

DIGITAL RESOURCES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH ONLINE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ЦИФРОВІ РЕСУРСИ ДЛЯ ВИКЛАДАННЯ ТА ВИВЧЕННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ОНЛАЙН В УМОВАХ ПАНДЕМІЇ COVID-19

Sabat S.I.,

orcid.org/0000-0001-9065-5833

*Assistant Professor at the Department of Applied Linguistics
Lviv Polytechnic National University*

The COVID-19 outbreak dramatically affected all spheres of our life: from social and economic to educational. In order to ensure the continuity of educational process higher education institutions had to shift to full online teaching and learning. The paper reflects the experience of teaching and learning English in contemporary academic environment during the pandemic situation caused by COVID-19 outbreak when an online education has become crucial in the educational field. The purpose of the article is to show the advantages of using video conferencing platform Zoom and MyEnglishLab developed by Pearson in the teaching and learning process in English classes. Combining these two online platforms can be beneficial both for teachers and students. Different digital tools that are provided by MyEnglishLab and Zoom engage students in effective virtual learning environment contributing greatly to students' motivation to study and improve English language proficiency. Zoom allows us to implement teaching and learning English by imitating live communication as close as possible to the traditional way, providing participants with support and variety of forms of feedback from the teacher and students. MyEnglishLab developed by Pearson can be a powerful tool suitable for teachers and learners' needs in online educational process. The article emphasizes the role of technology in providing more learning opportunities and better means for students to interact and learn effectively. The study revealed that the main advantages of using the platforms in English language teaching and learning are: ease of access to teaching resources, comfortable and constant interaction between students and the teacher in safe and secure environment, ability to establish audio and visual contact, time efficiency, flexibility and convenience.

Key words: online learning, online platform, digital tool, Zoom, MyEnglishLab, COVID-19 pandemic.

Пандемія COVID-19 різко вплинула на всі сфери нашого життя: від соціальної, економічної до освітньої. Щоб забезпечити продовження освітнього процесу, заклади вищої освіти були змушені перейти до викладання та навчання онлайн. Стаття відображає досвід викладання англійської мови в сучасному академічному середовищі в умовах пандемії COVID-19 студентам факультету прикладної лінгвістики національного університету «Львівська політехніка». Мета статті – показати переваги застосування цифрової онлайн платформи Zoom та віртуальної навчальної платформи MyEnglishLab від Pearson для викладання та навчання англійської мови. Поєднання цих двох платформ може бути корисним як для викладача, так і студента. Такий формат максимально наближує процес вивчення англійської мови до сучасних реалій, пропонує різноманітну діяльність студента в інтерактивному середовищі, надає миттєвий зворотний зв'язок. Різноманітні цифрові інструменти платформи Zoom та MyEnglishLab залучають студентів в ефективне віртуальне навчальне середовище, підвищують мотивацію студентів та заохочують до навчального процесу. Платформа Zoom дозволяє навчати та вивчати англійську мову, імітуючи живе спілкування, близьке до спілкування в традиційній навчальній аудиторії, забезпечує постійну та динамічну взаємодію учасників навчального процесу, відкриває нові можливості презентації навчального матеріалу для викладача. MyEnglishLab є потужним інструментом навчання, який підвищує ефективність та якість навчального процесу, відкриває нові можливості для роботи зі студентами, формує комунікативну компетенцію студента. У статті наголошується на ролі інформаційних технологій у забезпеченні навчальних можливостей та кращих інструментів для ефективної взаємодії та навчання студентів. Основними перевагами застосування онлайн-платформ для викладання англійської мови є: легкий доступ до навчальних ресурсів, постійна взаємодія між викладачем та студентами в безпечному середовищі, можливість аудіо- та візуального контакту, ефективне використання часу, гнучкість та зручність.

Ключові слова: онлайн-навчання, онлайн-платформа, цифровий інструмент, Zoom, MyEnglishLab, пандемія COVID-19.

Problem statement. The COVID-19 outbreak has caused great social and economic transformations which triggered significant changes in all areas of education. A sudden shift to full online learning and teaching has been brought into the educational process. Many instructors and learners had to adapt to the pandemic condition and transfer from in-person teaching and learning to online education.

