

## THE USE OF MOODLE IN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore the effect of blended instruction on language skills. A total of 44 students participated in the study ranging in age from 16 to 18 selected on the basis of convenience sampling technique. After a fifteen-week treatment, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were administered to the experimental group. The overall analysis of the data from both questionnaires and interviews indicates that MOODLE improves all four skills. Students were found to improve their writing skills much more than other language skills.

**Keywords:** MOODLE, Blended-learning, Course management system, English language teaching

### INTRODUCTION

Educational technology has been widely applied in English Language Teaching (ELT) for a long time. Especially since the 1990s, parallel with the developments in the information technology sector, it has become an indispensable part of ELT at all levels of education. Over this time, classroom use has moved from drill, text manipulation, and word processing to more interactive and communicative applications such as e-mail, chat, and web-based programs (Warschauer & Meskill, 2000). As teaching and learning gain new dimensions in today's world, due to the proliferation of ICT education, it becomes independent of time and place. Consequently, learners and instructors have to challenge the new modes of learning and communication due to the proliferation of ICT (Kern, 2006).

It has always been a matter of concern to raise the quality of instruction. Innovations and new approaches are seen as essential to improve the quality of studies in the field of ELT as well as other educational studies (Boticki, Hoic-Bozic & Mornar, 2009). One of these innovations is to use a course management system (CMS). CMSs are web applications that run on a server and are accessed by a web browser. These are systems that are used to simplify the creation and administration of learning content (Cole & Foster 2007). A CMS allows content to be stored, retrieved, edited, updated and then outputted in a variety of ways. These systems can be used to support face-to-face instruction or for complete online distance learning (Robb, 2004).

One of these CMSs is the Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (MOODLE), which is a free, open source software package designed using sound pedagogical principles, to help educators create effective online learning communities (<http://moodle.org/>). It is also defined as "Learning Management Systems" (LMS), or "Virtual Learning Environments" (VLE). It was originally developed by Martin Dougiamas in 2002 to help educators create online courses with a focus on interaction and collaborative construction of content, and is in continual evolution (Cole & Foster 2007). It facilitates online content creation and collaboration and entails various social and communication tools that support teacher-student, student-student, and teacher-teacher interactions.

### Aim of the Study

Students learning a new language need as much language support as possible and any language support is helpful for their language acquisition. According to Liaw (2002), teachers should offer English language students a language-rich environment in which students are constantly engaged in language activities. Nunan (1999) suggests 200 hours of instruction for adequate exposure to a second language (L2); the average instruction time students receive in compulsory English language education in state primary schools and high schools is far below this number. In addition to small amounts of class time, large classes are also an obstacle for different in-class language activities (Kırkgöz, 2008).

Studies show that supplementary on-line learning environments may enhance language learning and development (Kung & Chuo, 2002; Ware, 2004; Wang, 2005). In this regard, English teachers can benefit MOODLE to create an authentic language environment to enable their students use English language. In addition, MOODLE can be a useful supplement to the traditional curriculum of the English language learning

classroom by developing students' language skills in a variety of ways. Therefore, the study aims to explore the effect of blended instruction on language skills.

### THE STUDY

A total of 44 students participated in the study ranging in age from 16 to 18 selected on the basis of convenience sample technique. Therefore, the participants in this study were chosen from 11th grade students in Lüleburgaz High School where the researcher is employed as an English teacher.

The course was organized using blended learning concept, where traditional teaching methods are combined with activities and resources presented through MOODLE. During the study, the students were asked to do various tasks in order to get used to learning English with the software. The course activities included actions related with contents such as presentations, reading, vocabulary, listening, speaking and writing. Students regularly uploaded their written homework given by the researcher under the writing section and the teacher gave feedback to the students' written works. All students could see each other's works as well as the feedback supplied by the teacher. Thus, they had the opportunity to do self-assessment. Besides routine written homework, students worked on collaborative writing activities such as story and film script writing in groups.

The mixed-method approach was chosen as the methodology of this research. Mixed-method research was defined by Creswell (2003) as “the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data is collected concurrently or sequentially, are then given a priority, and thus involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research” (p. 212). The quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire administered at the end of the treatment. The qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted with randomly selected students among the experimental group. Both the control group and the experimental group were selected by convenience sampling technique. The experimental study lasted 15 weeks.

### FINDINGS

This study collected both qualitative and quantitative data. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v.16.0) was used to analyze the quantitative data which was obtained from the questionnaire. The data collected through the interviews were processed using content analysis.

