Секция 2. ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ БАЗОВЫХ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЙ УЧАЩИХСЯ НА ОСНОВЕ ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИХ ТЕХНОЛОГИЙ ЭЛЕКТРОННОГО ОБУЧЕНИЯ

COLABORATION IN VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN TEACHING WRITING IN EFL

Ivana Cimermanova,
English language teacher-trainer,
Faculty of Arts,University of Presov
(c. Presov, Slovakia)

The article discusses the experience with virtual learning environment and building cooperative atmosphere to develop autonomy of the pre-service teachers in the course of creative writing applying peer-evaluation.

Keywords: virtual learning environment (VLE), a process of teaching foreign language, cooperation, peer evaluation, autonomy.

We live in digital era and children born to this era are digital natives (cf. Prensky [3]). Concerning technologies, those children do not use old-fashioned email (just in case they have to), they run instant messaging in the background constantly on their phones, they use phones as navigation, game, they surf web on their phones, they pay using their phones. They do not need records, newspaper, movie DVDs or TV. They simply go online and get what they want. And in case they watch TV, they have a pone in their hands chatting with, reading statuses in the social net. They are naturally multitasking several activities. Even though we, digital immigrants, feel we are technology skilled and use them often, it is still not their level.

Virtual learning environment (VLE), blended learning, online learning, e-learning, learning management system (LMS) are the buzz words. Those words are slowly substituting the words as computer assisted learning, technology enhanced learning from our dictionaries. E-learning has become a part not only of informal education but also a part of formal education. Interactive whiteboard and tablets can be found even in kindergarten. Education naturally reflects technological development. Prensky [3] introduces the term partnering pedagogy that assimilates technology, learning and teaching. The teachers' role is to facilitate and coach the learning process rather than control it; what includes «asking good questions, providing context, ensuring rigor, and evaluating the quality of students' work».

Creating safe and positive atmosphere is very important for teaching/learning efficacy and self-actualisation. In face-to-face classes there are various tools teachers use to develop classroom dynamics to support students' learning and social inclusion. Marzano suggests to consider dominance, cooperation and an awareness of student needs if one wants to build positive

atmosphere [1]. This should be applied in both, face-to-face learning and e-learning. One of the main characteristics of e-learning is that the learners are physically not present at the same place but they share the same virtual space, materials, that are virtually available and they can work synchronously or asynchronously using the tools available.

It is still truth that many courses are rather storage for organized data at one place. There is low level of interaction. VLEs however offer much more. Many institutions use Moodle that is a free open-source learning content management system (LCMS). It includes a set of tools available to the teacher to deliver the learning content, track students' activity, to build different types of interactions, build collaboration between learners, etc.. It is easy-to-use, navigation is intuitive and includes useful tools as wiki, chat, forum, glossary, possibility to integrate e.g. hot potatoes activities (also open-free source). The basic computers skills are enough to create a moodle course and run it` however to create it and run it effectively means that it follows necessary methodological principles. This idea is mentioned by various researchers and educators (see e.g. Prensky [4], Weller [7]).

Weller highlights the importance of personalization and he namely mentions four important factors: content needs to be suitably chunked; content should be suitably described; a wide, sufficient range of content to meet different learner styles and preferences; rich user data.

Digital natives are used to read material online. What course designers and author designers should take into consideration is the amount of material and way of its presentation. The report Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning prepared by Means et al. in 2000 [2] reported that «[e]ffect sizes were larger for studies in which the online instruction was collaborative or instructor-directed than in those studies where online learners worked independently».

Reflective and practical tasks are easy-to-use for digital natives as they use different social fora to communicate and deliver different kinds of material. They are used to comment and give feedback. This kind of tasks can be used to give learners possibility to get acquainted with the educational environment, to meet safety needs and slowly build a community to meet the needs of belonging and lower anxiety and fear of unknown. The role of the teacher is very important. Even though teacher is «invisible» students have to know teacher helps them to manage their progress and learning. Salmon defines 5 stages of teaching and learning e-moderating, namely: access and motivation, online satisfaction, information exchange, knowledge construction, development [5]. Good e-moderation leads to higher participation of students what can be reflected in the amount of browsed/downloaded material, level of their contribution in fora, discussions and chats.

