

UDC 378:371.311:811.11

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2410-0927-2021-14-15>

Olga SOKYRSKA

PhD in Philology, Senior Lecturer of Department of Technical English № 2, National Technical University of Ukraine “Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute”, 37, Prosp. Peremohy, Kyiv, Ukraine, 03056

ORCID: 0000-0001-8100-9709

Svitlana BUHA

Lecturer of Department of Technical English № 2, National Technical University of Ukraine “Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute”, 37, Prosp. Peremohy, Kyiv, Ukraine, 03056

ORCID: 0000-0001-9609-2867

To cite this article: Sokyrka, O., Buha S. (2021). Vykorystannia platform dlia dystantsiinoi osvity pid chas onlain navchannia navychkam pysma [The Use of Distance Learning Platforms in Teaching Writing Online]. *Current Issues of Foreign Philology*, 14, 96–101, doi: <https://doi.org/10.32782/2410-0927-2021-14-15>

THE USE OF DISTANCE LEARNING PLATFORMS IN TEACHING WRITING ONLINE

The work outlines the challenges educators face while teaching writing online and finds out ways to overcome them. Therefore, the aim of this study is to review available e-learning platforms used to facilitate foreign language teaching process in general and teaching writing in particular, analyze opportunities it gives, the applicability of online tools, demonstrate how to combine them with onsite teaching. The author reflects on the possibility of the use online learning environments in post-pandemic time.

This work also analyzes pre-lesson activities and their use while online and onsite work, substantiates pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing activities and how beneficial they are to ESL students in learning English. The article reviews the possibilities provided by Moodle and Google Workspace distance learning courses on the basis of “Sikorsky” Distance Learning Platform supplemented with other online learning services for teaching writing skills. The implementation of e-learning at Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute demonstrated that it enables and facilitates interaction between educators and students, the university has developed and advanced huge amount of activities and materials supplementing course materials aimed at teaching writing skills as well as other language skills.

The peculiarities of synchronous and asynchronous teaching of writing skills are studied in the article. The results show the effectiveness of combination of online and traditional tools of teaching writing and the potential of distance learning platforms.

The results of the study show that one of the main benefits of teaching writing online is the ability to adjust learning process to students’ individual needs and learning style. Thus, online learning will eventually become an integral component of teaching which will lead to the emergence of a new hybrid model of education.

Key words: distance education, online learning tools, teaching writing online, distance learning platforms.

Ольга СОКИРСЬКА

кандидат філологічних наук, старший викладач кафедри англійської мови технічного спрямування № 2, Національний технічний університет України «Київський політехнічний інститут імені Ігоря Сікорського», просп. Перемоги, 37, Київ, 03056

ORCID: 0000-0001-8100-9709

Світлана БУГА

викладач кафедри англійської мови технічного спрямування № 2, Національний технічний університет України «Київський політехнічний інститут імені Ігоря Сікорського», просп. Перемоги, 37, Київ, 03056

ORCID: 0000-0001-9609-2867

Бібліографічний опис статті: Сокирська, О., Буга С. (2021). Використання платформ для дистанційної освіти під час онлайн навчання навичкам письма. *Актуальні питання іноземної філології*, 14, 96–101, doi: <https://doi.org/10.32782/2410-0927-2021-14-15>

ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ПЛАТФОРМ ДЛЯ ДИСТАНЦІЙНОЇ ОСВІТИ У НАВЧАННІ НАВИЧОК ПИСЬМА ОНЛАЙН

У роботі висвітлюються проблеми, з якими стикаються педагоги під час онлайн навчання навичкам письма та з'ясовуються шляхи їх подолання. Тому метою цього дослідження є розглянути доступні платформи електронного навчання, які використовуються для полегшення процесу навчання іноземної мови загалом і навчання навичкам письма зокрема, проаналізувати можливості, які воно дає, застосування онлайн-інструментів, продемонструвати як поєднати їх із навчанням в аудиторії. Автор розмірковує про можливість використання онлайн-середовищ для навчання в постпандемічний час.

У цій роботі також аналізуються види роботи на етапі підготовки до уроку та їх використання під час роботи онлайн та оффлайн, обґрунтовуються види вправ перед початком написання роботи, під час написання та після написання та наскільки вони корисні для студентів у вивченні англійської мови. У статті розглядаються можливості дистанційних курсів Moodle та Google Workspace на базі платформи дистанційного навчання «Sikorsky» та інших сервісів онлайн-навчання для удосконалення навичок письма. Впровадження електронного навчання в Київському політехнічному інституті імені Ігоря Сікорського продемонструвало, що воно уможливує та полегшує взаємодію викладачів та студентів, університет розробив та вдосконалив велику кількість вправ та матеріалів, що доповнюють матеріали курсу, спрямовані на навчання навичкам письма та інших мовних навичок.

