digital tools and platforms, has significantly impacted the way foreign languages are taught and learned.

The advantage of e-learning in the context of foreign language acquisition is its ability to provide learners with a more personalized and interactive learning experience (Boyanova et al., 2018). Technology-assisted foreign language learning allows for the utilization of multimedia resources, such as videos, audio recordings, and interactive exercises, which cater to diverse learning styles and preferences. Moreover, the integration of social media and conferencing applications in e-learning can facilitate communication and collaboration between learners, fostering a more engaging and immersive language-learning environment (Paliath & Evangeline, 2022; Kalugina & Tarasevich, 2018).

Furthermore, e-learning has the potential to foster learner autonomy, a crucial aspect of successful language acquisition. With the abundance of online resources and self-directed learning opportunities, learners can lead their own learning, exploring topics and concepts at their own pace and in their preferred manner. This shift from a teacher-centered approach to a more student-centered approach encourages learners to take an active role in their language development, ultimately leading to improved competencies and achievement levels (Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2023). The present study focuses on the evidence of primary studies conducted by different scholars in different places of the world.

Objective

To investigate whether e-learning is effective or not in foreign language acquisition.

Material and Method

The present study collected 28 research documents on e-learning in English as a foreign language teaching from 2004 to 2024. The documents were collected from the online repository. The documents were systematically reviewed and concluded with descriptive statistical analysis.

The implementation of digital technologies and the Internet in online English classrooms in higher education has shown a positive impact on language learners. These technologies provide foreign language learners with opportunities for independent learning outside the classroom, through an abundance of programs, websites, videos, online lectures, and e-books (Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2023). Additionally, the application of technology in language learning has been shown to create a shift in language pedagogy, moving from a teacher-centered approach to a more student-centered one. (Aziz et al., 2020)

Using technology in foreign language learning is not without its challenges, however. While the advantages of e-learning and the use of social media in English language teaching are evident, however, numerous limitations and potential drawbacks must also be considered. Nonetheless, as the digital age continues to evolve, it is crucial for educators to embrace the opportunities presented by technology-assisted foreign language learning and to continuously innovate and adapt their teaching practices to meet the needs of modern language learners (Melkonyan & Matevosyan, 2020; Paliath & Evangeline, 2022).

A total number of N=28 primary research papers were examined. Out of these 21 papers mentioned the effectiveness of e-learning on foreign language teaching and seven papers mentioned not effective. It is shown as a pie-chart below, in Figure 1.

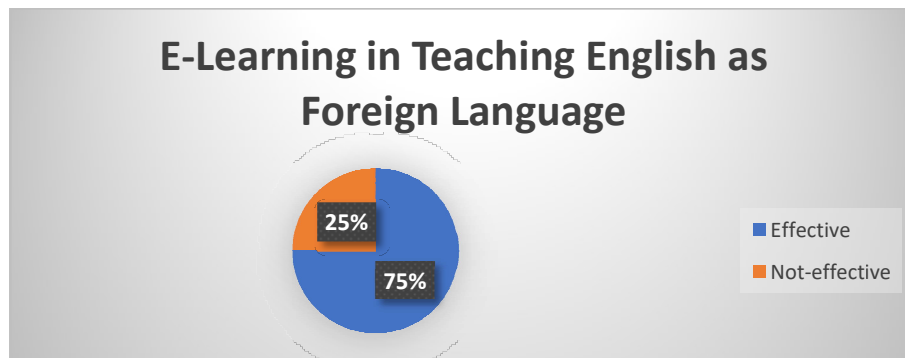


Figure 1. E-Learning on Teaching English as a Foreign Language Based on 29 Primary Research Papers

Findings

E-learning becomes effective in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. A systematic analysis of 28 primary research papers indicated that 75% of the primary research has shown effectiveness and the remaining 25% found not effective of e-learning.

Discussion

E-learning has strengths and weaknesses. The following key points highlight the strengths and weaknesses of e-learning.

Strengths of E-learning in Foreign Language Teaching:

Personalized and Interactive Learning: E-learning offers a more customized experience by using multimedia tools like videos, audio, and interactive exercises, which cater to different learning styles (Boyanova et al., 2018).

Enhanced Communication and Collaboration: Social media and conferencing apps facilitate communication and collaboration between learners, fostering engagement and immersion (Paliath& Evangeline, 2022).

Learner Autonomy: learners can explore their own learning, exploring topics at their own learning pace, which promotes student-centered learning and increases competency (Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2023).

Abundance of Resources: e-learning provides learners with vast independent learning opportunities through websites, programs, online lectures, videos, and e-books (Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2023).

Shift in Pedagogy: Technology encourages a move from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach, enhancing learners' engagement and active participation (Aziz et al., 2020).

Weaknesses of E-learning in Foreign Language Teaching:

Challenges in Integration: Despite its advantages, incorporating technology in foreign language teaching has its limitations and challenges that need addressing (Melkonyan & Matevosyan, 2020).

Potential Drawbacks: Some learners may face difficulties adapting to self-directed learning or struggle with the lack of direct teacher interaction, which may affect negatively in their learning progress.

Conclusion

The present reviewing paper has concluded that e-learning is effective based on the findings from 28 primary research papers. Despite its effectiveness, there still exists of digital divide that hampers e-learning in teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

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