BLENDED LEARNING AND ETCS: EXAMPLE OF VIRTUALIZATION OF A SUBJECT OF SPANISH MORPHOLOGY

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Abstract

In the context of the application of the European Higher Education Area in the University of Cádiz, we can say that the partial or total virtualization of the subjects represents the extreme degree of the combination of blended learning and the use of the ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) and affects the renovation of the programing, from the moment at which it repels, by the level of non-attendance teaching that it allows and by the possibilities of directed independent personal work that it offers, in the student’s work load, besides to grant an innovating character to the methodology. In the case of the subject “Spanish Morphology”, main of 2nd course of Hispanic Philology, the resources on which the virtualization has been sustained is the following ones: a) Calendar, that presents the temporalization detailed according to days and hours of the different activities included in the programming; b) Program, that is to say, the complete programing of the subject (objective, index of subjects, methodology, system of evaluation, tutorials, bibliography); c) Contents, with summaries of each subject; d) Didactic guides, with suggestions to guide the study of each subject and bibliographical advice; e) Graphics, tables and images, that summarize main information in a format different from the verbal; f) Self-assessments, tests of multiple choice as a training that the student can do whichever times he wants, that it contains a series of original items that is not repeated in the examination, in which nor qualifications are assigned, nor are registered; g) Online Exercises, as complementary practice to the ones made in classroom or as reinforcement of the studied contents; h) Interesting web pages, with the object to extend the field of the bibliography and to foment the search of information beyond the traditional routes; i) Works in group, that try to develop the reflective capacity and to harness a critical attitude; j) Tools of communication (electronic mail and forums), that allow, in non-attendance environments, the communication among the students and between these and the professor for the exchange of information and the consultation of doubts referred to the different academic activities, as support to the attendance tutorials and to the direct communication in class; and k) attendance Examinations of test type (multiple choice and relation of pairs) or of open answer.

From the point of view of the teacher, all the tools that give form to the Virtual Classroom have demonstrated effective to provide to the student the contents of the subject, each one in the proportion that was possible to hope. Thanks to it, the Virtual Classroom has harnessed the student’s independent learning, who has felt like part important of teaching when assuming a protagonist role in his work of study and investigation, forced to make his notes from a bibliographical search, thing that has been complemented with summaries of the theoretical sessions in electronic format that the teacher has hung in the Virtual Campus. With all property, it is possible to be said that the professor has exerted of orientation tutor as much or more than of educational. Therefore, we emphasized the attainment of two objectives of the blended learning: to stimulate the participation of the student in his process of formation and the role of the professor as orientation of the learning; and to reduce the index of academic failure when doing the student conscious of his real progress in the subject.

Keywords - Blended learning, European Higher Education Area, ECTS Experiences.

1 ETCS AND VIRTUALIZATION

The subject “Spanish Morphology” is annual. In the present course the teaching is shared by two teachers, each person in charge of one four-month period. In our case, we take charge of the second four-month period, which relies on the authorization of the Vicerrectorado of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) and Educational Innovation for its virtualization, so that it has 30% of attendance and 70 % of not-attendance. It is a question of a blended or hybrid learning: "learning which combines online and face to face approaches" [1].
The information referred to the credits is this one:
- Equivalence in the ETCS credit system: complete subject: 9 credits (6 theory + 4 practice). 90 school hours + 90 not school hours = 180 student’s working hours.