У статті досліджуються особливості синхронного та асинхронного навчання навичкам письма. Результати показують ефективність поєднання онлайн і традиційних інструментів навчання письму та потенціал платформ дистанційного навчання.

Результати дослідження показують, що однією з головних переваг навчання письмом онлайн є можливість налаштувати процес навчання відповідно до індивідуальних потреб і стилю навчання учнів. Таким чином, онлайн-навчання з часом стане невід'ємною складовою навчання, що призведе до появи нової гібридної моделі освіти.

Ключові слова: дистанційна освіта, інструменти онлайн-навчання, навчання навичкам письма онлайн, платформи для дистанційного навчання.

Introduction. Rapid changes and modern trends in the English language learning are caused by the new challenges of the world which accelerated the transition to distance learning from traditional forms of instruction used in the higher education system before. The use of information and communication technologies in education have become ubiquitous and inevitable in the long process of gaining language proficiency which attracts attention of many researchers (Kornieva, Vashchylo, 2021; Baklazhenko, 2021; Lockee, 2021).

Learning of foreign languages is crucial for successful professional, business, international and interpersonal communication which is impossible without learning academic language as well as academic writing. Thus, teaching writing has become an important part of the curriculum.

Many universities were forced to develop e-learning platforms on the basis of previously created learning management systems due to the global pandemic. These platforms facilitate educators' interaction with online learners, significantly help them to conceptualize various courses, course structures, syllabus and make educational process more flexible, convenient, accessible and tailored to students' needs (Ghouname, 2020, pp. 25–31; Hussin, 2018).

Writing is a linguistic skill which is as important for English language learners as all other language aspects such as reading, listening, and speaking. Students need to think critically, analyze and systematize information, express their opinions which is impossible without writing skills.

All these aspects make the study of available online tools and platforms providing possibilities and functions for teaching writing **relevant** as the transition from traditional classes to online instruction due to the global pandemic might be here to stay which will significantly affect the system of education. Besides, forced shift to distance education due to quarantine restrictions demonstrated the efficiency of using online learning platforms used in language learning in general and teaching writing in particular, the potential of virtual educational environments, the diversity of functions and possibilities they provide, the need of their further improvement and development since they make it possible to deliver information as effectively as in offline instruction.

Thus, the **aim** of this work is to review and analyze available e-learning platforms used to facilitate foreign language teaching process in general and teaching writing in particular, study the opportunities and tools provided for teaching writing skills, their combination with classroom

work and the applicability of its use in post-pandemic time.

Methodology. Many higher educational institutions used online education opportunities to its full potential. Forced transition to online instruction demonstrated that traditional offline learning and e-learning can go hand by hand. To master all English language skills (speaking, reading, listening and writing) the students of Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute were provided with Moodle and Google Workspace distance learning courses available on “Sikorsky” Distance Learning Platform during the quarantine. Asynchronous learning process was supplemented by such services as MyEnglishLab, Classtime, Peardeck, Padlet, Google Forms, Google Doc etc. Synchronous learning process was organized with the help of such services as Webex, Google Meet, zoom, Skype etc. because of their convenience and wide range of possibilities they give. Such services as Google Workspace (GSuite for Education) are widely used by Ukrainian universities for teaching different language skills and writing in particular. During the pandemic these tools enable educators to interact with students more efficiently and effectively via video conferences, chat groups, document sharing and make it easier to communicate with a teacher with the help of online platforms. Such English learning platforms as My English Lab provide exercises where students are offered to complete writing tasks having possibility to practice other language skills as many times as they need. The teacher’s feedback is left in student’s personal account with highlighted, corrected and commented mistakes.

These online tools proved its effectiveness in enabling students-teachers interaction, the get students actively involved in studying process (Toffoli, Sockett, 2015). The use technology for studying and working distantly is beneficial for both participants of the educational process, teachers and students. That’s why blended learning, allowing a combination of online and traditional tools of teaching, has become so popular (Sokyrskya, 2020).

Results and discussion. Teaching writing is a challenging and overwhelming task for many educators even in classrooms, let alone online instruction. A teacher may not be able to conduct writing classes as often as in classroom, but

a positive thing is that students can be given a lot of time to practice writing skills independently with the help of online learning tools.

Combining live online classes with self-study and homework on the basis of online learning platforms allows to master writing skills and maximize students’ progress significantly. Many in-person classroom activities can be easily adapted for online writing instruction and incorporated in distance learning courses to make online classes as effective as offline.

