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PROSPECTIVE INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS' TRAINING: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL DISCIPLINES ONLINE

Abstract. *The system of higher education in Ukraine has been changing offering new distance learning solutions to all the participants of the educational process, lecturers and students. In higher educational establishments worldwide (Australia, Asia, North and South America, Europe), professors have been using different online platforms to teach students theoretical and practical disciplines according to the syllabus. Special attention is paid to the prospective translators and interpreters' preparation as their high quality education requires powerful theoretical and practical input. Online platforms Google Classroom and MyEnglishLab can be adjusted to the interpreters and translators' needs providing a wide range of functional learning tools for the professional preparation of pre-service specialists. According to the criteria of selection of educational online platforms for prospective interpreters and translators' preparation are the following: easy access to the online platform and user-friendly navigation, a possibility to create content, a possibility of bilateral communication, a possibility of computer-aided assessment and observance of academic integrity rules, both online platforms are suitable for theoretical input and practical skills that the students should acquire during their university studies. However, as for prospective translators and interpreters, it is recommended to use Google Classroom for teaching theoretical disciplines such as "Comparative Linguistics", "The History of the English Language", "Introduction to Translation Studies". While MyEnglishLab platform is suitable for covering practical courses developed by Pearson company. Meanwhile English practice for pre-service interpreters and translators' preparation is possible at the abovementioned platform as well.*

Keywords: *prospective interpreters and translators; educational online platforms; Google Classroom; MyEnglishLab; theoretical and practical disciplines.*

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ПІДГОТОВКА МАЙБУТНІХ ПЕРЕКЛАДАЧІВ: ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ І ПРАКТИЧНІ ДИСЦИПЛІНИ ОНЛАЙН

Анотація. *Зміни в системі вищої освіти України сприяли розробці нових рішень для реалізації навчання у дистанційному форматі, що позначилося на всіх учасниках навчального процесу. Заклади вищої освіти інших країн (Австралія, Азія, Північна та Південна Америка, Європа) мають певний досвід використання онлайн-платформ для навчання студентів теоретичних та практичних дисциплін. Особлива увага приділяється підготовці майбутніх перекладачів, оскільки якість їхньої навчання вимагає значного теоретичної та практичної підготовки. Онлайн-платформи GoogleClassroom і MyEnglishLab відповідають освітнім потребам студентів-перекладачів завдяки широкому спектру функціональних інструментів навчання для професійної мовної підготовки спеціалістів. Відповідно до критеріїв відбору навчальних онлайн-платформ для підготовки майбутніх перекладачів, а саме: простий доступ і навігація, можливість створення контенту, можливість двосторонньої комунікації, можливість автоматизованого оцінювання і дотримання принципів академічної доброчесності, обидві онлайн-платформи здатні задовольнити вимоги щодо теоретичної і практичної підготовки студентів під час навчання в університеті. Зокрема, платформа GoogleClassroom рекомендується для навчання теоретичних дисциплін, наприклад, "Порівняльне мовознавство", "Історія англійської мови", "Вступ до перекладознавства", а курси на платформі MyEnglishLab, попередньо розроблені на основі освітніх продуктів компанії Pearson, здатні забезпечити розвиток практичних умінь майбутніх перекладачів.*

Ключові слова: *майбутні перекладачі, навчальні онлайн-платформи, Google Classroom; MyEnglishLab, теоретичні і практичні дисципліни.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, when society is faced with the need to move to distance learning, information and communication tools have become an integral part of education at all levels of education. The use of various online tools, which previously provided the implementation of blended learning in Ukraine and around the world, has become

particularly relevant. There is some competition between online products designed for educational activities, in which developers are constantly improving, supplementing and updating these products. In addition to the long-known ones, there are also new online platforms, applications and programs that can be useful during training.

The problem statement. All of the above leads to the need to constantly learn new tools, as well as to update the skills of using previously known tools to maintain high efficiency of educational activities.