2nd four-month period: 45 school hours (15 attend + 30 virtual ones) + 45 not school hours = 90 student’s working hours. The distribution of the student’s load of work in the above-mentioned four-month period is the following one (* the asterisk means "school hours" gathered in Table 1):

Number of student's working hours: 90
- Theory Classes*: 20
- Practice Classes*: 10
- Specializing Tutorials (attendance or virtual):
  A) Collective*: 2; B) Individual: 4
- Accomplishment of Academic Directed Activities (ADA):
  A) With presence of teacher*: 10; B) Without presence of teacher: 12
- Another Personal Autonomous Work:
  A) Hours of study: 15; B) Preparation of Personal Work: 15
- Accomplishment of Examinations:
  A) On-line Examination *: 3; B) written Examination: 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Distribution of the school hours</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>School hours (attendance and virtual)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
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<td>(10 attendance) + 10 virtual)</td>
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<td>45</td>
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2 METHODOLOGY OF THE SUBJECT

70% of the school load is assigned to theory and practice: the theory supposes 70% and the practice, 30%. 30% remaining of the above mentioned load constitutes the academic directed activities (principally the control of the works in group) and the collective tutorials (indicated especially for presentations, introductions and instructions on the managing of the Virtual Classroom). The school hours can be attendance or virtual (not-attendance), the above mentioned managed across the Virtual Campus, by means of the forums of Contents and of Works in group and the e-mail.

The evaluation distributes in three components: three examinations, which suppose 60% of the total qualification, a work in group, with a value of 30%, and the efficient use of the Virtual Campus, which represents 10%. The thickness of the not school load is constituted then by the hours dedicated to the study. At a distance, the other not-attendance activities are the hours of reading, the preparation of the personal work, the academic directed activities without the presence of the teacher, the evaluation and the individual tutorials.

As for the development of the teaching, the used modality is the lecture for the theoretical attendance classes, with the support of presentations in “Power Point”. In the second four-month period, the subject “Spanish Morphology” is planned on the base of two components:

1. One principal that consists of the presentation of the theoretical contents (Subjects).
2. A second consisting of the elaboration in small groups (compounds of three students) of a work about some question related to the curriculum.

1. Presentation of the theoretical contents: This part is canalized across the theoretical attendance sessions (explanatory classes), in which the teacher will explain the matter corresponding to each of ten topics. To extract the maximum profit, this task must go preceded by a individual reading of the concerning topic and it is complemented with not-attendance activities, as the practical sessions (self-assessments, resolution of problems) and the collective tutorials (instructions for the activities, didactic guidance, resolution of doubts).

The topics, then, must be read by the student before coming to the theoretical class. For it, the student will take three bibliographical basic references that are facilitated to him. To control the progression and the correct assimilation of the contents, two types of activities is offered: 10 self-assessments
(one for each topic) and 3 examinations (topics 1-3, 4-7 and 8-10) in continuous assessment, which the student must realize. These activities are, in the Virtual Campus, in its corresponding places inside the page of Beginning (“Self-assessments”, “Examinations”). Self-assessments are not evaluated; on the other hand, the examinations are elements of evaluation.

The general instructions with the information of the bibliographical specific reference to prepare the corresponding topic and with the guidelines necessary for its follow-up, appear inside the page of Beginning, in didactic Guides > Topic 1...

So then for each topic, the ideal sequence is the following one: 1st. Individual previous reading (student), 2nd. Theoretical session: explanatory class (teacher), 3rd. Practical session: self-assessment (student)... [the sequence repeats so often as topics existing that integrate an examination] ... 4th. Collective tutorial: resolution of doubts (teacher - student), 5th. Examination (student).

2. Elaboration of a work in group: The work will be realized with the control, supervision and follow-up of the teacher, by means of ADA managed across the Virtual Campus.

The distribution of the base-groups will be placed, once established, inside the page of Beginning, in “Works in group”. The indications necessary for the elaboration of the corresponding work appear in the latter entry. This work is a part of the evaluation.

3 STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

The course is organized in the following sections or blocks:

- Welcome message.
- Innovations and consultation of doubts, with four tools of communication (two forums, chat and e-mail), an informative document about the attendance tutorials and a resource for the final self-qualification.

![Figure 1](image)

- General Information, with two principal sections with the respective resources and links (Program and Internet links) and other informative documents about the significance of the blended learning, the regulation of electronic tutorials and the credit equivalence among the different European countries that form a part of the Socrates-Erasmus program.
Figure 2

- Didactic guides, one for each topic.