Since its emergence pedagogical, technical, methodological and psychological aspects of distance learning have been the subject of scientific research. The global pandemic and strict restrictions gave the stimulus for the study of this problem (Goudeau, Sanrey, Stanczak, 2021, pp. 1275–1280). Long before the pandemic such big companies as Google, LinkedIn Learning, EdX, Coursera, Khan Academy, Uдеми provided online certificate programs but the quarantine has accelerated the demand which has led to massive spikes in the number of users. Many large universities have developed virtual learning environments to keep up with the latest trends and to support large-scale remote work. To cope with a sudden shift to online instruction the largest technical university of Ukraine Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute created “Sikorsky” Distance Learning Platform which helps to organize online learning process, facilitates teacher-student interaction, provides the access to many resources. The study on learners attitude to transformations introduced in the learning process after the lockdown restrictions at Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute demonstrated that learners commend the changes and showed their desire to stick to online learning tools in post-pandemic time after they come back to traditional form of studying (Melnychenko, Zheliaskova, 2021, pp. 6–9). All English language skills can be mastered with the help of distance courses provided by this platform. It is worth mentioning that all courses are free of charge for Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic students.

Writing skills have always been one of the most important and challenging at the same time. This type of skills can be taught online and offline. In order to engage students in work and make them more motivated and interested they should be involved in reflective process. The lack of face-to-

face interaction leads to lower learners' engagement in group work in case of synchronous learning that is why teachers must constantly invent creative ways to involve all students in practical activities. Asynchronous work involves using online tools, videos with instructional sessions, samples of essays, letters and other types of writing etc. Zoom's polls, Google Classroom, Classtime etc. can be used at pre-writing and post-writing stages as well as at mastering other language aspects (Sokyrska, Buha, 2021, pp. 114–115).

At pre-writing stage a teacher can ask students during online group meeting about what they really want teacher's feedback about with their essay. Another good way to make students reflect on their mistakes and learning goals is to provide them with self-evaluation questionnaire in Google Forms or use Zoom polls for this purpose. Various polls are an easy way to get learners actively involved and make them interact with the group and contribute to the lesson.

Despite the fact that distance learning have become ubiquitous now, not reliable internet access, the lack of modern digital equipment or poor quality of hardware and software is still an essential obstacle for both students and teachers in case of synchronous learning when live classes are conducted (Sokyrska, 2020). Another problem teachers faced was the lack of awareness and knowledge regarding ways to implement online learning tools into teaching writing online and uneven level of readiness of teachers distance education process.

At pre-lesson stage students can be asked to prepare question, carry out some research on the topic, find certain information which will help to come up with ideas for the writing. The online lesson is used for brainstorming the ideas for an essay, discussing questions, practicing, and developing new skills. The writing itself is performed individually as a homework.

In order to brainstorm the ideas for writing a teacher can use Padlet, Flipgrid, Peardeck, Google Doc which helps to involve all students in discussion. Using mind maps is one more way to brainstorm and develop ideas for opinion essays. Students can be organized into pairs or groups to negotiate the question in breakout rooms which are a substitute of traditional classroom discussions. They are good for working collaborative writing tasks. After completing the task students return to the main room for further work.

The combination visual, audio and kinesthetic elements in work is considered to be the most effective in teaching different language skills. Reading a book with illustrations for many people is more exciting than just gulp the text. Thus, use visuals to make the writing task more entertaining for students. For example, using a picture or a video at pre-writing task will make students more interested in completion a task.

Teaching writing lessons online is exhausting so they should be concise as it is difficult for students to stay focused on lengthy lessons while working remotely. Thus, teaching writing online needs to be chunked. It would be effective to meet online for synchronous part of the work and provide students with resources and time to work individually. Also, the process of writing a text can be divided into parts which are performed synchronously and asynchronously. Students can be offered to write some parts of the text such as topic sentences and introduction paragraph while working synchronously and other parts such as body paragraphs and conclusions could be offered to write while working individually.

Distance learning demonstrated that grading essays digitally is much easier and more efficient that checking writing works and causes less stress due to many reasons. One of the reasons is that providing feedback in person can be quite time consuming. While working with online learning platforms a teacher leaves the feedback in student's work which is available in learner's personal account. The mistakes can be highlighted, corrected and commented by a teacher. Students have access to the feedback at any convenient time. The teacher emphasizes weak and strong sides of the work, points area for growth. If online learning platform used for English learning has audio features, a teacher can also verbalize the feedback which will save the time. Students are not limited in time to work on mistakes, they can revise the material learnt withing a certain topic, repeat grammar and vocabulary as much time as they need. What should be taken into consideration while assessing essays is that all language skills can not be corrected at the same time. We should focus on certain material depending on the type of writing learners are producing. Usually the structure, word order, fluency, style, grammar and vocabulary are paid attention to. If necessary, a teacher can provide re-teaching lesson based on students' needs.

Another important aspect is handwriting which can cause difficulties for both teachers and learners. Teaching writing online solves this problem.

