User-Friendly and Learner-Friendly Courseware Design, Development and Evaluation

By

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Dedication

To my beautiful mentor Dr Thao Le. Your encouragement, expertise and support inspired my journey. You offered me a beacon, and showed me the door at the end of the journey. I am so grateful my path was led to yours. Thank you.

To my wonderful Angus Wallace. Your endless love, financial and emotional support made it possible for me to complete this study. You refuelled the beacon, kept it going when the light was dimming, and held my hand along the journey. This is our journey. We open the door together. We shut it hand in hand.

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To the participants in this study – students, academics and experts, who gave their time and attention to this study. Also, to participants on the international educational technology ITFORUM and IFETS listservs, who provided ongoing feedback and support.
Abstract

The design of eLearning courseware has become an important area of research within contemporary Higher Education. The literature and practice of designing eLearning indicates that the role of user-friendly and learner-friendly design as it applies to fully-online courseware is yet to be established. When it comes to user-friendly design, an established set of heuristics is still in development, as researchers’ investigate the impact an additional requirement of learning has on traditional user-friendly design. When it comes to learner-friendly design, there are still questions in regards to the features that contribute to effective pedagogical design. The design, development and evaluation of fully-online courseware based on a constructivist philosophy for ill-structured problem types, is yet to be discussed in-depth within the literature. In particular, it is not clear whether learners’ perspectives differ from that of academics and professional courseware designers. This thesis attempts to address these gaps in the literature through a mixed-methods approach. Firstly, a questionnaire survey is used to obtain statistical and open-ended data on teaching and learning online, user-friendly design, and learner-friendly design, from a range of students, academics, and professionals. Secondly, a fully-online prototype courseware on Intercultural Communication aimed at first-year university students, has been designed and developed by the researcher. A sample group of participants evaluate this courseware, through open-ended interview and email feedback. The results are bought together to present a range of contemporary perspectives on some specific aspects of user-friendly and learner-friendly courseware design.
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