Table 2. Example of didactic guide

**TEMA 2**

**“LAS CATEGORÍAS LINGÜÍSTICAS: CRITERIOS PARA SU DELIMITACIÓN Y DEFINICIÓN”**

SUGERENCIAS PARA GUIAR EL ESTUDIO DEL TEMA 2

- Este tema toca un punto teórico central en la morfología general que enlaza con otra disciplina gramatical, la sintaxis: las llamadas “partes de la oración” (categorías gramaticales, clases léxicas o categorías léxicas). Además, entronca directamente con el tema 3, que aborda la relación entre categorías y funciones.
- Del primer capítulo interesa principalmente la referencia a las gramáticas clásicas, por su incidencia y vitalidad en las romances, y las razones que sustentan lo inapropiado de preguntarse por el número de tales partes.
- Por su pervivencia a lo largo del tiempo, es importante saber de la existencia de las cuatro clasificaciones binarias de las categorías gramaticales (§ 2.2).
- Asimismo, es fundamental conocer los criterios de clasificación e identificación de estas categorías, ordenados en tres grandes grupos: morfológicos, semánticos y sintácticos; y las objeciones que, desde un punto de vista crítico, presentan (§ 2.3).
  - Con respecto a los criterios morfológicos, debemos contar con las marcas flexivas, la tonicidad y la independencia sintáctica.
  - Los semánticos tienen que ver con la idea tradicional de que los modos de predicación lingüística representan los diferentes modos de ser de la realidad.
- Por último, los sintácticos se centran en los entornos sintagmáticos como instrumentos identificadores de las categorías gramaticales, hecho éste criticable por las cinco razones apuntadas en las pp. 42-43; y son igualmente el marco que sirve de justificación de la definición de las categorías gramaticales a partir de las funciones sintácticas, asociación ésta de categorías y funciones también objeto de crítica por los motivos expuestos principalmente en las pp. 44-45. Este grupo de criterios sintácticos sirve de puente entre el tema 2 y el siguiente, dedicado precisamente a la relación entre categorías y funciones.
- El capítulo referido a la duplicación de las categorías (§ 2.4), en el que se enfrenta la hipótesis de los pronombres cuantificadores a la de los núcleos nulos, cae fuera de nuestros intereses.
- Summaries of the Contents.
- Complementary documents.

- Self-assessments, with informations in shape of feedback.

- Works in group.
TRABAJO DEL TEMA 2

“Norma y uso del género gramatical”

Referencias bibliográficas:

Enlaces de Internet:
- Soledad de Andrés Castellanos, *Sexismo y lenguaje*
- Ana M. Vigara Tauste, *Miembra*

Documentos:
- “Elecciones a delegados/as de curso”
- “Sugerencias para las familias”
- “Elecciones a Consejos Escolares”

Tareas:
1. Relacionad el contenido del texto de S. de Andrés Castellanos *Sexismo y lenguaje* con el del artículo *Miembra*, de Vigara Tauste.
2. Actualizad a la luz de la última edición del *DRAE* la información de los étimos que cita de Andrés Castellanos.
3. Explicad y criticad, si procede, los usos que se hacen del género gramatical en los documentos de arriba. Comentad la relación que tienen aquí los fenómenos lingüísticos llamados “neutralización” y “sincretismo”.
4. ¿Qué alternativa proponéis como reescritura del documento “Elecciones a delegados/as de curso”?

- Examinations.

