CURRENT TRENDS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING: USE OF THE MOODLE PLATFORM AT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES

СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ ТЕНДЕНЦИИ В ПРЕПОДАВАНИИ ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ: ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ПЛАТФОРМЫ MOODLE НА ЗАНЯТИЯХ ПО ИНОСТРАННОМУ ЯЗЫКУ

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Topical changes in the modern world cover all spheres of public life, including the education system. This increases the requirements for students' knowledge, as well as knowledge of foreign languages. In this situation, the main task of foreign language teachers is to constantly expand the students' vocabulary, develop their communication skills and increase their motivation. Moodle-platform offers specific opportunities enabling teachers and students to cooperate.

Keywords: distance education; learning management systems; Moodle; internet education.

Новые тенденции современного мира охватывают все сферы жизни общества, в том числе и сферу образования. Использование компьютерных технологий повышает требования к владению иностранным языком. В этой ситуации преподаватели иностранных языков должны не только расширять словарный запас обучающихся, но и развивать коммуникативные компетенции, а также повышать мотивацию изучения иностранного языка. Мы попытались осветить в данной статье возможности образовательной Moodle- платформы.

Ключевые слова: дистанционное обучение; интернет-образование; Moodle-платформа; менеджмент системы образования.

The development of information technologies has provided wide access to online computer technologies for students. This enables to introduce these facilities into the structure of learning process. The Moodle is one of the most

popular open source software systems, it is a course management system intended firstly to create cooperation between the teacher and the student [1].

The Moodle (acronym from Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is an Open Source Learning Management System or Virtual Learning Environment, provided under a conditionally free license (GNU General Public License) [2].

According to a brief summary given by its producer the Moodle is "a software product capable of establishing courses and web-sites set up in the Internet" [2]. One of the Moodle advantages is that the course forming data are kept at the university wide server and thus can be easily moved, uploaded, edited or deleted, thus ensuring that any change automatically becomes available to the course participants.

The main task of this platform is to organise remote learning process. The Moodle can be used as an alternative source of information helping to balance the irregularity of the students' academic activity within a semester.

Originally the Moodle was planned as a free open source software available to everybody, easy to install and open to maximum number of users. Everyone interested can develop the Moodle learning environment and add their own updates as well as exchange information about working with the Moodle through the system of forums and communities.

A vast variety of functions and facilities within the Moodle system made it a most popular virtual learning environment.

Teaching foreign languages requires direct interaction between a teacher and a student as well as between students. That is why for a long time computer has been only treated as a supplementary tool for training certain skills such as speaking or writing. Recent achievements of hi-tech solutions (such as Internet connection, big enough data storage capacity, appearance of Web 2.0) made it possible to perform voice communication over the Internet (Skype), to implement such forms of work as blogs, podcasts and others. Users can also communicate in social networks, online communities, Wiki-projects [3]. However, there is still an unsolved problem as how to integrate all those forms into a unified environment where a teacher could monitor students performing different forms and types of activities, assess their work and, which is more important, where individual students, groups of students and teachers could work together.

Furthermore, working with the Moodle system helps to increase remarkably time and the intensity level of communication in the learning environment. Clever variety of activity forms ensures that the system user can always find what to do: visit a forum, study and assess an assignment performed by another user, open a project page and leave their comment. The main condition of a successful cooperation is by no means to use only a foreign language as a default language at the virtual class. Teachers and students

should have enough time for communication outside the class, and the course materials should be arranged in such a way, that the work is varied and interesting (implementing audio and video files, podcasts, maximum of interactive forms such as wiki-projects, data bases, forums and others [3].

To access the system, each participant needs to register, with a unified account being used for signing up to unlimited number of courses.

The status or role of a participant can differ: "Course creator", "Teacher" (authorised to add material and teach), "Student" (authorised to participate in all activities excluding content publication in the module blocks of the course webpage and assessment monitoring) and "Guest" (minimum authorisation: browsing but few items of a course, no posting at forums, no tests performing etc).

The most important components of the basic course page are module blocks on different topics.

