The Use of Moodle in Teaching a Foreign Language: Development of Moral and Aesthetic Qualities of Students

Anna Bobunova[1]

Abstract

The paper discusses prospects of e-course based learning on a Moodle e-learning platform for teaching a foreign language and the development of students' moral and aesthetic qualities. To improve their speaking and communicative skills students should acquire aesthetic language skills and possess appropriate manners and behavior. The enhancement of aesthetic and moral skills goes through a purposeful perception of the aesthetic aspects of language, the knowledge of lexical, phraseological and syntactical forms, and the development of moral and aesthetic qualities of students. The e-course based on LMS Moodle can contribute to the development of these qualities if there is appropriate moral and aesthetic content of educational materials. Special emphasis should be placed on the development of aesthetic communication skills. In addition, the author lists the elements of the course that help the teacher to develop the moral qualities of students while learning a foreign language. The application of moral and aesthetic content is based on step-by-step work. Preparatory and procedural stages lead students to achieve a specific practical purpose: a visual representation of the results, PowerPoint presentations, e-collages, essays, etc. The paper presents the list of project ideas which can contribute to the cultural development of students.

Keywords: *e-learning, Moodle, second language acquisition, moral and aesthetic qualities;*

1. Introduction

Intensive informatization of the educational process is the main feature of education in the modern world. The requirements of up-to-date educational programs along with the development of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) encourage teachers to use ICT in the process of not only education, but also spiritual development [1; 2].

In the scientific literature, there are many studies on ICT benefits in learning language aspects and speech activity as well as the formation of student's intercultural competence. Former researches proved that ICT application can carry out also develop esthetic taste and moral qualities of students [3; 4; 5; 6].

Agreeing with the position of the methodologists, we add that culture and language co-learning will contribute to the prevention of inter-ethnic tensions, fostering tolerance, respect for diversity and civic responsibility culture [7; 8; 9; 10]. When switching from one language to another, the interrelation of linguistic meanings and speech sense can be transmitted through the prism of another culture and depends on the situational conditions of communication [11]. Van Driel, B., Darmody, M., Kerzil, J., emphasis that simply bringing young people from different backgrounds and countries together physically is not always sufficient to reduce prejudice and develop positive intercultural relations. There is a need to create the conditions for all students and staff to develop their intercultural competence. Students mastering foreign languages should be acquainted with human values such as patriotic devotion, ethical and civic conscience, respecting cultural and historical traditions, and a healthy and active lifestyle [12].

Modern teachers should promote the use of educational materials that deal with ICT and cooperative work that can lead to a better linguistic material presentation and gives motivation for personality formation. According to Bykova, I.A., this increases the need to adequately convey in another language and culture the originality of the social and communicative experience of the corresponding linguistic community [13].

Recently, the Moodle distance learning system (LMS Moodle), which combines the functions of many programs, for example text editing, inserting images and audio-video material, compiling questionnaires and surveys, has become popular. The electronic platform supports the feedback function. With its help, teachers can create an educational space, so-called an electronic language portfolio for each student [14]. Educators can use Moodle in order to foster students' language skills and personality qualities and values that help them to make positive connections between languages, cultures, and peoples.

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[1] RUDN University, Russia

2. Objective

In the modern methodology of teaching foreign languages and cultures, the use of ICT in educating the culturalogical outlook of students has not been fully studied. The purpose of this study is to identify moral qualities and aesthetic values which can be formed using an electronic language portfolio based on a Moodle course when learning a foreign language.

3. Methods

Fourty first-year students of RUDN University were taught English as a second language utiziling an electronic portfolio in Moodle. This group was experimental. The course was undergone in the first semester from September to January 2017. The control group consisted of fourty first-year students. Controls' training was set up according to the established curriculum accepted by the Department of foreign languages.

The implementation of moral and esthetic oriented course consisted of three steps: preparatory, procedural, and feedback. The preparatory stage included completing an introductory test in Moodle and discussion of new material with the teacher. The purpose of this stage was to evaluate students' knowledge and motivation with respect to upcoming curriculum and point out its weak and strong points in order to correct the content of the course.

At the procedural stage, students mastered grammatical and lexical skills with the aesthetically and morally oriented texts and multimedia materials. The course included extracts from classic literature works, historical events description, folk stories and songs. Students became acquainted with art and culture of both their native and foreign countries. All materials were selected based on their potential to contribute to the formation and development of personality. Moral, aesthetic, and cultural materials and tasks were added and used in the course elements such as Database, Seminar, Wiki, Forum, Glossary, Feedback, and Conference.