Analysis of recent studies and publications. Successful implementation of various online platforms worldwide into practice made it possible to organise students for lectures and practical workshops. In particular, an online platform Agora has been used at universities of Australia, Asia, North America, Europe. This online instrument enables the learners to do online blind self-review of their written assignments (Martynenko & Shevelko, 2021). Students in Poland, at Wyższa Szkoła Biznesu – National Louis University (WSB-NLU) use an online platform CloudA (https://wsb-nlu.clouda.edu.pl/) to master theoretical and practical disciplines (Martynenko, 2019). The online component for the students at Kyiv National Linguistic University as well as Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics has been organised in the online platform Moodle (http://m.knlu.edu.ua/ and http://ldn.knute.edu.ua/ correspondently) (Pysanko & Martynenko, 2020).

The research goal is to highlight and compare the specific characteristics of Google Classroom and MyEnglishLab as the online platforms used by lecturers in Ukraine to teach prospective interpreters and translators theoretical and practical disciplines.

2. THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS

Google Classroom is a cloud-based platform designed specifically for learning. This platform is accessible to all Google personal account holders. In this service users can: create training courses, share educational materials, create tasks, check the level of knowledge acquisition and track the progress of everyone. The service is interesting for a wide range of tools for work – videos, images, simulators. Each time you add a new task, students automatically receive email messages. Also, all updates and comments from other members are displayed in the news feed in the "Stream" tab (Abid&Iqbal, 2018).

All work created by students is automatically sent to the teacher and stored in Google Drive by both the teacher and the student. All assigned and completed tasks, each student can track in the calendar which is especially convenient during project work, when each team member has an individual task. Due to the combination of the "Announcements" service and commenting on tasks in the Classroom, teachers and students always keep in touch and monitor the status of each task (Hussaini & Libata, 2020).

The other tool that has already proven itself in foreign language training of students from around the world is the online platform MyEnglishLab, developed by Pearson. The successful use of this platform is evidenced by published research and practical cases, which include analysis of data on the level of student achievement, the functionality of the tool and the features of the application. MyEnglishLab is designed to complement Pearson ELT textbooks: Choices, Speakout, Language Leader, MarketLeader etc. MyEnglishLab components can replace traditional Pearson paper workbooks, helping students and teachers get more from the course. MyEnglishLab activities replicate the content students complete in their workbook, but in an interactive and engaging environment (Sabat, 2020).

The base of MyEnglishLab platform makes online tasks designed and embedded so that the student, performing most of the exercises, feels the interactive nature of their activities, which provides support and interest. This is also facilitated by the variety of forms and formats of presentation of the training material of the platform – from multiple choice exercises based on the read text to open answers to questions after watching an authentic video.

3. THE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Considering the proved efficiency of using Google Classroom (Singer, 2017) and MyEnglishLab in undergraduates' training (Milkova, 2019) our research investigates the educational online platforms on the basis of the criteria of their selection for prospective interpreters' preparation (Martynenko & Shevelko, 2021). These criteria are as follows: easy access to the online platform and user-friendly navigation, a possibility to create content, a possibility of bilateral communication, a possibility of computer-aided assessment and observance of academic integrity rules.

1. Easy access to the online platform and user-friendly navigation

1.1 Google Classroom

This criterion is a basic one that determines the general possibility to utilise the tool. The survey previously conducted by the authors (Martynenko & Shevelko, 2021) demonstrated quite a high level of importance of this criterion to lecturers in theoretical and practical disciplines (53.6% and 63.8% correspondingly).

The online platform Google Classroom is a free web service, a product of Google Apps for Education, designed for creating and arranging educational courses. It can be found at https://classroom.google.com/. To start working in Google Classroom, any user of a Google account can choose the application among other Google apps, therefore it is not required to install or download the application. Google Classroom navigation is user-friendly as all the created courses and the details (the class code, the number of students of the course, the professor's name etc.) are displayed on the Homepage. Among the wide range of

the courses prospective interpreters and translators at National Transport University (Kyiv, Ukraine) can find the following: "Comparative linguistics", "The History of the English Language", "Introduction to Translation Studies", etc.

