

USING WEB-BASED LEARNING MATERIALS FOR ENHANCING GRADUATE STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN ESP COURSE

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Development of information and computer technologies has revolutionized the life of people; and their impact on higher education can be hardly overestimated [1, 5]. Synchronous and asynchronous communication tools, e-learning, distance teaching/learning, Open Educational Resources, digital repositories, etc. are at educationalists' disposal to provide modern and high-quality education [2, 4, 7]. They have considerably influenced the way of the English language acquisition by students of different categories [6]. Students vary in gender and age, goals and qualification, interests and employment. Graduate students, for instance, are inclined to gradually lower their motivation [3]. Also, many graduate students are facing the necessity to work either to earn for their living or to gain more professional experience. Therefore graduate students might need tailored ESP courseware.

Despite substantial research on the use of different information and computer technologies for teaching and learning, there have been few investigations assessing how web-based learning materials could favour the development of graduate students' performance in an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) course – English as a foreign language – especially in the classroom where traditional face-to-face learning is migrating to blended learning. Thus, it is important to determine if web-based learning materials are beneficial to students under such conditions.

The research should focus on the approach that exploits the use of web-based learning materials for helping students in an ESP course to form stable language, communicative, and discourse skills. The aim is to identify the factors that influence gradual substitution of face-to-face classes by distance periods among some graduate students as well as the students' attitudes towards using web-based learning

materials. Moreover, two contents versions and two implementation modes are proposed to assess which one can ensure increase in graduate students' learning outcomes and performance in the course. Accordingly, the following research questions could guide the study: (1) What prevents graduate students from attending traditional face-to-face classes? (2) What are graduate students' attitudes towards using web-based learning materials in an ESP course instead of attending classes? (3) What are graduate students' attitudes towards using web-based learning materials in an ESP course along with attending classes? (4) What types of materials do students find helpful? (5) Are there significant differences in learning outcomes and performance in the course in students who used different contents versions and implementation modes of the web-based materials?

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