In Ukraine, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

issued the letters which have been advising higher education institutions to ensure the continuity of the educational process and take into account all circumstances related to coronavirus situation.

On February 3, 2020, higher education institutions received the official letter recommending to organise “distance learning for students from the People’s Republic of China and Southeast Asia countries, who are currently in Ukraine and/or who cannot arrive in Ukraine due to spread of coronavirus” [7].

The letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine from March 11, 2020, No1/9-154 announced a three-week quarantine for all types of educational establishments in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and recommended online education [8]. Later, as the situation with coronavirus pandemic worsened, the quarantine was prolonged and schools, colleges and universities were closed. The teachers had to transfer to online teaching adapting the technologies and means they had at hand and students even had to take exams online. For both teachers and students online education has become a new challenge.

Our article discusses the results of utilising into educational process, particularly in the process of teaching and learning English, a video conferencing platform Zoom and online platform MyEnglishLab developed by Pearson in English classes at the department of Applied Linguistics in Lviv Polytechnic National University. It reflects the experience of teaching and learning English in contemporary academic environment during the pandemic situation caused by COVID-19 outbreak when an online education has become crucial in the educational field.

The topic of the article is of paramount importance due to the necessity of integrating different online tools and resources in language education caused by a new world life situation. Besides that, incorporating different online resources into foreign language teaching and learning is a significant factor in effective development of students' communication skills.

The appeal to online learning existed before the outbreak of COVID-19 in the form of distance learning, Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), and blended learning, a combination of traditional and online learning. Blended learning has been implemented in education rather extensively in the past years and the trend is increasing in the following years. Distance learning is not a new experience in many European, American, and Asian universities anymore. It has become an integral part of teaching and learning [6].

In 2013, the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv launched the first massive open online course (MOOC) in Ukraine. In 2016, the National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute", The Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, The Lviv Polytechnic National University, and the Ukrainian Catholic University piloted projects on the blended learning technology where MOOCs available at Prometheus were combined with face-to-face learning [1]. However, the COVID-19 outbreak demanded undertaking rigorous measures to withstand the pandemic challenges and provide online learning methodologies and technologies in

teaching that could be of a great help in the educational process. The transition towards online education system accessible to all students has started.

Purpose of the article. The purpose of our research is to describe and analyse the existing online platforms and applications for teaching and learning English in virtual classes. Our task is to show the advantage of utilising video conferencing platform Zoom and MyEnglishLab developed by Pearson in the teaching and learning process in English classes. The article emphasizes that the role of technology is vital in providing more learning opportunities and better means for students to interact and learn effectively. "The online space allows learners and teachers to stay connected outside the classroom. Learners can benefit from the fact that space and distance do not matter anymore" [5].

Different digital tools that are provided by MyEnglishLab and Zoom engage students in effective virtual learning environment contributing greatly to students' motivation to study and improve English language proficiency.

It should be noted that a considerable number of terms is used to describe online learning: e-learning, web-based learning, learning via the internet, distance learning, computerised electronic learning, virtual learning, and etc. "It is the type of learning environment specifically delivered via the internet to students and conducted by the teacher in a virtual classroom. The students can interactively communicate with the teachers and others students in this virtual classroom." [4]. Various digital platforms and applications can support online learning implementation. It can be carried out utilizing Google Meet, Google Classroom, Zoom Cloud Meeting, Microsoft Teams, etc. Those digital platforms helped both teachers and students to adapt to the pandemic conditions. Besides improving the students' digital literacy, it also helps students to learn English virtually and develop their language proficiency through natural interaction.

Presentation of the main material. It is impossible nowadays to imagine our life without technology. One of the world's most popular learning management system is Moodle which is designed to provide educators and learners with a secure and integrated system to create personalised learning environment. It is trusted by institutions and organisations worldwide and numbers of more than 270 million users. Moodle provides flexible tools to support both blended learning and fully online courses [9].

Besides the resources mentioned above, in teaching English we use MyEnglishLab which is

an online platform designed to complement Pearson ELT textbooks: Choices, Speakout, Language Leader, Market Leader and etc. It is considered to be one of the most powerful tools for blended learning in global academic society and can be integrated with systems like Moodle, Blackboard and Canvas. MyEnglishLab components can replace traditional Pearson paper workbook, helping students and teachers get more from the course. The activities in MyEnglishLab replicate the content students complete in a workbook, but in an interactive and engaging environment. Students can access all their content through the Pearson English Portal in one place and receive instant feedback on each task. The Pearson English Portal is the single access point for online and offline English teaching and learning resources. Students can watch videos, listen to audio and even record their own voices online. This vast range of activities help them build their confidence and improve on their mistakes [12].

