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Can E-mails as Reminder Enhance English Learning on the English Learning System?

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Abstract: In recent years, more and more online English learning sites have emerged. However, most language learners may be constantly busy or may lack external stimulation and reminders so that the learners in a lower on-line learning initiative cannot maintain a fixed long learning, and then affects their learning outcomes. This research, therefore, developed an English learning system with assistance of email to maintain learning activity. This system applied to college students and office workers, conducting a one-month experiment. The results revealed that the students' learning achievement with assistance of e-mail was significantly higher than those without it.

Keywords: Email, computer-assisted language learning, learning system

Introduction

In recent years, information technology has become a major turning point of English teaching (Cavus & Ibrahim, 2009). Currently, the asynchronous English teaching websites offers students/learners a diverse learning platform. However, the materials and courses offered by websites lack of supervision of teachers or other additional external reminders mechanism for long-term motivation. Therefore, learning English site need to take how to stimulate the motivation and attitudes of students into consideration to maintain users' long-term learning (Furner & Daigle, 2004).

In such an information age, more and more computer mediated communication (CMC) applies in education. More and more research focus how to integrate emails into the teaching activities (Hertel, 2003; Thornton & Houser , 2005; Yang & Chen, 2007). That's to say, if e-mail can be integrated effectively at the appropriate time for learners to learn in real time, and if e-mail can be used to remind the learner through the timely on-line access to learning system to make learning sustainable, such an email assisted English learning system will get learners motivated. This is also the motive of this research.

The aim of this research is to develop an online English learning system, and build a media of learning like an alarm clock to make e-mails become the timely provision of materials to remind learners of learning. To understand the application of such learning objects, in this study two groups including college students and office workers are selected to become this experiment subjects, discuss the discrepancy and effectiveness of language learning with the assisted reminders of email.

1. Related research about E-mail assisted language learning

With the advent of information technology and network, computer-assisted language learning system grows rapidly in recent years (Muir-Herzig, 2004). More and more studies declare that using e-mail an assist language learning (Hertel, 2003; Rau, Gao & Wu, 2008). Yang and Chen (2007) study shows that the experimental results of using e-mails to contact with pen pals as writing courses show that e-mail truly improve learners' motivation and effect of learning, Thornton and Houser (2005) e-mail students vocabularies and other materials to the phone for their learning English, and the results of it show that a better learning results in the teaching materials via e-mail sent to users than photocopying a piece of paper or on the web.
This study focused on the e-mail functions for sending messages, materials and test questions, providing users with online instant reply function, and reminding learners of using English on-line learning system.

2. Research Methods

The purpose of this study is to develop e-mail supporting the online English learning system, and conduct experiments and related assessment and analysis. The following is a brief account of these elements.

2.1 Experimental design

This experiment is designed to divide learners into two groups, including the experimental and control groups. The experimental group adopts e-mail to assist online English learning system. The control group uses the same online English learning system as the experimental group, but doesn't use e-mail to assist their learning. The experiment lasts for one month and imposes on pre-test questionnaire in English achievement tests before the experiment and post-test questionnaire in English achievement test after the experiment in order to understand the effect and differences of learning.

2.2 Subjects

The experimental subjects were office workers and college students, and these two groups were divided again into the control and experimental group, giving a total of four groups, each group in each of 30, total number of 120.

2.3 Experimental procedure

This experiment mainly explore the discrepancies of effect of learning between using the English learning system with the assistance of email system and using the English learning system alone, and learn further about the application of this learning object. Experimental procedure is described as below. First, the subjects in the experiment group conducted the pre-test questionnaire of the test of English Achievement Test which is the related learning materials in the English learning system the previous week before the experiment. Next, start the experiment after the pre-test. In the experimental group, the system pre-located to send materials by mail at least one time a day, and the times of sending emails a day to the

user can be adjusted at this system and decided by the users. Thirdly, compare the learning effectiveness of subjects at the end of the experiment. Conduct the post-test questionnaire of the test of English Achievement Test after one month of the experiment in order to compare the effectiveness and discrepancies of the learners' English learning achievements before and after the experiment according to test scores.

2.4 Research tools

2.4.1 Use Email to strengthen English learning system

Users must first register before using the system and select the desired time, frequency and the difficulty and quantity of sending learning materials in the system. According to the information filled by learners, the above system send learning materials, test questions by e-mail at a fixed time to inform the learners to get on the system. After receiving the notification, the learners/users either select the link in the message/email to this learning system for testing and learning or answer online directly.

2.4.2 Analysis tool and the results of analysis

In this study, do the pre-test and post-test analysis of the English achievement test, and the related materials are out of the English learning system. Assessment of some experimental results to the experimental treatment (control group, experimental group) as independent variables, the pre-test scores before the English achievement for the questionnaire were variable, the post-test scores as the dependent variable, and do ANCOVA analysis to explore the learning model with the assistance of electronic e-mail for students and office workers, learn the impact and effectiveness of learning with the assistance of email.

3. Results

The one-way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to test the difference among the achievements of the experiment and the control group. The pretest scores were used as the covariate in the analysis.

Tables 1 and 2 present the results of the statistical analyses of the study. The descriptive statistics for the ANCOVA analysis are depicted in Table 1, whereas Table 2 presents a summary result of the ANCOVA analysis on the overall post achievement test. For both the college students and the office workers, the ANCOVA results (college students: F=506.25*; office workers: F=628.10*) and the adjusted means in the experimental group (college students: M=35.77; office workers: M=36.50) are significantly higher than those in the control group (college students: M=21.47; office workers: M=22.11) indicate that the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group on the overall achievement test.

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics of the achievement test scores*

Subjects	Groups	N	Pretest		Posttest		Adjusted Means
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
College students	Control	30	20.67	2.44	21.57	2.57	21.47
	Experimental	30	20.40	2.40	35.67	3.43	35.77
Office workers	Control	30	21.70	1.95	21.90	1.88	22.11
	Experimental	30	22.37	2.82	36.70	3.23	36.50
College students	Experimental	30	20.40	2.40	35.67	3.43	36.23
Office workers	Experimental	30	22.37	2.82	36.70	3.23	36.10

Table 2. *Summary results of the ANCOVA analysis on the overall achievement test score*

Subjects	Groups	Source	SS	df	Mean Square	F	p
College students	Experimental & Control	Between Groups	3057.00	1	3057.00	506.25	.00*
		Error	344.19	57	6.04		
Office workers	Experimental & Control	Between Groups	3046.96	1	3046.96	628.10	.00*
		Error	276.51	57	4.85		
College students & Office workers	Experimental	Between Groups	.33	1	.33	.04	.85
		Error	496.73	57	8.71		

*$p < .05$

And the results can be seen the learning English achievement test scores of college students and office workers in the experimental group are not significantly different (F=.04). That is, there is no significant difference between office workers and college students in experimental group with the complement of assisted learning system, using e-mail, after learning.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study investigated the impact of learning outcome with the supporting system of the e-mail online English learning to support students and office workers. The experimental results and learning outcomes of the college students and office workers using e-mail assisted learning system are better than those simply using the online English learning system and there is no more bias towards the effectiveness of the learning with e-mail assisted learning system of learning English for college students and office workers.

In this study, the experiment lasted one month, and in the future it may develop more long-term experiments to explore the learning effects of the long-term users and users' learning behavior. In addition, the subjects of this study were office workers and students, and in the future we may take more different ethnic groups as the subjects in the experiments and compare their discrepancies more among them.

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