With this structure we approach some of the principles that—in agreement with what Rakes [2] says—Cabero Almenara [3] proposes, for whom “otro de los aspectos que deben de ser vigilados se refiere a la utilización de materiales con un diseño específico que favorezca la interacción y reflexión”.
4 EVALUATION SYSTEM

The modality of evaluation is continuous, which forces the student to expire in the period established with the activities that are object of evaluation, all of them inside the four-month period. To evaluate the subject in the second four-month period, all the examinations must be done and delivered the work in group in the fixed dates. The final qualification of the second four-month period is 100 points, which will be obtained of the sum of three components:

1. Three examinations on-line: 60 points (60 questions) = 60% = 6 points / 10.
   a) Topics 1-3: 20 points (20 questions)
   b) Topics 4-7: 25 points (25 questions)
   c) Topics 8-10: 15 points (15 questions)

2. One directed work in group: 30 points = 30 % = 3 points / 10.

3. Effective use of the Virtual Campus, interest and participation in class and in the forums of discussion: 10 points = 10 % = 1 point / 10.

These 10 possible points correspond to the qualification of the second part of the course. Therefore, in the global calculation they are equivalent to 5 points of the whole of the same one, since other 5 points correspond to the other four-month period. The criteria of evaluation are the following ones:

1. Examinations:

There are two types of examinations: one of multiple choice and other one with combination of multiple choice and related pairs. The first one presents the same format of examination: questions with three or more possible answers of which or only one is correct, or the correct ones are different. The computer system assigns automatically the scoring, the same as to the questions of related pairs. In both types there must be demonstrated that the contents of every reading have been assimilated adequately.

2. Directed Work in group:

It is evaluated depending on these general criteria [4] :
- Handling of the information: Search and compilation of the information; Information processing.
- Handling of the data: Search and compilation of the data; Analysis of the data.
- Written expression: Grammar correction; Adjustment in the expression.
- Presentation of the information: Coherence and cohesion of the writing; Observation of the presentation norms.
- Cooperative work: Attitude to work in team.

3. Effective use of the Virtual Campus, interest and participation in class and in the forums of discussion:

There is given priority the favourable disposition of the students to use the Virtual Campus. With respect to this, the number of income registered to the diverse spaces of the course does not import so much that the real use of this one, measured in terms of effective utilization of the different resources, communication among them and with the teacher by means of the tools of the course and exchange of information relative to the collective tutorials, the self-assessments and the work in group.

Among the conditions of evaluation that are demanded there is the requirement of that to can add the note of the second four-month period to the correspondent to the first one, a few minimums must be obtained in that one:
   a) Global minimum: 50 points adding the examinations and the directed work in group.
   b) Minimum of the set of the examinations: 35 points (with the minimums of 8 points for the first examination, 10 for the second one and 6 for the third one).
   c) Minimum of the directed work in group: 15 points.

This system of continuous assessment is valid for the June call of the current course, out of which the modality of evaluation is the traditional one: the only written test with questions of theoretical or theoretical-practical character, whose value is 10 points.

Nevertheless the previous thing, if the qualification of the directed work fulfills the minimum demanded of 15 points (1.5 of a maximum of 10), this one is kept only up to the September call. Also there is kept only till then the qualification relative to the third component of the evaluation (effective use of the
Virtual Campus, interest and participation in class and in the forums of discussion. In this case, the value of the traditional examination is 6 points.

The assistance to class is obligatory. This suits for all the attendance activities, being of the type that they are. The absenteeism can drive, in the teacher's opinion, to a negative evaluation.

5 RESULTS OF THE EXPERIENCE: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Now that the end of course is coming, we rely on sufficient data to affirm that, from the teacher’s point of view, all the tools that give form to the Virtual Classroom have been demonstrated effective to provide the contents of the subject to the students and to facilitate to them the attainment of the aims, each one in the proportion that was necessary to wait. The majority of the registered students has been present regularly at the attendance sessions. Almost all of them have chosen the continuous assessment, which means that they have come realizing the class examinations in the recommended dates, and the results, acquaintances a few seconds after realized, are in general good. As the weeks have been passing, they have conquered the initial resistance, given the traditional inertia of studying only at the end of course, towards the systematic and guided work.