The teacher fills in such a block with content to browse and learn as well as with assignments. This system is very appropriate for teaching a foreign language: the same module can comprise content for developing different language skills: a text for reading and discussion, additional materials for individual work, audio and video files, test assignments. Visualization and clear structure of such system turn its content into a true electronic textbook or teaching manual. Date setting option allows synchronising the course with a real calendar of a semester which makes it easy-to-use, especially when following deadlines is needed.

Filled in blocks can be edited more than once, especially if the course is supposed to remain in the system longer than a semester. A poor assignment, a too long text can be shortened or substituted with a different one even in the course of semester work. All the participants in the system will see the changes in the block on the right hand side and receive notifications by email.

The Moodle is supplied with an inbuilt audio player which enables direct links to audio files such as mp3 or wav format.

Multimedia content formats can also be integrated from external sits - YouTube video, flash-animation, slide show and presentation etc.

Thus, the teacher tunes up their course so that various content corresponding to the topic of a learning module is built up into a unified block and students could easily navigate through the whole course with just few mouse clicks and fulfill assignments in the order recommended by the teacher or in any other order suitable for them.

The most common form of assignment is a test. If the teacher used the option of editing lecture content with the help of built-in editor and placed the text directly on the Moodle server, the test questions can be formed automatically on the basis of the lecture text. However, it is more efficient if assignments are formed

by the teacher. A test can include the following types of tasks: choosing one of the given options (multiple choice, most suitable for grammar tests), alternative (more than one option can be chosen), true/not true choice, short text response etc. All the test items are stored in a special data base and can be edited separately or used by the teacher in another course later on. Students may be allowed to pass the test a number of times, each new attempt being automatically assessed.

A more complicated form of assignment can be "file uploading": students perform an essay or another creative task and upload it on the server within the time limits appointed by the teacher. Unfortunately such form of assignment does not allow cooperative work of students on this project or reviewing and even overlooking other students' works. This problem can be solved by the creative task being repeatedly placed at a corresponding forum.

To implement the idea of collaborative and fair work on creating team knowledge, the Moodle offers a lot of useful tools such as Wiki-projects, forums, chats, blogs, so that different forms of social interaction could be applied.

The most accessible form of collaboration for a foreign language course is by all means a forum. Each course holds the main forum where every participant can post news, links to useful files or just start discussion on issues they are interested in.

Another important form of cooperative work is blogging - keeping individual journals in which any participant of the course can make comments on any topic. Unlike forums, blogs do not allow discussion and reply to the material.

Summing up, the virtual learning environment Moodle demonstrates great opportunities to improve the process of foreign language teaching, especially for team work and integration of different activities aimed to develop separate language skills and language proficiency in general. Other advantages of the program are its user friendly interface and possibility to monitor learning activities of the students automatically. The main difficulty to implementing the platform is the necessity of initial input of the teacher' labour especially concerning selection of learning content. This problem can be solved by gradual enlargement of the content.

A weak point of the Moodle is its being a course management system but not an educational system.

However, using eLearning environment allows enlarging capabilities of the educational process in terms of increasing opportunities for students' individual work as well as using the system supported by different teaching forms.

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РЕАЛИЗАЦИЯ ЭВРИСТИЧЕСКОГО ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОГО ПОТЕНЦИАЛА СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ

REALIZATION OF SOCIAL NETWORKS HEURISTIC EDUCATION POTENTIAL

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В данной статье представлен опыт реализации принципов эвристического обучения в социальной сети на примере блога по учебной дисциплине «Компьютерно-опосредованное обучение иностранным языкам».

Ключевые слова: социальные сети; блог; принципы; эвристическое обучение.

This article reveals the realization of the heuristic education principles on the basis of the educational blog "Computer assisted language teaching".

Keywords: social networks; blog; principles; heuristic education.

Социальные сети являются привычной средой для коммуникации обучающихся. История развития социальных сетей восходит к 1995 году – моменту создания американского портала Classmates.com (сам термин «социальная сеть» был введен в 1954 году австралийским и британским социологом Джоном Барнсом). Успешность данного проекта активизировала появление многочисленных аналогичных сервисов. Сегодня в системе социальных сетей выделяют следующие: социальные сети для общения (Facebook, «ВКонтакте», «Одноклассники», Linkedin, Google Plus и др.); социальные сети для обмена медиа-контентом (Flickr, Instagram, YouTube, Vimeo, Vine, Snapchat); cоциальные сети для отзы-