#### The Analysis of the Questionnaire

**Table 1: Students' opinions on the effect of blended instruction with MOODLE on language skills**

Question	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
1	Use of Moodle is useful for collaborative learning.	3 (%13,6)	13 (%59,1)	6 (%27,3)	-	-	2,13
2	Use of Moodle is useful for increasing individual learning.	5 (%22,7)	15 (%68,2)	2 (%9,1)	-	-	1,86
3	Feedback is applied to correct any mistakes in writing.	15 (%68,2)	7 (%31,8)	-	-	-	1,31
4	Collaborations with Moodle upgrade my skills in writing.	6 (%27,3)	11 (%50,0)	4 (%18,2)	1 (%4,5)	-	2,00
5	I enjoy collaborative learning as I can work with other students.	4 (%18,2)	9 (%40,9)	7 (%31,8)	2 (%9,1)	-	2,31
6	I have improved my reading skills through the activities on Moodle	2 (%9,1)	13 (%59,1)	4 (%18,2)	2 (%9,1)	1 (%4,5)	2,40
7	I have improved my listening skills through the activities on Moodle.	2 (%9,1)	10 (%45,5)	10 (%45,5)	-	-	2,36
8	I have improved my writing skills through the activities on Moodle.	6 (%27,3)	11 (%50,0)	4 (%18,2)	1 (%4,5)	-	2,04
9	I have improved my speaking skills through the activities on Moodle.	1 (%4,5)	3 (%13,6)	14 (%63,6)	3 (%13,6)	1 (%4,5)	3,00
10	I have improved my grammar through the activities the on Moodle.	3 (%13,6)	12 (%54,5)	5 (%22,7)	2 (%9,1)	-	2,27

The analysis of the questionnaire reveals that MOODLE improves all four skills (reading 59.1%, listening 45.5%, writing 50%, speaking 13.6%) of the students. However, students (27.3%) strongly agree that MOODLE

improves their writing skills much more than other language skills. This is in line with the findings of Arslan (2009). In addition, students 15 (%68,2) strongly agree that they got feedback for their writings. It is also interesting to note that students think that MOODLE is both useful for collaborative learning (59.1%) and individual learning (68.2%).

### **The Analysis of the Semi-structured Interview**

All the participants reported that using MOODLE improved all their language skills. However, they stated that some skills improved much more than other skills. The students put the skills in order according to improvement level as follows; 1. writing skills, 2. reading skills, 3. listening skills and 4. speaking skills. One of the participants ranked the activities on MOODEL as follows:

“Writing, reading, listening and speaking” (S2).

Another participant declared that:

“It improved my writing and listening skills. I listened to the tracks on MOODLE and tried to fill in the gaps. In the writing section you corrected our writing works, so we could see the correct forms” (S4).

As agreed among students, the use of MOODLE improved speaking skills least. One of the interviewees stated that:

“It has improved my writing and listening skills. Generally, I try to improve my speaking skill by watching foreign films and serials” (S8).

Another interviewee also said that:

“I think MOODLE has improved my writing skills. In addition it has improved my listening and reading skills. But I think there was a deficiency in speaking because we could not speak on MOODLE” (S9).

Most of the students stated that they enjoyed the collaborative story writing tasks very much. The reasons for enjoying the collaborative story writing tasks are as follows;

- Improving imagination.
- Group work.
- Combination of different opinions.
- Becoming close friends.
- Improving collaboration and cooperation.
- Improving English.
- Competition between groups.

One of the participants stated that:

“I think it was most entertaining, each student in the group wrote what they wanted. There was no certain thing. Everything was changeable. My friend wrote something, I wrote something else, but at the end a whole story came up and it was enjoyable to read” (S4).

Another participant also supported the same idea as follows:

“Yes it is very nice. We became close friends. We talk about it, then, in the evening we write it on MOODLE. We wonder who wrote what. It is exciting” (S10).

One participant also added that:

“Yes it was so enjoyable, because the emergence of a story combining different ideas is more fun than a story written by only one person” (S8).

However, only one student reported that he disliked the collaborative story writing activity because he thought that face-to-face group work was more useful than group work on the net. He explained that:

“I did not like that activity. Because I think it is more individual on the Internet. In my opinion face-to-face group work can be more efficient” (S7).

## CONCLUSIONS

All four skills were integrated into the study. A section was assigned for each skill. The findings display that MOODLE improves all four skills (reading 59.1%, listening 45.5%, writing 50%, speaking 13.6%) of the students. However, students (27.3%) strongly agree that MOODLE improves their writing skills much more than other language skills. This is in line with the findings of Arslan (2009). In this respect, MOODLE can be utilised to improve students' writing skills in particular. In addition, it can be used to give feedback especially on writing works.

By the help of wiki, students actively collaborated on writing wiki projects. It appears from the findings that the students enjoyed collaborative writing tasks much more than individual writing tasks. The reasons for enjoying the collaborative story writing tasks were reported as improving imagination, group work, combination of different opinions, becoming close friends, improving collaboration and cooperation, improving English and competition between groups. In this regard, it can be said that MOODLE offers mediating tools which help to achieve the objectives of a social constructivist-based classroom in many ways (Baskerville & Robb, 2005). Since collaboration and interaction facilitate students' language development, teachers can benefit from MOODLE to create constructivist environments.

In conclusion, MOODLE is an effective learning tool supporting blended learning. This study can be a beneficial guide for English teachers who look for new ideas to make their instruction more interesting and innovative. The findings of the study can also give valuable information to the Ministry of National Education (MONE) about integrating blended-instruction with MOODLE in EFL at high school level.

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