

Chapter 32

The Adaptation of a Residential Course to Web-Based Environment for Increasing Productivity

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the design process of a blended learning environment using a learning management system to transform Basic English courses into the web-based distance learning format in the School of Foreign Languages at a large scale research university in Turkey. The research design was based on design-based research and the ASSURE, which is an instructional design model. A design plan was created based on the needs indicated by the analysis, and the necessary materials were developed and transferred to the learning management system. A usability test of the environment was conducted for increasing efficiency of environment, facilitating learning, increasing productivity and making the environment more user-friendly. As a result, an environment was designed where instructors can create the desired multimedia materials (videos, exercises, quizzes). Students can access these materials, discuss with each other and instructor (chat, discussion) and assess their learning outcomes (weekly homework, quizzes, games).

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INTRODUCTION

In higher education, there is a need to design and use new tools, techniques and environments for increasing productivity of instructors and students. In this context, the importance of web-based distance learning environments and learning management systems is increasing. In simple terms, distance learning is a type of learning where the teacher and the learner are physically in different places. At the beginning, distance learning was created for the students unable to attend school lessons for various reasons. Then it was re-built in a web-based form and gained a new dimension called “online learning” or “e-learning” (Lei & Gupta, 2010). Since distance education takes place through the Internet, it increases the quality and power of education. It also enables teachers and students to exchange information, experience, materials and notes, and it can even reach more people (Subbiah, Saravanakumar, & Perumal, 2012). Web-based distance learning has many advantages such as providing access to information in different modalities—audio, video, text—independent from time and location thanks to the use of multimedia, facilitating individual learning in asynchronous cases and providing interaction in cases of synchronised use.

Learning Management Systems (LMSs) are units of software that enable online distance education teaching and learning activities in a systematic and planned form, making it easier to follow and monitor educational activities, regulating the content and interactions between teachers and learners (Ozan, 2008). Learning management systems are online interfaces for the production and management of course contents and management of the learning process (Gökova & İnceoğlu, 2011). Moodle is one such software program. It is commonly used in online learning because its web interface supports interactions between teachers and students, because it is easy to use, and because it uses open source code (Kaleci, 2011).

This study explores the design process for migrating “Basic English” courses for online delivery. These courses are normally taught face-to-face in the School of Foreign Languages at a reputable public university in Ankara. This research is an example of design-based research. Tüzün (2001) claims that if educational designers and teachers use a certified method to transform courses for online education, they will be able to overcome problems such as limited time and limited experience. Design models show what, when and how to do things, thus ensuring that the design process advances successfully and according to the plan (Tüzün, 2001). This study is based on the ASSURE Model, an instructional design model. The courses were put online using Moodle. The ASSURE Model is based on learning necessities, and it aims to improve material selection. It stresses the interaction between learners and teachers during the design process and the realisation of learning targets at the end of the process. The ASSURE Model has six phases: analyze learner (i.e., demographical features, learning styles and life styles of the target group), state objectives, select media and materials, utilize media and materials, require learner participation, evaluate and revise (Akkoyunlu, Altun, & Soylu, 2008; Chiou et al., 2006). In this context, this study aims to redesign, develop and implement “Basic English 1” and “Basic English 2” courses for web-based online education in the bases of ASSURE model.

BACKGROUND

Literature Review

Web-based distance learning has many advantages. It provides access to information free of place and time thanks to its multimedia elements (e.g., audio, video, texts). It facilitates individual learning in

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