Inserting images enables to make the content more visible. Reading images is faster and more memorable than the words.
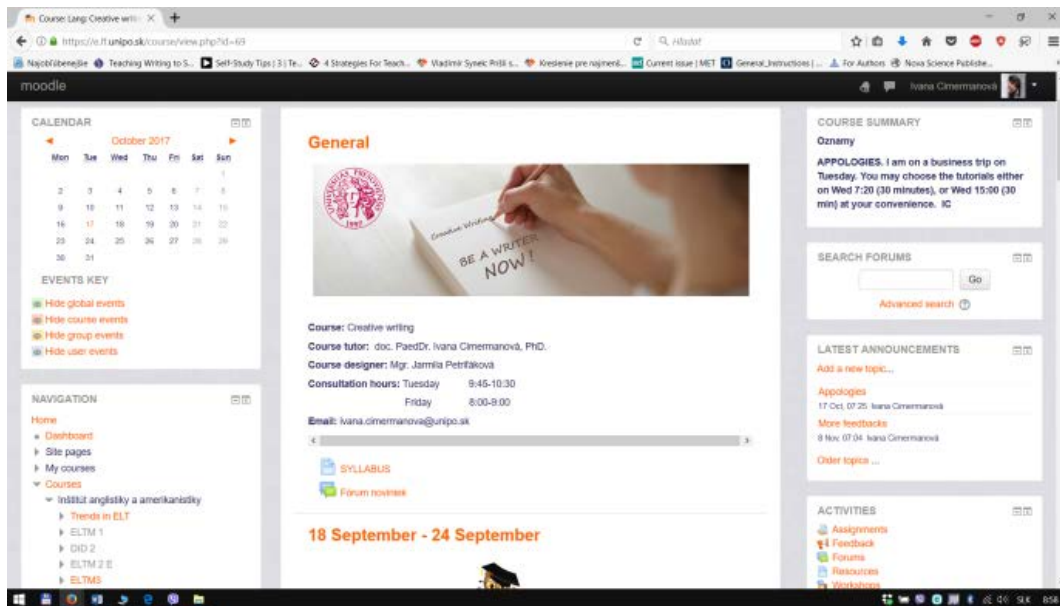
Figure 1 – Printscreen of the course Creative writing

Peer evaluation is a possibility how to involve learners in not only running the course but to help them understand their own writing, to help them become autonomous. It enhances collaboration and it is a possibility to train effective ways of giving feedback, reading feedback and also to realise the effect of objective criticism and need of balance of both, positive and critical comments them can help the learner to make progress. In Moodle one can easily set the workshop where students can evaluate writings of their peers (workshops can be divided into several phases and teacher switches the phases according to the needs and set timeline).
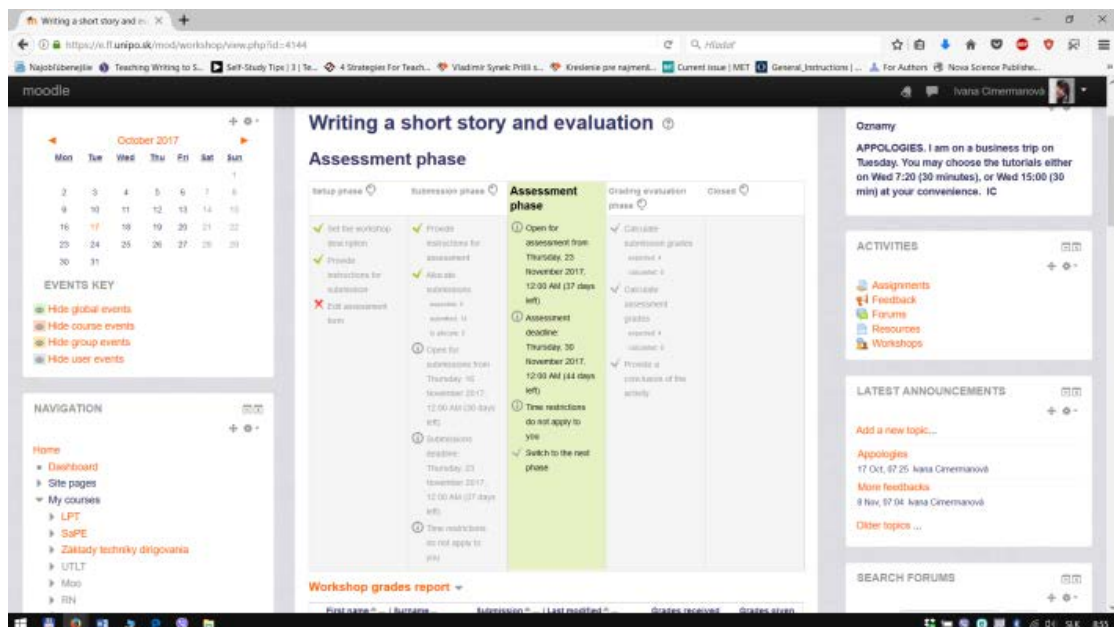