The preparatory and procedural stages came to an end with the presentation of independent works: PowerPoint presentation, e-collage, essay, etc. Project work included students feedback on the issue raised in the sections of the course and its topics. Students were asked to reflect on their acquired skills, qualities, and new ideas in their projects. The themes of the projects had moral and aesthetic potentials [15]. Therefore prior to completing their projects students discussed, on the Moodle forum, what moral and ethical problems they would raise in their projects. The themes of the projects corresponded to the actual problems of the society and cross-cultural barriers overcoming:

> ➢ Restoration of ecosystem;
> ➢ The solution of political problems by peaceful means;
> ➢ Causes of family conflicts and their resolution;
> ➢ Influence of family conflicts on children;

The analysis of the assignment was carried out by means of questionnaire and statistical analysis at the beginning of the course and upon completion.

4. Results

Using data obtained from student questionnaires conducted before, and after completing the e-course, we construct the list of variables shown in Table.1, Table 2 and Figure 1. From these tables and the histogram it can be seen that the levels of assessed variables in the experimental group in comparison with ones in the control group have significantly increased (P>0.05).

Table. 1. Variables before completing the e-course in control and experimental groups

Group	Number of students	T-Value				
		Moral qualities	Aesthetic skills	Sociocultural knowledge	Motivation	Speaking skills
Control group	40	6.97	5.71	4,19	3.03	7,3
Experimental group	40	7.1	5.55	3.85	3.05	7,8
P-values		≤ 0,5	≤ 0,5	≤ 0,5	≤ 0,5	≤ 0,5

Table.2. Variables after completing the e-course in control and experimental groups

Group	Number of students	T-Value				
		Moral qualities	Aesthetic skills	Sociocultural knowledge	Motivation	Speaking skills
Control group	40	7.97	6.41	7,5	3.5	9,6
Experimental group	40	10.1	9.41	11,5	10.5	11,4
P-values		>0,5	>0,5	>0,5	>0,5	>0,5

Fig.1. Histogram of variables before and after completing the e-course in control and experimental groups
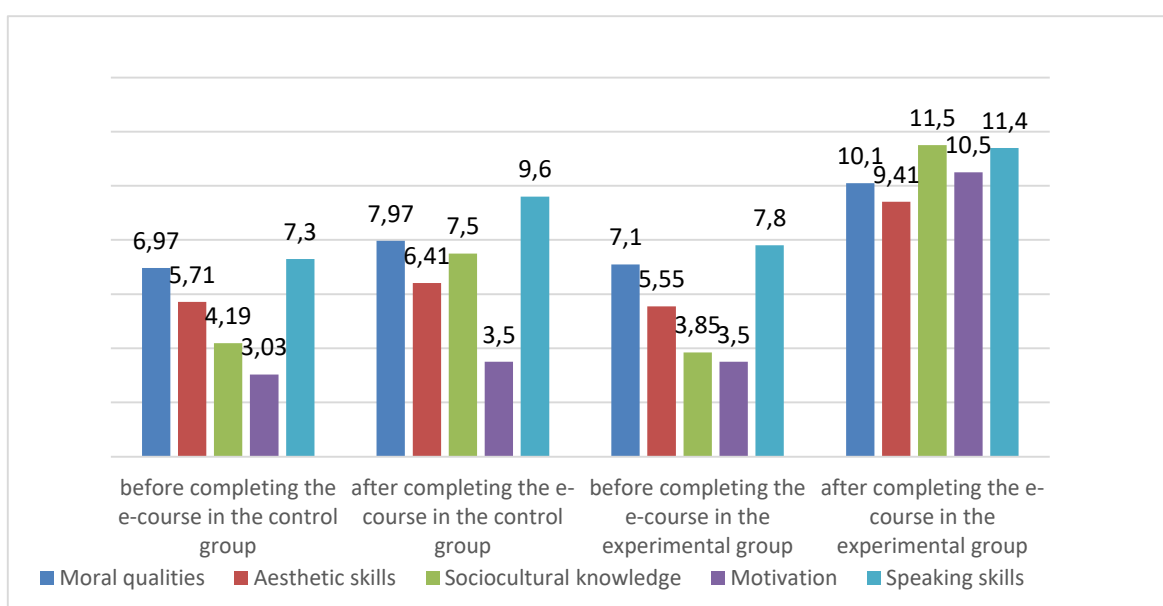
5. Conclusion

The analysis of the conducted research made it possible to determine the specifics of students training and teaching using the LMS Moodle. Application of e-course based learning on the basis of Moodle may develop: moral qualities, aesthetic skills, sociocultural knowledge, motivation and speaking skills. Furthermore, the topic themes devoted to the actual problems of society and overcoming cross-cultural barriers encourage students to pay more attention to these issues, discuss the proposed solutions, and offer new ideas in a foreign language.

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