HOW TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH ONLINE AT THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

This study examined the state of online English teaching and learning in order to suggest workable methods to enhance the effectiveness of such instruction for students at Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration (TUEBA). The respondents consist of 10 English lecturers at the university and 300 second-year students at TUEBA. The research was designed based on quasi-experimental method. Students were divided into two groups, experimental group and control group (150 students in each group). The data collection instruments included lecturers' questionnaire, students' questionnaire, pretest, and posttest. The findings showed that using online teaching tools properly could enhance the effectiveness of teaching and English online.

Keywords: teaching English online, learning English online, effectiveness

1. Introduction

English has long been considered an international language, acting as a bridge between individuals and organizations around the world. English is also a useful tool for finding documents and exchanging information. Along with accelerating the process of globalization, modernizing the role of English in our country is becoming more and more important.

As a prestigious higher education institution, Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration is always ahead of trends, in order to provide quality human resources for society. contribute to the economic development of the country. Accordingly, the quality of training is always considered a top priority. The school always has high requirements for standardization and updating of training programs, contents, and methods. However, the process of teaching and learning in general and the process of teaching and learning English in particular also face many obstacles in the context of the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic and extremely complicated developments. To ensure the safety of lecturers and students, the school has promptly switched from face-to-face teaching and learning to online teaching and learning. However, because online teaching and learning are still quite new, the teaching and learning process also encounters some difficulties and limitations, compared to face-to-face teaching. Specifically, the interaction between lecturers and students is somewhat limited, discussions, group work, and other learning activities also face many barriers when implemented.

From that fact, the research team carried out this research to improve the effectiveness of online English teaching for students at TUEBA.

2. Theoretical background

To ensure the quality of online teaching, the online learning environment must be designed before teachers embark on the delivery of the online course. Wu & Hiltz (2004) asserted in their study on student learning from an asynchronous online discussion that instructors play an important role in promoting effective online discussion. As a result, teachers need more online instruction, more structured discussion topics, and more time and dedication for teachers.

The online learning environment also includes the use of pedagogical technology (Ascough, 2002), the integration of instructional design elements (Zheng & Smaldino, 2003), various kinds of media (Deubel, 2003),

and diverse learning methods including learning, critical thinking, cooperative learning, and learning problem-based practice (Ascough, 2002).

Okada and Sheehy (2020) have studied the factors affecting the learning motivation and receptive capacity of learners in the online learning process, thereby proposing measures to promote learning motivation. learners and improve the quality of learning.

Mukhtar et. al (2020) conducted a survey and pointed out that the positive point of online learning is that online learning has encouraged student-centeredness. The limitation pointed out by only lecturers is that they can only teach and evaluate the knowledge part. Due to the lack of immediate feedback, teachers cannot assess students' understanding while teaching online.

3. Research Methodology

The study was designed under quasi-experimental method. The respondents were 10 English lecturers and 300 second-year students at TUEBA. The students were divided equally into two groups, experimental and control group.

Data collection instruments include lecturers' questionnaire, students' questionnaire, pre-test, and post-test. The data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively and descriptively presented.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Findings from the questionnaires

4.1.1. Student's view on the current status of teaching and learning English online at TUEBA

Although the majority of students rated themselves good (27%) and very good (33%) at using online learning applications, more than half of the students surveyed admitted that they had difficulty studying online.

The biggest difficulty students face is staying focused while studying online. Specifically, only 14.3% said that they did not face difficulties in studying, while the number of students who had difficulty concentrating when studying online accounted for 60.3%. Second is the difficulty in managing study time. Specifically, nearly 50% of the surveyed students face this difficulty, and only 15% do not have problems managing their time studying online. Students also had difficulties in understanding online learning tools and technologies (43.3%).

Students also recognized the importance of three elements in an online teaching lesson. The level of visualization of the lecture is considered the most essential factor, rated as necessary by 47% of students and very necessary by another 27% of students. In second place are interactive group discussion activities, gaming is rated by 62% as necessary and very necessary. 47.3% of students consider diverse and interactive exercises to be necessary or very necessary to create an effective online English lesson.

4.1.2. Lecturers' view on the current status of teaching and learning English online at TUEBA

25% of lecturers have difficulty encouraging learners to interact with lectures, organize and manage online classes, correct assignments, and provide timely feedback to students. Another 25% of lecturers rated this task as very difficult for them. 50% of the surveyed lecturers admitted that the design of appropriate online lecture content for different skills (Listening - Speaking - Reading - Writing...) for learners is difficult.

One more difficulty originated from the students' attitude and autonomy when studying online. In general, lecturers assessed that students were not as active when participating in online learning as they expected. Accordingly, 75% of lecturers said that students were not active in interacting as well as participating in group discussions. Besides the low level of positivity, students are also not highly appreciated for their self-discipline in self-studying and performing assigned tasks. Collected data showed that 37.5% of surveyed lecturers rated students' self-discipline only at level 2 (Not self-disciplined) and the remaining 67.5% of lecturers rated it at level 3 (normal).

4.2. Findings from the tests

The research team designed two tests of equal difficulty, covering the three skills of Listening, Reading, and Grammar. Accordingly, the pretest was conducted at the beginning of the period and test 2 was conducted at the end of the period. The results of the pre-test are summarized in the following table:

Table 1. The results of the pre-test

Pre-test	Experimental group	Control group
Mean score	5.3	5.3
Highest score	8	8
Lowest score	3	3

The statistics in table 1 showed that students in both groups are at the same English level. After 8 weeks of treatment, students were given a post-test.

The data in Table 2 show that after 8 weeks, the test scores of both groups showed signs of improvement. However, in terms of correlation, the experimental group had a higher mean score than the control group. The experimental group had a 1.0-point difference between the mean score of the post-test and that of the pretest, while the difference of the control group was only 0.4. In addition, the highest and lowest scores were also 0.5 points higher than the control group. This shows that the method proposed by the research team is effective.

Table 2. The results of the post-test

Pre-test	Experimental group	Control group
Mean score	6.3	5.7
Highest score	9	8.5
Lowest score	4	3.5

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1. Conclusion

Teaching and learning English online at TUEBA still faces many difficulties. Students do not have enough understanding of online learning methods, managing their time, and maintaining their concentration when studying. As for lecturers, they had difficulty encouraging, engaging, assessing, and promptly giving feedback to students. Besides, the low level of students' active learning was also an issue for them.

The use of online teaching tools in different parts of a lesson could significantly help in improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning English online.

5.2. Recommendation

Lecturers need to equip themselves with online English teaching methods, create favorable conditions for students when participating in learning, promote group activities, and build highly interactive lectures. Lecturers should also learn and apply information technology to improve the quality of lectures and increase student engagement. Applying teaching methods through projects (Project-based learning), teaching through games (Game-based learning), and personalized methods when imparting knowledge to stimulate students' learning motivation. Due to the characteristics of online learning, lecturers should also be flexible in assessment methods and assessment forms, in order to encourage students to actively study, and improve self-discipline and self-study.

Students need to improve their self-discipline in learning and organize their study time and space effectively. It is necessary to seriously participate in learning, and avoid using unrelated network applications when participating in online learning to avoid affecting the quality of learning. It is advisable for students to be open, boldly discuss and propose to the lecturers so that the lecturers can promptly adjust learning activities to suit their own capacity and conditions. Besides, they should enhance sharing, exchange, discuss online learning methods with friends, and seek and refer to solutions from trusted sources to overcome difficulties.

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