Figure 2 – Printscreen of the Worshop setting in Moodle
with peer-evaluation included

In their feedbacks students claimed that reviewing their peer's writing helped them to focus their attention on important aspects in their own writing. They appreciate the time plan of activities (drafting, reviewing, rewriting and

uploading the final draft), the possibility to work on their own, at time that was most convenient for them.

They also reported that the first peer feedback they were delivered was a lesson for them how to write a feedback. After first, very positive feedbacks that did not help them as much as the feedback should – they stated they realized how important it was to be constructively critical to help the writer. Student engagement increased with time. The course participants were pre-service English language teachers what might influence their understanding of feedback importance.

The findings highlight the important of engaging students in feedback as well as benefits of VLE for effective collaboration and cooperation that would be more difficult to manage in the writing class. There are many more asynchronous tools that might be used effectively in blended learning or computer assisted language learning/ technology enhanced language learning as a supplement to in-class activities and support collaboration. As a result this can also promote self-regulated learning and increase the level of autonomy.

Bibliography

1. Marzano, R. J. What works in schools: translating research into action / R.J. Marzano // VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. –2003.
2. Means, B. et al. Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies [online] / B. Meeans et al. // U. S. Department of Education. – 2010 – Available at: https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf. – Date of access 14.10.2017.
3. Prensky, M. Teaching digital natives: partnering for real learning / M. Prensky // Thousand Oaks : Corwin Press. – 2010.
4. Prensky, M. Before Bringing in New Tools, You Must First Bring in New Thinking [online] / M. Prensky – Available at: http://marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky-NewThinking-Amplify-June2012.pdf. – Date of access 14.10.2017.
5. Salmon, G. E-moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online / G. Salmon // RoutledgeFalmer : London. – 2003.
6. Tapscott, D. Grown up digital: how the net generation is changing the world / D. Tapscott // New York : McGraw-Hill. – 2009.
7. Weller, M. Virtual learning environments: using, choosing and developing your VLE / M. Weller // London : Routledge. – 2008.

СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВО В ВИРТУАЛЬНОЙ ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОЙ СРЕДЕ В ОБУЧЕНИИ ПИСЬМА НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ КАК ИНОСТРАННОМ

Цимерманова И.

В статье обсуждается опыт виртуального обучения будущих учителей и создания совместной атмосферы для развития автономии учащихся в курсе креативного письма с использованием оценки студентов своими сокурсниками.

Ключевые слова: виртуальная образовательная среда, процесс обучения иностранному языку, сотрудничество, оценка студентов сокурсниками, самостоятельность / автономия.