For prospective interpreters and translators, such easy access to the online platform enables them to accomplish the practical assignments technically quickly which saves the learning time and makes the educational process easy, comfortable and user-friendly.
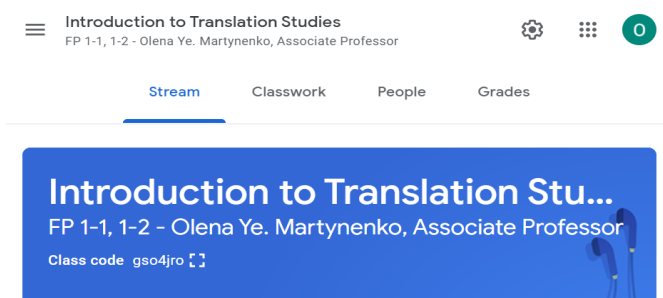

Figure 1. An online course ("Introduction to Translation Studies") for prospective interpreters and translators in Google Classroom

1.2 MyEnglishLab

While being a paid online-tool MyEnglishLab was free for students and teachers during the spring-summer 2020 pandemic. The research conducted in Turkey and Poland (Efficacy Research Report. Speakout with MyEnglishLab, 2018) states that 92-95% of students had quick access to their accounts, courses and assignments (a case study of Speakout course). Besides, the platform is mobile and tablet-friendly which gives wider opportunities for students to use it in or out of university. First time users and returning ones can get technical support via filling in a form, a live chat, video-manuals, web-articles, downloadable guides and recorded or live training webinars.

Among the latest updates of the platforms that provide a complex approach to addressing educational challenges through other systems is a possibility of integrating MyEnglishLab with Moodle, Blackboard and Canvas. In November 2020 built-in ZOOM application was introduced in MyEnglishLab so that translation practice can be carried out in a mode of video calls as well.

At Kyiv National University of Economics and Trade (Ukraine) pre-service interpreters and translators are mainly taught practical disciplines via MyEnglishLab online-tool. "Practical course of English as the 1st foreign language" and "English for specific purposes (economics, management)" are among them.

2. A possibility to create content
2.1 Google Classroom

For the educational courses designed for teaching prospective interpreters and translators, it is highly recommended to provide the users with such a possibility. Therefore, this criteria of selection of educational online

platforms for prospective interpreters' preparation matters much in our research. As it is shown in the picture, the author of the course can create classes of various formats: an assignment, a quiz assignment, a question, material, a topic, etc. In Google Classroom, the lecturers can easily upload various study information, i.e. text files, video lectures, audio tracks, images, presentations, seminar material, workshops, questionnaires, registration forms, surveys, etc. Moreover, the data can be added, edited, deleted by the developer of the course thus providing the students with the updated information on the courses. All the folders and files are stored on the Google Disk enabling all the participants of the course to review and revise the information.
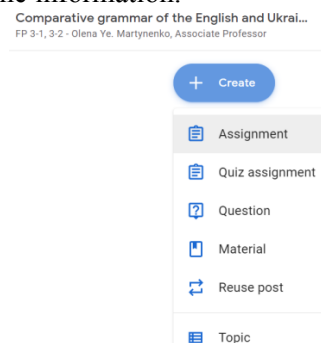

Figure 2. Creation of the content in the course "Comparative Grammar of the English and Ukrainian languages" for prospective interpreters and translators in Google Classroom

2.2 MyEnglishLab

The content in MyEnglishLab is mainly introduced by ready-designed sets of exercises consolidated by topics within courses. It is the teacher's responsibility to choose which assignments will be displayed for students. This is especially important while introducing test material to students, which we will analyse in the observance of academic integrity rules criterion. Thus, the set of exercises in each group of students may look different depending on their needs, level, readiness and intensity of the course. Besides, the platform offers an individualised approach where one or selected students get a task aimed at developing a particular skill or ability. Apart from this the platform provides additional teaching and learning tools and resources that can be optionally used to accompany the courses. In some courses the "Teacher resources" section can also be completed by a teacher who uploads files in different formats to share supplementary texts, audio, video etc. with students. Many of the courses are aided by an e-textbook that can be accessed anytime.

