

practical classes. Recommendations on the use of elements of the problem in the process of forming the mathematical competence of future primary school teachers are formulated.

Keywords: *mathematical competence, problem-based approach, problem, problem lecture, task, future elementary school teacher, techniques, means.*

UDK 378.011.3-051:81'243

Torubara O. A.

EFL LECTURER EVOLUTION: FROM CONTENT EXPERT TO CURRICULUM FACILITATOR

Current higher school pedagogy faces an urgent need of adaptation to address the challenges of the twenty-first century. The traditional approach based on a teacher-centered focus and one-way passive learning does not engage the students into an active process of developing their skills and values necessary for success in their study and careers. These days, University lecturers teaching English as a Foreign Language are expected to help students learn how to teach themselves, be responsible for their own life-long learning and foster creativity. The article explores possible ways of transforming the role of higher education EFL professionals as well as increasing their competence by developing the skills of facilitating and educational guidance based on personal experience of on-line learning facilitation, the literature on the subject, and our research on the theories and practices of facilitating educators.

Keywords: *English as a Foreign Language (EFL), higher education, facilitator, massive open on-line courses, blended learning.*

Over the past decades, the Internet, World Wide Web, and digitalization of content have brought about a transformational shift in society. Higher education is being similarly transformed by these forces, both in how institutions operate and how faculty members teach and students learn. The ability to learn online independent of time or place provides students with greatly increased options and flexibility. But online education is not merely the electronic conveyance of content, and a well-designed online course is much more than an online collection of PowerPoint slides. Achieving quality in online learning requires hard work of instructional designers, media producers, assessment staff, administrative personnel. It is also impossible without sufficient technical facilities.

But the most important factor is sustained commitment of well-trained and supported faculty members ready to combine off-line and on-line work with the students. Terminology is considered the most dynamic field of lexis. Pedagogical science has recently been enriched by the terms *couch, mentor, tutor, advisor, facilitator* which are closely connected with the notion 'life-long learning'. These new functional roles of educator appeared due to introduction of learner-centered approach and reflect transition from authoritative model to flexible guidance and scaffolding. The aim of the article is to explore possible ways of transforming the role of higher education professionals by developing the skills of facilitating and educational guidance as well as to share our professional experience of implementing main principles of blended learning into University practice.

Theoretical background

The latest trends in teaching such as *flipped classroom, blending learning, student-centered approach, project-based learning*, and even *self-organized learning* – they all transform the teacher into a more facilitative role. Sokolova Y. in her article on the latest trends in educational terminology tries to clarify connotative peculiarities of the terms *couch, mentor, tutor, advisor, facilitator* and to define the sphere of their professional use from pedagogical and psychological points of view (Соколова, 2013). With the help of the frequency analysis method, addressing etymology and semantic of the concepts as well as special dictionaries and Internet search the researcher comes to the conclusion that there are no strict differentiations between the notions in pedagogical sources. The use of the listed terms is specific for the field of continuous education and depends on cultural and professional context. The author also mentions that the term 'facilitator' appears more organic for informal education and to a greater extent correlates with the functions of a qualified trainer or creative sessions moderator.

A facilitator is commonly defined as a substantively neutral person who manages the group process in order to help groups achieve identified goals or purposes. The term was first introduced to be used for educational needs by Carl Rogers and the general tone of learning through facilitation was set by him in the middle of the 20th century. In 1951 Rogers looked at 'student-centred teaching' in *Client-Centered*

Therapy, where he claimed that teaching is really ‘facilitation’ and that we must allow the learner to relax to learn and feel free from any form of threat. Later, in 1969, in his *Freedom to Learn* he applied counselling principles to education and explored facilitation and person-centred learning in schools (Rogers, 1969). Genuineness, acceptance and empathy are the core qualities of a facilitator according to Rogers.

In his turn, Underhill A. In *Facilitation in Language Teaching* (1996) defines a facilitator as “a teacher in any educational setting who understands the topic, is skilled in the use of current teaching methods and techniques, and who actively studies and pays attention to the psychological learning atmosphere and the inner processes of learning on a moment by moment basis, with the aim of enabling learners to take as much responsibility for their learning as they can. A qualified facilitator should have knowledge and practical expertise in all three areas: topic, method and inner processes” (Underhill, 1996, 126).

Schwarz (2002, 2005), a facilitator educator based in the U.S.A. identified five common facilitation roles: facilitator; facilitative consultant; facilitative coach; facilitative trainer; and facilitative leader. He described a facilitator as a “substantively neutral third party, acceptable to all members of the group, who has no substantive decision-making authority” (Schwarz, 2005, 27).

Schwarz is not the only facilitator educator or facilitation author to conceptualise similar roles. Hunter (2007), a facilitator educator based in New Zealand, also highlighted the difference between a facilitator and someone who is facilitative. She distinguished the role of facilitators from that of facilitative mediators, teachers, coaches, managers, group therapists, and leaders. The role of a group facilitator, according to Hunter (2007), is to guide the group process to help participants achieve their agreed purpose.