Interactive activities, tasks and tests raise students' interests and engage them in the learning process. Extra hints and tips that the platform provides encourage and support learning. Each activity is built into a lesson plan and helps students practice speaking, listening, reading and writing.

The activities that students complete are recorded in MyEnglishLab Gradebook and help the teacher to see students' progress. It can be viewed for the whole class or individual students. The teacher can see how students are progressing at every stage, the amount of time spent on task, number of attempts to get an answer. Using the Common Error Report, the teacher can also analyze which errors are common among the students. With this information, the teacher can focus valuable class time on the areas that are needed the most. MyEnglishLab enables to mark students' homework assignments automatically. The time saved by automatic correction helps the teacher to manage and personalize the course material according to students' needs and preferences [10].

The platform has a range of tools to make classroom management simple and flexible. The teacher can communicate with students easily through email notifications and online messaging in a safe and secure environment. As teaching and learning online requires more e-correspondence and interaction via mobile applications between students and teachers this feature is of a significant help for both participants of the educational process.

MyEnglishLab makes possible learning and teaching be conducted both online and offline. Students can access all the activities when they are online anytime and anywhere. The teacher can create

course, groups, hide/show/assign content, share course with colleagues and even download the video activities.

In response to COVID-19 outbreak Pearson launched another feature that made teacher's and student's lives much easier and supported teachers teaching remotely. Zoom video conferencing tools have been integrated into the Pearson English Portal. This feature can help teachers schedule and run virtual lessons directly from the Pearson English Portal. Because Zoom is integrated into the Portal, teachers can set up classes and groups with the class management tool, create a calendar of scheduled classes, switch easily between showing the presentation on their screen and other resources they want to share, all within the Portal.

Zoom technology is widely used nowadays in teaching and learning English. Zoom is a cloud-based video conferencing service that enables to virtually interact "face-to-face" when in-person meetings are not possible. It has become one of the leading video conferencing software applications trusted by millions of enterprises, small businesses and individuals. It provides videotelephony and online chat services through a cloud-based peer-to-peer software platform and is used for teleconferencing, telecommuting, distance education, and social relations [15].

Zoom's popularity has increased drastically during the time of COVID-19 pandemic. It has helped students and teachers around the world quickly shift to remote virtual learning in a secure and productive environment. Zoom has numerous security features designed to control online classrooms and help educators effectively teach online. It also provides teachers with detailed tips and tricks for educating on Zoom and additional resources such as Free Remote Teacher Training Webinars. The webinars are led by experienced teachers who have transitioned from in-person to online teaching and help to adapt teaching practices and curriculum to a live video chat classroom. In addition, Zoom can be a powerful tool for teachers in their continuous professional development by hosting training sessions to cover online learning strategies and to collaborate with their peers on best teaching practices. Students can also find helpful tips for successful participating in online learning and some resources to help them stay secure.

Zoom's effective tools allow English teachers to develop reading, listening, speaking and writing skills in various ways. Zoom's screen sharing feature works both ways- the teacher and students can share videos, presentations, Internet and book pages. Book page sharing allows students to follow explanations

of the teacher and take an active part in the lesson. The teacher can easily allow students to share their own screens e.g., for demonstrating a project presentation. The activities a teacher can do via screen sharing:

- Show presentation slides to present new grammar
- Show images to explain new vocabulary
- Play a video on a video channel
- Display texts for students to complete comprehension tasks
- Show a student's written work and elicit correction (one-to-one)
- Provide feedback and comments, ask questions, organise discussions that can be incredibly stimulating for students.

All these activities greatly contribute to class interaction and productivity of the educational process [11].

There are numerous engaging activities that English teachers can incorporate into their course which will make the learning effective in an online setting. Zoom allows the teacher and students to use different virtual backgrounds. This is good for privacy so that learners do not have to worry about what is behind them. But it can also be used for language practice. Adding a suitable background image can help the teacher introduce the topic of the lesson and create a better understanding of the topic allowing students to be involved in the work more actively. Sharing videos and presentations as well as Whiteboard sharing can be of great help for both the teacher and students.

