

Practice and Performance of One-on-one Online English Lessons: A Case Study of an Online Educational Experiment

一對一英語線上課程的實踐與表現：以線上教育實驗為例

黃瓊葦¹ 廖婕妤² 王嘉穗³

HUANG, CHIUNG WEI¹ LIAO, JAY YU² WANG, CHIA SUI³

¹ 嘉南藥理大學 博士級研究員、兼任助理教授

¹ Chia Nan University of Pharmacy and Science, Associate Research Fellow and Adjunct Assistant Professor

E-mail: deepblue139@gmail.com

² 台北美國學校

² Taipei American School

E-mail: sabrina.liao914@gmail.com

³ 嘉南藥理大學 副教授

³ Chia Nan University of Pharmacy and Science, Associate Professor

E-mail: box1025@mail.cnu.edu.tw

Abstract

Unprivileged students in remote areas could be granted more chances to access better learning resources for the improvement of their capabilities through one-on-one online English lessons. This study analyzed the process and results of an online educational experiment—one-on-one online English lessons—conducted at a university and multiple elementary schools. The subjects participating in this study included ten e-tutees, ten e-tutors and few supervisors. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied to analyze the research materials including video recordings of online lessons and e-tutors and supervisors' journals and logs. The experiment showed that the e-tutees were usually happy when learning through one-on-one online lessons; they highly concentrated on the learning process and achieved excellent performance. The experiment also showed that e-tutors put a great amount of effort into preparing for the online lessons; in addition, the e-tutees and the e-tutors interacted well with each other, and all of them were on time for the online lessons. Summing up all our observation and analysis of the experiment, we concluded that one-on-one online English lessons for the elementary school students participating in this study were effective and helpful, and this type of educational tool could also be effective and helpful to other students in remote areas with sparse educational resources.

Keywords: e-tutee; e-tutor; one-on-one online English lesson

摘要

透過一對一的英語線上課程，可為偏鄉地區的弱勢學生提供更多機會，以獲得更好的學習資源、以提高他們的能力。本研究分析了一所大學和多所小學進行的一對一英語線上課程教育實驗之過程和結果。本研究的參與者包括10名線上課程的小學學伴、大學學伴和帶班老師。研究採用了量化和質性研究的方法來分析教學錄影檔、課輔教學記錄、大學學伴和帶班老師的日誌等研究資料。實驗顯示，透過一對一英語線上課程學習時，小學學伴通常很開心；他們高度集中於學習過程並達成優異表現。同時，大學學伴投入大量的努力在準備線上課程；此外，小學學伴和大學學伴彼此互動良好，都準時參與線上課程。總結對實驗的觀察和分析，我們得出結論：這個實驗在實驗期間能有效且有益，在未來對其他偏遠地區缺乏教育資源的其他學生而言也同樣有效且有益。

關鍵詞：小學學伴、大學學伴、一對一英語線上課程

1. Introduction

E-learning has emerged as a new educational trend around the world due to the rapid development of Information Technology and the Internet (Lin, 2010). More and more online courses are provided in higher education (Song & McNary, 2011). The number of admissions of online courses has significantly outgrown the total number of students in higher education, and the rate of this growth shows no sign of deceleration (Allen & Seaman, 2010). The purpose of the online English tutoring program was to have e-tutees living in rural areas taught online in real time by undergraduate students recruited by this program. The online courses provide e-tutees an opportunity to receive complementary lessons and instructions with the help of the latest computer and internet applications. The popularization of this program can guarantee underprivileged students' access to equal educational opportunities and improve their academic performance (MOE, 2013). Therefore, this study analyzed the process and results of the educational experiment in the hope to better the wide adoption and further application of this one-on-one online lessons in the future. In order to understand the e-tutees' learning outcomes, the study explored the performance of one-on-one Online English Lessons.