Thus, there is a consensus among the researchers that a facilitating teacher is good at classroom management as he trusts the potential of the group, sees group interaction as a way of learning and is sensitive to group dynamics. Facilitator also uses a variety of work modes and diverse group rearrangement techniques. What is more, such type of a teacher is a good listener and a keen observer. As he believes in learner autonomy, he unlocks the power of questions and works with a process-sensitive methodology.

Methodology, organization and results of the research

Initially the term ‘facilitator’ was associated with off-line group work, but nowadays facilitating techniques are adapted for on-line environment. The educational market adapts to the needs of people born in the digital age, with an emphasis on technology. Today we give preference to educational on-line platforms whose advantages are mobility and flexibility, freedom of choice and comfort. Distance learning is developing in two directions. First, on-line learning platforms such as Khan Academy, Future Learn, EdX, Coursera offer massive open on-line courses (MOOCs). Second, there are many training programs created by big companies and experts in their field to upgrade their potential or existing employees, and meet the requirements of the local market.

Following the global trend, Ukrainian universities are increasingly using online resources and interaction to support student learning across blended and online courses. Educators of these courses need sound online facilitation skills to facilitate engaged students online conversational spaces. Trained online facilitators are also able to make good choices about the use of online communication when designing learning activities. There are some theoretical convergences as to what facilitation of on-line learning constitutes, but it is less widely understood how to put it into practice. Also, there have been relatively few studies focusing on facilitation in Ukrainian educational contexts. Given this paucity of local empirical studies, insights as to how facilitation might be operationalized can be drawn from studies elsewhere. A number of these studies introduce the principles and practice of facilitation with curricular innovations such as communicative language teaching, problem-based learning and virtual learning sites.

It is obvious that E-learning industry has been growing enormously. Simultaneously, on-line course completion rates are alarming low. In general, according to recent study of Jordan K., a respected education and technology researcher, only 15% of MOOCs participants manage to complete the course they have enrolled for. In this paper we would like to present our reflection on facilitating a MOOC and attempts to cope with the main challenges of distance learning – low completion rates and lack of student engagement.

Our first steps were made within the project “English for Media Literacy” which was implemented by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Public Affairs Section of the Embassy of the United States in Kyiv in collaboration with educational online platform Coursera. A MOOC “English for Media Literacy” was created by the University of Pennsylvania and designed for non-native English speakers who are interested in learning more about media literacy. In this course, the participants explore

different types of mass media, such as newspapers, magazines, television, and social media. This course also gives the opportunity to develop a broader understanding of the role media plays in our lives, while building vocabulary and giving the students the language skills needed to analyze what they read and watch.

From January to June, 2018 program participants had an opportunity to improve their English skills while learning more about the role mass media plays in modern society. The program was designed to inform audiences about media literacy and how to be better informed about modern media.

30 English language professionals from 20 Ukrainian towns and cities were selected to take part in the project and to receive special training as course facilitators. They held dissemination seminars and workshops for multiple audiences, including youth, educators, community leaders, and news professionals in their regions. They also facilitated the work of MOOC Camps and helped the course participants share expertise and work together to develop their media literacy strategies. In total, 120 group trainings were held for nearly 700 participants all over Ukraine and 500 people were awarded "English for Media Literacy" Certificates for successful course completion from Coursera, Pennsylvania University and RELO of US Embassy in Kyiv.

O. Torubara was lucky to be selected as a course facilitator in Chernihiv region. Together with 15 students of Natural and Mathematical Faculty we had 6 weeks of fruitful collaboration, learning from each other, unexpected insights and heated debates. The course gave the participants a great opportunity to develop a broader understanding of media and its role in our lives as well as the language skills needed to analyze what you read and watch.

In order to provide the best e-learning experience, on-line learning was combined with regular face-to face meetings. These sessions were organized by the course facilitator who was ready to answer the participants' questions on the course content and procedures, and offer help. Apart from on-line presence, participating in the course forum and covering all stages of the course completion together with the students, the facilitator had an opportunity to work with them individually and in person any time they come across any problems with course learning. A great job was done to maintain a friendly environment and relaxed but engaging tone of the discussion through a wide range of team-building activities, warmers and ice-breakers. The participants felt free to ask questions, share experiences and collaborate to get the most out of the course.

Successful launch of the project led to high interest to media literacy education among the students and faculty members which soon entailed changes in specialty curriculum. A new academic course "English for Media Literacy" was introduced into teaching practice at Natural and Mathematical Faculty of NUChC at the beginning of the fall semester, 2018. It was provided for the students of the 4th year of study majoring in Computer Science and IT. The course includes 20 hours of lectures and 20 hours of practical classes which are to be held twice a week for half a year. At the end of the course the students are supposed to be assessed in oral or written form and receive their Coursera certificate. The mark for the course completion is an official one and is to be registered in the Bachelor's Certificate after graduation.

As we believe that the course may become a valuable educational experience and reveal for our students great opportunities of life-long learning we developed a Classroom Set which is the guide to the massive open online course "English for Media Literacy" (Torubara, 2019). The aim of the guide is to help the participants to cope with all course tasks, complete it successfully as well as to gain media literacy skills and improve their English.

