

The use of Moodle in Higher Education for improving English skills in non-language courses*

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Abstract

The use of technology in language teaching and learning has been the focus of recent research (Stockwell, 2007). Academic journals such as CALICO Journal, CALL, Language Learning & Technology, and ReCALL provide evidence of the importance and the interest of research on Computer Assisted Language Learning nowadays.

Specifically, several authors have provided evidence of the suitability of e-learning environments for foreign language learning (Matas and Birch, 2000; Warschauer, 2000; Greenfield, 2003; Blake et al., 2008) as well as for intercultural learning (Griffith, 2007; Markey, 2007; Müllering and Ritter, 2008) in terms of pedagogical results. Notwithstanding, the point of view of the learner should also be taken into consideration (Appel and Gilabert, 2002; Lee, 2005).

Additionally, relationships between universities are influencing the education-learning process during the past few years. Continuous efforts have been done to develop collaboration agreements between higher education institutions in the European Union through several programs.

As a consequence of the collaboration agreement held between the London School of Economics (LSE) and the Universitat de València (UV), an interdisciplinary, bilingual and e-learning project was designed. The project aimed to introduce new pedagogical resources in two different courses of two universities in different countries, i.e. Spanish Language and Society (LSE) and Marketing (UV). In this way, an interdisciplinary collaboration was held in order to facilitate students' knowledge and experiences interchange through an online learning environment as well as to improve their language skills in a foreign language. Thus, the collaboration was developed in Spanish for the topics proposed by LSE students, and in English for those related with market research tasks of UV students, respectively. Online exchanges have taken place through Moodle in the last two editions of the project.

In this context, we aim at analyzing the student perception of an online project based on a multicultural, interdisciplinary and bilingual collaboration developed between these two European universities, through the open access academic platform Moodle. In this project, students have worked linguistic aspects, economic and managerial contents as well as other social competences. Specifically, we describe UV students' perception of the project, those taking a non-language course.

Taking into consideration both the quantitative results of a survey and the qualitative evidence obtained, we find support to the positive student perception of the interdisciplinary e-learning activities through Moodle in terms of motivation and satisfaction with the virtual learning environment and, therefore, with the use of education methods that facilitate active and cooperative learning by means of audio-visual didactic resources. In general, this interdisciplinary and bilingual collaboration project allowed students of different institutions, disciplines and cultures to get to know themselves, to discuss, as well as to obtain and to process information on other realities and to improve their language skills through a motivating e-learning environment.

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