It is necessary to emphasize the efficiency of the Self-assessments and the validity of the Contents and of the didactic Guides. In relation with the first ones, it has been verified that "las actividades de autoevaluación pueden ser muy útiles para los estudiantes siempre y cuando les proporcionen información adecuada para que puedan llegar a cotas superiores de autonomía en su aprendizaje y de comprensión de los contenidos" [5]. With regard to the Works in group, everything aims at that, with some exception, they are going to satisfy fully the criteria of evaluation marked initially: the adequacy to the contents, the coherence of the exposition and the structure of the contents, the correction in the written expression, the efficiency in the managing of the bibliography, the critical capacity and the favourable attitude to work in team. In this respect, the students have highlighted the importance of relying on the directed work in group as one more element in a diversified evaluation. They have valued very positively the tutorization of the work, fact that has allowed them to observe the mistakes or deficiencies that they were presenting and that has given to them the opportunity to restructure modifying them so that they could obtain the maximum qualification. In the same way, participants of the subject have felt on having had to be organized to work in team and turn in the obligation to discuss among them. To that integration commitment the individual preparation before the theoretical and practical sessions has also contributed.

Finally, the Calendar and the Tools of communication, singularly the e-mail and the forums to consult the doubts, have been very valuable auxiliary elements: that one as agenda of daily consultation that has marked the steps of the student in the follow-up of the course and this one as vehicle of almost daily communication among the pupils and between these and the teacher, which has allowed the exchange of information and the consultation of doubts relative to the different academic activities (theoretical and practical sessions, collective tutorials, self-assessments and works in group).

Thanks to these tools, the Virtual Classroom has promoted the autonomous learning of the student, who has felt important part of the teaching when assuming a protagonist role in the study and research work, forced to elaborate his notes from a bibliographical search, thing that has been complemented by the summaries of the theoretical sessions in electronic format that the teacher has hung on the Classroom.

As weakness, we have stated in a few cases one of the resistances at that Pérez Pérez, R. and other [6] aim recounted to the use of the virtual forum and that here we apply to the Virtual Classroom as a whole, exactly, certain "falta de autonomía, de criterios, etc., para superar la ausencia de la directividad que proporciona la clase magistral".

6 CONCLUSIONS

The design of our Virtual Classroom obeys an organization which educational aims and activities of teaching-learning are orientated to give fulfillment to some of the functions that Barberà and Badia [7] indicate:

- Informative: "consultar diversidad de informaciones provenientes de fuentes también diversas" we rely on as resource web pages of interest.
- Communicative: with the purpose of "expresar los propios conocimientos, experiencias y opiniones en un contexto comunicativo real", we are served the forums of discussion, the e-mail and the chat.

- Formative and forming: with the idea of "construir conocimiento compartido con el profesor y otros compañeros con su ayuda one proposes the cooperative work.

- Motivating: "ampliar los conocimientos personales siguiendo itinerarios personales y mediante la exploración libre u orientada" there are Internet, being the general ones, being the individual ones of the works in group.

- Evaluative: to the aim of "plasmar el aprendizaje realizado y argumentar los procesos de comprensión de los contenidos" the self-assessments and the examinations obey.

It is possible to say that the teacher has been a tutor and moderator so much or more than a teacher. So then, we emphasize principally the attainment of two aims of blended learning:

- to stimulate the participation of the student in his process of formation and training and the role of the teacher as adviser and moderator of learning;

- and to reduce the indexes of academic failure on having made the students conscious of their real progress and improvement in the subject.

In the matter, Cabero Almenara [8] comments that some of the roles of the traditional teacher will tend to vanish, "como el de transmisor de información, y a potenciarse otros, como el de evaluador y diseñador de situaciones mediadas de aprendizaje, entre otros motivos, porque puede que él ya no sea el depositario de los contenidos y de la información, de manera que se convierta más en un facilitador y proveedor de recursos".

References