3. A possibility of bilateral communication
3.1 Google Classroom

Bilateral communication is a vital prerequisite of efficacy in the context of distance learning. On the online platform, a two-way connection and interaction between the students and the lecturer is realised through the built-in

messenger. Prospective interpreters and translators upload their media and text content to be viewed, commented, and graded by the tutor in real time, instantly, which is functionally convenient and effective for both sides. The students' questions and requests are digitally dealt with via a chat option whereas the students' reports and presentations are accessible to the tutor via the attached files to the certain task created by the author of the course.
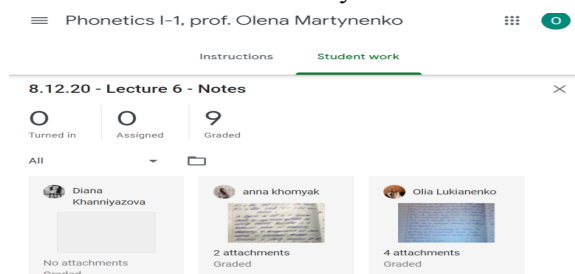

Figure 3. An example of bilateral communication between the students and the lecturer of the course "Practical Phonetics" for prospective interpreters and translators in Google Classroom

3.2 MyEnglishLab

To fulfil the function of academic communication between the teacher and students the platform comprises a messenger although it works similarly to an email service, not instant messages, and requires refreshing the page of a browser to check for new correspondence. The messenger has an option to send letters individually and to a selected group of recipients with no possibility to attach any file to them. The teacher is capable of restricting communication between students, which in authors' opinion seems unjustified. To compensate for the lack of instant messaging functionality on the platform, a new message alert option, which is not currently available on the platform, could be a good solution.

4. A possibility of computer-aided assessment
4.1 Google Classroom

Prospective interpreters and translators' ability to improve their professional skills is the key factor for any distance course. Such skills must be regularly developed and assessed via online instruments one of which is the electronic Google Grade Page which provides the detailed data such as the dates of the assignments, their types, a list of students, the grades, the deadlines. Both the students and lecturers can see the students' progress made on the online courses by visiting the "Grades". Each student's completion of the assignments is stored on the online platform and can be observed by the teacher for further analysis. The objective computer-aided assessment of the students' accomplished exercises leads to a conscious and profound attitude of the prospective interpreters and translators to their speciality. The grades of the whole group on all the assigned tasks provide the tutors with the overview of the general progress of the group and with the achievements of every person in particular.

Figure 4. Computer-aided assessment of the students' achievements on the course "Practical Phonetics" for prospective interpreters and translators in Google Classroom

4.2 MyEnglishLab

This criterion is presented on MyEnglishLab platform in a variety of functions and capabilities, in different types of students work since the system contains all the possible correct answers to those tasks that do not require individual grading by the teacher (students' essays or pronunciation work, for instance). Therefore, the verification of the correctness of the assignment occurs at almost all stages of students' work on this platform: in classroom drilling exercises, homework revision ones and even exams. The teacher can optionally switch on the function which allows the students to accomplish the tasks at several attempts.

At the stage of the final assessment in the form of exams the teacher can choose to distribute the points according to the assessment scale set by their educational institution so that the platform calculates the students' final result according to the required grading system and immediately reflects the points according to the scheme convenient for the teacher's downloadable reports.

The implementation of this criterion on the platform MyEnglishLab not only saves the teacher's time and effort spent on reviewing each work and its manual check, but it also saves time the benefit of in-class practice, while there is no need to devote any learning time to checking homework as a class. Instead, the teacher can see in reports what difficulties the students had, how many attempts they had to get the best scores, how long it took them to cope, what was their first/last/average result of the task completion, etc. in order to analyse and discuss selected answers.