2. Literature Review

Synchronous learning and teaching on the Internet has been a popular tool for teachers and students to overcome the difficulties brought by distance and isolation facing most students (Hastie et al., 2007). With this tool, an educational environment that mimics traditional face-to-face instruction can be created (Huang, Liu, Lin & Chang, 2011). In contrast, asynchronous instruction enables teachers and students to interact with each other at different times (Chen, Ko, Kinshuk & Lin, 2005). Researchers have found asynchronous communication beneficial for the following reasons: it encourages well-thought discussion with depth; it allows teachers to communicate with temporally diverse students; it enables ongoing discussion that requires archiving; it provides enough time for all students to respond to a topic (Branon & Essex, 2010). BAGC (2018) indicated that online education is widely applied at every educational level. Teachers and students transcend the limits of time and space to gather together. Hrastinski, Cleveland-Innes & Stenbom (2018) points out that e-tutors are a key element to e-learning; other than the expertise of a subject, they also need to have proper skills.

3. Methodology and Details of the Experiment

Denzin (1978) utilized different sources to interpret and analyze one phenomenon, employed a variety of perspectives to interpret one dataset and employed many ways to examine one research question or case methodology and employed different researchers or evaluators to have a look at the research. Triangulation enhances research conscientious and convincing. Based on the above statements, to enhance credibility, this study incorporated the triangulation method.

3.1 Participants

1. Online tutors: The e-tutors took part in the online English tutoring. Seven undergraduate students and three graduate students were recruited as online tutors.
2. Online tutees: There were respectively five online tutees from Elementary School A and B participating the online English tutoring. There were respectively seven sixth graders and three fifth graders. These online tutees' learning need is English.
3. Online tutors' on-site supervisors: one on-site supervisor was assigned to each computer room. The one-site supervisor was responsible for keeping supervising journals, which contained attendance, equipment, systematic conditions, and teaching situations. Additionally, on-site supervisors checked and replied to e-tutors' tutoring journals to ensure the quality of online tutoring.

3.2 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The sources of data included videos recordings of the teaching, e-tutors' tutoring journals, supervisors' journals, and the logs of online English tutoring. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted to analyze the collected data. Besides, the researcher used coding to characterize the meanings in the data.

4. Results and Discussion

E-tutors would keep a record of their e-tutees' learning performance after they finish their teaching. These quantitative results were from e-tutors' journals, which were the statistical results of the whole semester based on the record of each class. The results of qualitative data are as follows:

E-tutors and supervisors' journals showed that almost all e-tutors went online on time and they appeared online earlier than e-tutees. Almost all e-tutees were also on time when going online. All e-tutors spent much time on preparing teaching materials, designing games, and planning for instructions. Teaching materials and activities prepared for the e-tutees by the e-tutors included jokes, music, stories, films, and psychological tests. Each e-tutors spent about one to two hours on preparing teaching materials for an online lesson.

All e-tutors' preparation for each online lesson was thorough. The quality of the learning environments provided by this project was considered high (MS0506). Six e-tutees (e-tutee B, C, D, E, I, and J) were always in a good mood during each lesson. Some of other e-tutees were sometimes in a bad mood. Generally speaking, almost all e-tutees were cheerful during each lesson.

The analysis of e-tutor A to J's teaching videos and a supervisor's journals revealed that the e-tutors skillfully intrigued their e-tutees. In addition, each e-tutor interacted with his or her e-tutee. Though each e-tutor and e-tutee did not know each other at the beginning of the program, their friendship gradually grew. Due to e-tutors' great efforts in employing a variety of learning resources including films, cartoons, music, stories and games to attract e-tutees, all e-tutees were highly focused on the online lesson, and thus, their performance in English improved (e-tutee A, D, E, I).

5. Conclusion

The integration of educational technology and English education is beneficial to elementary school students. For the students participating in this program, they were fond of using JoinNet to learn English, their performance was good, and their attitudes were positive during each online lesson. Most importantly, e-tutees from underprivileged families can have equal opportunities to access information technology while learning English. As of Apr. 14, 2019, there have been 14,034 families benefited from this program (MOE, 2019). Through the online program taught by e-tutors to underprivileged students, especially those living in remote areas, institutes in higher education can fulfill their social responsibilities to contribute to communities and society. And with this study, we wish to contribute to the scholarship of distance education, higher education, and learning environments.

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