The guide consists of two parts: Student's Book and Facilitator's Book. Student's Book contains step-by-step instructions as for registration on the platform and passing on-line course as well as learning materials for each of the five modules and additional lesson plans from the NewseumEd.org for the group work and projects. Student's Book is particularly useful for developing class discussions. There are some teacher-controlled exercises, as well as pair and small-group work activities involving role plays, problem solving tasks and projects.

Facilitator's Book gives some recommendations how to organize blended learning and the keys to most tasks. As one of the MOOC facilitator's tasks is to help the participants to start work with the platform and build their learning success strategy the sections Help Me, Coursera Honour Code, Coursera Conduct Code and Coursera Website Guide were extremely useful especially if it was their first online course. The manual is addressed to the students and English teachers as well as to a wide circle of those wishing to be better informed about media world. Besides, this Classroom Set can save the facilitator's time and efforts in case of no Internet access or poor technical support.

Conclusions

The participation in the project described here was a powerful learning experience for all those involved. The students received an opportunity to try out an alternative to common University courses.

For the most of the participants it was the first experience of distance learning and that is why we did our best to turn this program into an exciting educational journey in a good company. From the very beginning they were helped to register and navigate the course, effectively manage their time working individually or in groups, make the most benefit of learning materials through language and communication practice, and peer review the works of the classmates.

The course ran for 5 weeks, requiring 3-4 hours of study per week. The learners had 24:7 access to traditional course materials, such as readings and problem sets, plus interactive tools, such as videos, quizzes, user forums, social media chats and articles that all generate discussion and debate. If the student did not finish all graded assignments before the end of the course, he could reset the deadlines. The progress was saved and the student was able to pick up where he left off.

At the same time academic course lasted for a semester and consisted of 20 classes. So, it enabled the participants to complete assignments on their own schedules with their own pace keeping up with the whole group. The progress of every student was monitored by the course facilitator. If the learner was not able to finish the task in time or submitted the work later he could address the facilitator or his groupmates, ask for help or complete the task together with the partner or a group. In addition to immense learning opportunities the participants joined the community of lifelong learners and their CV grew with one more University certificate. Academic performance of the group was absolute as all the students enrolled for the course “English for Media Literacy” managed to complete on-line study, receive digital certificate, prepare final presentation and successfully pass University exam.

It is difficult to overestimate the role of a facilitator in successful course completion. Among numerous facilitator’s duties were to monitor and require scheduled attendance of synchronous on-line and off-line courses, to state the reasons of poor performance and offer appropriate solutions, to encourage active participation and help with additional individual learning trajectory, to keep track of group dynamics. The task of facilitation can be made easier if we better understand the different roles of an educator, are aware of main principles of blended learning and base our practice on sound theoretical concepts and best models.

Online education is scarcely more than 20 years old. In that short period, there have been many discussions of facilitation and there is a well grounded consensus on essential combination of the best on-line and off-line practices for the learners’ benefit. No doubt further research on facilitation will contribute new elements to our understanding of this powerful educational trend as well as promote its transformation into profession of the future.

References:

1. Haythornthwaite, C. And Andrews, R. (2011). *E-learning Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.
2. Hunter, D. (2007). *The art of facilitation: The essentials for leading great meetings and creating group synergy*. Auckland: Random House.
3. Jordan, K. (2015) *MOOC Completion Rates: the Data*. Retrieved from: <http://www.katyjordan.com/MOOCproject.html>
4. Rogers, C. R. (1980) *A way of being*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin
5. Rogers, C. R. (1951) *Client-centered therapy*. Oxford, England: Houghton Mifflin
6. Rogers, C. R. (1983) *Freedom to Learn for the 80s*. Columbus Merrill
7. Schwarz, R. (2005). *Using facilitative skills in different roles*. In R. Schwarz & A. Davidson (Eds.), *The skilled facilitator fieldbook: Tips, tools, and tested methods for consultants, facilitators, managers, trainers, and coaches* (pp. 27-32). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
8. Schwarz, R. (2002). *The skilled facilitator: A comprehensive resource for consultants, facilitators, managers, trainers, and coaches*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
9. Torubara, O. A. (2019) *English for Media Literacy. MOOC Guide. Facilitator’s Book*. Chernihiv: Desna Poligraf
10. Torubara, O. A. (2019) *English for Media Literacy. MOOC Guide. Student’s Book*. Chernihiv: Desna Poligraf
11. Underhill, A. (1997). *The psychological atmosphere we create in our classrooms*. *The Language Teacher*, 21(9), Tokyo: JALT
12. Underhill, A. (1996). *Facilitation in language teaching*. In J. Arnold (Ed.), *Affect in language learning* (pp.125-141). Cambridge: CUP.
13. Соколова, Е. И. (2013) *Анализ терминологического ряда “коуч”, “ментор”, “тьютор”, “фасилитатор”, “эдвайзер” в контексте непрерывного образования. Непрерывное образование: XXI век, выпуск 4*. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15393/j5.art.2013.2171>