

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF AN E-LEARNING TOOL

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Abstract: *The article as a whole will offer a theoretical overview of the topic, an analysis of advantages and disadvantages of an e-learning course used as a support for face-to-face English classes for young learners and a concrete e-learning course creation will be carried out and described. A specific e-learning course supporting English classes for young learners will be created. These steps shall lead towards better understanding of this complex topic and by giving a practical example to the basic school English teachers also towards encouragement of their own e-learning course creation and usage.*

Key words: *advantages, disadvantages, e-learning, online learning, communication, technology, education,*

The value of foreign languages knowledge is accepted also by the Uzbekistan Ministry of Education and these are taught at basic schools as obligatory from an early age. As Crystal mentions, generally speaking, the most widely taught foreign language is English and, English is a preferred foreign language also in the Uzbekistan educational system. Consequently, one would expect that the importance set upon this foreign language is reflected in the quality of its teaching. The truth is that despite the respect and recognition towards English, the school English classes are limited especially in terms of time and one can say that it is always possible to find there some small gaps offering space to improvement.

At the same time, computers together with Internet connection are getting more and more available among general populace. As will be described in following chapters, the Uzbekistan Ministry of Education are well aware of the ICT becoming a common part of everyday life and they try to implement these into basic school classes where ICT usage is not so common.

Before concentrating on how to make English teaching more effective it is necessary to realize what the language teaching consists of and what its scope is. At the same time, it is essential to know well what kind of audience the fifth-graders are, what knowledge and skills these learners are officially required to get from the educational process and what characteristics these learners have. Knowledge of these facts is important for the educator to be well aware of what she teaches, with what goals, and in what way she can meet the needs of the learners. According to most of the authors dealing with a language teaching topic it can be assumed that the foreign language scope is divided into two main categories: "Language Skills" and "Elements of Language" or also "Language Items" (McKenzie-Brown) (3) McKenzie-Brown specifies language skills as "the mode or manner in which language is used", while Davies and Pearse further divide the language skills into "receptive skills", e.g. listening and reading, and

“productive skills”, which are speaking and writing. It is important to point out that the skills are interdependent and according to Davies and Pierce should be integrated as the language user naturally switches from one skill to another. Teaching foreign languages, as well as other subjects, at Uzbek basic schools is based on “Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education” which highly evaluates their importance saying that: Foreign language skills help reduce language barriers and increase the individual’s mobility in their personal lives and during their future educational and career paths. They allow pupils to learn about the different lifestyles and cultural traditions of people in foreign countries...promote an awareness of the importance of mutual international understanding and tolerance, create the conditions for schools’ participation in international projects (4). Based on this approach The Framework Curriculum timetable sets foreign language studies to be an obligatory part of basic schools’ syllabi from the third to the ninth grade. Moreover, it gives explicit preference to English which shall be offered to the pupils on the first place. The evidence of English being a dominant and preferred foreign language in Uzbek basic schools is also the highest and continually growing number of its learners in comparison to other foreign languages. By offering English in preference, the Uzbek school system aims to achieve a continuity of foreign language studies from pre-school education through basic education to secondary education.

The foreign language specifics are involved in the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education in educational area “Language and language communication” together with Uzbek language and literature. The requirements pronounced in the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education origin in the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” in which an A2. The Framework Educational Programme specifies the educational content of educational field “Foreign language” with expected outcomes of period 2 in stage 1 which reflect the previously mentioned content of language. The expected outcomes are divided into “Receptive language skills”, “Productive language skills” and “Interactive language skills” with the following specifics:

- Expected outcomes for receptive language skills (in the second period of stage 1) are based on understanding familiar words and simple sentences, authentic materials meaning comprehension and their use. Learners should be capable of fluent, phonetically correct reading of familiar vocabulary and texts being able to gain information from a simple text and answer questions. They are also expected to be able to use a bilingual dictionary.

- Expected outcomes for Productive language skills (in the second period of stage 1) are the abilities to convey simple written message or text and reply to a message all grammatically and formally correct, as well as to be able to complete a form with personal information. The pupils should be able to give a content of simple conversation or text in both written and spoken way and modify a short text without changing its meaning.

• Expected outcomes for Interactive language skills (in the second period of stage 1) are active participation in conversation, familiarity with common social phrases and ability to give required information.

The Framework Educational Programmed for Basic Education gives also details of the stage 1 subject matter which shall involve these areas:

- language rules of communication in everyday situations
- simple practical messages
- orientation in theme-based areas
- vocabulary and word formation
- grammatical patterns and sentence types

E-learning can be approached from two basic angles - it can be seen either as an “educational process” or as a “set of tools supporting the educational process”. Consequently, there is a wide range of definitions which may differ according to organization and the way of e-learning usage. For the purpose of this thesis, the term e-learning can be illustrated by comparing and combining the following definitions:

In these definitions a shared opinion is that e-learning is delivered through modern information and communication technologies which create a rich learning environment. The first definition describes the goal of e-learning as an unlimited access to knowledge whereas the second definition says that the main goal is the improvement of the learning output. It is possible to combine these goals and say that thanks to the rich learning environment and the unlimited access to information e-learning helps to achieve better results in an educational area. Furthermore, Kveton sets the aim of e-learning to be higher access to education of suitable quality and acceptable cost. As such, e-learning has without doubt its place in modern education. When investigating e-learning issue in various sources one can find out that the term “e-learning” is often connected or even equated to the following concepts:

Distance education (or also Distance learning)

According to Willis distance education “takes place when a teacher and student(s) are separated by physical distance, and technology (i.e. voice, video, data and print) is used to bridge the instructional gap”.

Online learning

White describes online learning as “an approach to teaching and learning that includes the use of Internet technologies for learning and teaching. Learners use the online learning environments not only to access information and course content but also to interact and collaborate with other online participants within the course”.

To create educational content of sufficient quality may be demanding in terms of time, finance and methodology and may require training for the course creators.

In conclusion, e-learning tools play an important role in modern education by providing flexible and accessible learning opportunities. Despite some disadvantages such as technical problems and limited social interaction, they remain a valuable educational resource. With proper use and support, e-learning can significantly improve the quality of education.

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