5. Observance of academic integrity rules
5.1 Google Classroom

Undoubtedly, it has been essential to keep to the standard rules of academic integrity over the period of distance learning. Lack of personal contact and eye contact, technical audio and video obstacles (noisy signals, dead cameras, intrusive noises etc.) during the online conferences create a harmful and irritating effect on all the participants of the educational process. Therefore, obeying the following

simple rules is a must for the prospective interpreters and translators: turn on your camera at the lecture/practical class (Google Meet), accomplish your written assignments without anybody's assistance, meet your deadlines set by the author of the course, use decipherable handwriting.
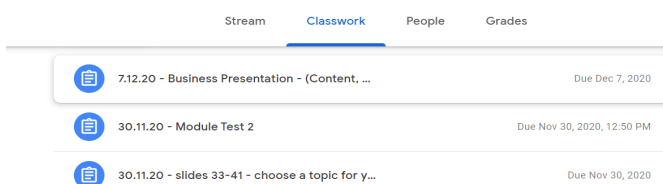

Figure 5. Deadlines as a means of academic integrity on the course "Scientific English" for prospective interpreters and translators (Master's Degree) in Google Classroom

5.2 MyEnglishLab

The platform enables the instructor to monitor the students' academic integrity. This feature is most significant during the assessment – both current and final – giving the teacher a possibility to make sure that all of the student's answers are the results of their intellectual efforts (MyEnglishLab)

As we mentioned earlier, one of the tools for implementing this criterion on the platform is the function of selecting assignments that will be displayed to students. Thus, it is recommended for the teacher to conceal the tests he or she is planning to use for assessment. With regard to the direct process of conducting a test or exam, the distance learning format has opened up endless opportunities for students. They can instantly exchange answers, solutions, media files with answers, for example, particularly screenshots of works checked by the platform, as well as works that have already been checked on the platform.

Taking this into account, we will reveal some of the functions and capabilities of the platform that help prevent the exchange of information and the spread of correct answers, as well as the participation of students in each other's work. The first and most obvious feature is to disable showing correct answers during test completion. At the same time, it seems rational to provide students with only one attempt to complete assignments.

The second important function is the ability to assign different tasks to selected students. The platform provides an extensive range of tasks designed at the same level and corresponding content, thus making it possible to create several options for testing one group.

Thirdly, another function of the implementation of this criterion is a time limit. It can be introduced on the platform in two ways. The first is the establishment of deadlines, where you can set the date and time the work should be done by. The second way is to set a timer inside each assignment. These two ways can be combined or used separately. Thus, by limiting the time for completing the assignment, discussion of the answers to the test assignments between students can be prevented.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Briefly summarizing the results of the research, it should be noted that Google Classroom is a convenient learning platform through which the process of teaching theoretical and practical disciplines for prospective interpreters and translators can be made as flexible, interactive and personalised as possible. Such theoretical and practical disciplines as "Comparative linguistics", "The History of the English Language", "Introduction to Translation Studies", "Practice of English", "Practical Phonetics" are efficiently and successfully taught in Google Classroom. According to the criteria of selection of educational online platforms for prospective interpreters' preparation, both teachers and students have easy access to the online platform and can take advantage of user-friendly navigation. Besides, the users have a possibility to create new educational content and are provided with an option of bilateral communication. A possibility of computer-aided assessment and observance of academic integrity rules make the use of the platform comfortable and transparent.

MyEnglishLab is an up-to-date online tool that provides carefully designed courses with authentic and engaging interactive activities as well as helpful instant feedback. The platform can only cover courses developed by Pearson although it is suitable to organise English practice for pre-service interpreters and translators' preparation. As for drawbacks, MyEnglishLab lacks an instant messenger. What could really work is either an instant messenger with chains of text conversations or an option of adding posts and responding to it in threads following an announcement or assignment. The platform can be used both as a part of a paper-based course and a purely digital one, synchronous and asynchronous learning in distance format developing skills of self-management and time independence in students.

Despite the differences and specific features, the use of both platforms as an online component of distance learning can provide sustainability to higher education and pre-service translators in particular. Besides the increase in the level of students' performance, these factors have a positive influence on their motivation towards studies.

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