Teachers also have the opportunity to record lessons and watch them again to assess students' strengths and weaknesses. Students can also record the lesson if the teacher enables this feature for them. They can watch recorded lessons and see their improvement over time or review the content at any time and at their own pace. The teacher can show the recorded lessons to another teacher, who they trust, and ask for constructive feedback [13].

To practise students' writing skills the chat box feature can be used. Students can use the chat box to communicate with the teacher, with another student or with the group, brainstorm and share ideas and opinions. Communicating via a chat during the lesson is perfect for an English spelling activity. "Chats serve as a platform for written communication in a foreign language, allow you to conduct diagnostic surveys, receive quick feedback individually or in a group, and also check the involvement of students in the educational process" [14]. The teacher may use this function to give personalised feedback to individual students.

The annotation tools allow teachers to really engage with teaching and learning materials by writing and highlighting on the screen. This helps to make the learning both accessible and visually appealing. Students can also use the tools to annotate on a shared screen. Annotation can be used for eliciting error correction, getting students to "vote" for the best ideas on the screen, describe and draw.

The teacher can create "breakout rooms" for small group discussions which is equivalent to putting a student with a partner in class. It is a great way to encourage pair work or group work and allow students to work independently. Breakout rooms are ideal for speaking tasks. Such interaction contributes to the development of students' speaking skills that are crucial in learning a foreign language.

The benefits of using these two online platforms in teaching and learning English online are significant to both students and a teacher.

- Ease of access to teaching resources that are available at anytime, anywhere, as well as audio and video resources.
- Comfortable and constant interaction between students and the teacher in safe and secure environment.
- Access to "native-speaking" environment.
- Instant comments and feedback from the teacher that contributes to live communication.
- Choice of devices (students can use their personal devices that enables them to access all the activities when they are online anytime and anywhere).
- Time efficiency, flexibility and convenience (can save time, paper and other resources).
- Ability to establish audio and visual contact that is characteristic of face-to-face classes

However, there could be some drawbacks, mainly connected with the technical difficulties that may arise from the instability of the Internet connection or lack of reliable equipment. One more problem that many teachers face is that some students do not wish to turn on the camera during classes. Students explain that turning off the camera means being in a more comfortable environment, others explain by technical difficulties of using the mobile Internet. Many students use mobile phones for online classes. This may work for lectures and discussions, but may be less satisfactory for other tasks.

It is worth noting the role of the teacher in a virtual classroom. "When working in a virtual classroom, the teacher's role expands. He does not work as a teacher, he acts as a moderator of the online class, which simulate as much as possible live communication, thus contributing to classes interaction productivity and effectiveness" [12].

Combining these two online platforms can be beneficial both for teachers and students. Online learning and teaching environments provide fresh approaches to learning and teaching, make the learning process more effective and improve the quality of language teaching. Zoom and MyEnglishLab have been of great help for teachers during COVID-19 pandemic and contributed significantly to online education. It helped our students learn at home and teachers teach in virtual classrooms.

Conclusions. The educational process in the system of teaching and learning English can be carried out by means of such digital platforms as Zoom and MyEnglishLab developed by Pearson effectively. Zoom allows us to implement teaching and learning English by imitating live communication as close as possible to the traditional way, provide participants with support and variety of forms of feedback from the teacher and students. MyEnglishLab developed by Pearson can be a powerful tool suitable for

teachers and learners' needs in online educational process. Different digital tools that are provided by MyEnglishLab, engage students in authentic context and learning environment. Our experience proved efficiency of using Zoom and MyEnglishLab platforms for teaching and learning English to Philology students of the department of Applied linguistics in Lviv Polytechnic National University. The teachers of our department have been applying the online learning technologies in teaching English intensively.

According to our observations, Zoom and MyEnglishLab platforms promote students' motivation for learning, help them reach better results in online tests and writing and speaking assignments. The results of teaching English to students with the help of Zoom and MyEnglishLab have confirmed successful outcomes of developing students' reading, listening, writing and speaking skills. The students' feedbacks have confirmed the platforms make learning more productive, more engaging and more time-effective.

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