It is worth mentioning that one of the things which students must be taught is the importance of avoiding plagiarism. There are several reasons for plagiarism. Some students do this due to the lack of time. Another reason is the lack of confidence in their writing skills. Sometimes students just do not understand what plagiarism is. That is why a teacher should explain what copyright and intellectual property is, strengthen their confidence and make them realize the importance of learning writing.

Conclusions. Online writing instruction offer opportunities to teach beyond the traditional classroom, geographic restrictions, when students must be self-isolated because of the quarantine rules, and time limits. Teaching writing online gives educators various ways to apply their theoretical and pedagogical knowledge. This definitely helps to recognize your teaching talent zones and areas for growth.

The problem of equipping teachers with e-teaching skills can be solved with the help of professional development courses in the sphere of mastering and implementing online learning tools and compulsory training of teaching staff.

There are no stark differences between core strategies in teaching writing inline and onsite though supplementing or adapting coursebooks for teaching remotely can be challenging task. But after a teach grasps the basics of online instruction, this will definitely become a rewarding experience.

The combination of resources for teaching writing online reviewed in the article is effective. However, in order to take advantage of distance education process, find the best ways to teach writing online and make the lesson effective a teacher has to combine multiple resources on various platforms, use different websites or applications which is very time consuming and causes inconveniences for educators and learners. Hence, creating an online learning environment enabling the combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning would be groundbreaking for further development of teaching English online.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Баклаженко Ю. Лінгвістичні передумови навчання англійського професійно орієнтованого мовлення в закладах вищої освіти. *Актуальні питання іноземної філології*. 2021. Вип. 13. С. 10–16. URL: <https://doi.org/10.32782/2410-0927-2020-13-2>
2. Goudeau S., Sanrey C., Stanczak A. et al. Why lockdown and distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to increase the social class achievement gap. *Nat Hum Behav*. 2021. Vol. 5. P. 1273–1281. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01212-7>
3. Hussin A. Education 4.0 made simple: Ideas for teaching. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*. 2018. Vol. 6 (3). P. 92–98. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.6n.3p.92>
4. Melnychenko A., Zheliaskova T. Transformation of educational process in COVID-19 pandemic: a case of Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute. *Advanced Education, [S. l]*. 2021. Vol. 8, n. 18. P. 4–10. DOI: 10.20535/2410-8286.237575
5. Lockee B. Online education in the post-COVID era. *Nat Electron*. 2021. Vol. 4. P. 5–6. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41928-020-00534-0>
6. Sokyrskya O. (2020). The importance of combination of online learning with work in the classroom. *II Annual Conference on Current Foreign Languages Teaching Issues in Higher Education: Conference Proceedings of the International Scientific and Practical Conference*. 2020. P. 56–58.
7. Sokyrskya O., Buha S. The Peculiarities of Distance Language Education: Listening, Speaking and Pronunciation an ESL Teaching. *III Annual Conference on Current Foreign Languages Teaching Issues in Higher Education*. 2021. P. 114–116.
8. Toffoli D., Sockett G. University teachers' perceptions of Online Informal Learning of English (OILE). *Computer-Assisted Language Learning*. 2015. Vol. 28 (1). P. 7–21. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2013.776970>
9. Ghouname N. Moodle or Social Networks: What Alternative Refuge is Appropriate to Algerian EFL Students to Learn during Covid-19 Pandemic. *Arab World English Journal*. 2020. Vol. 11 (3). P. 21–41. URL: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.2>
10. Kornieva Z., Vashchylo O. Development of Speaking Skills Assessment Criteria for Engineering Students. *Arab World English Journal*. 2020. Vol. 12 (2). P. 72–82. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no2.5>

REFERENCES:

1. Baklazhenko, Yu. (2021). Lihvistychni peredumovy navchannia anhliiskoho profesiino orientovanoho movlennia v zakladakh vyshchoi osvity [Linguistic preconditions for teaching professionally oriented English writing in higher educational institutions]. *Aktualni pytannia inozemnoi filolohii*, 13, 10–16. URL: <https://doi.org/10.32782/2410-0927-2020-13-2> [in Ukrainian]
2. Goudeau, S., Sanrey, C., Stanczak, A. et al. (2021). Why lockdown and distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to increase the social class achievement gap. *Nat Hum Behav* 5, 1273–1281. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01212-7>
3. Hussin, A. (2018). Education 4.0 made simple: Ideas for teaching. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 6 (3), 92–98. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.6n.3p.92>
4. Melnychenko, A. ., & Zheliaskova, T. (2021). Transformation of educational process in COVID-19 pandemic: a case of Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute. *Advanced Education*, 8 (18), 4–10. URL: <https://doi.org/10.20535/2410-8286.237575>
5. Lockee, B. Online education in the post-COVID era. *Nat Electron*, 4, 5–6 (2021). URL: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41928-020-00534-0>
6. Sokyrskya, O. (2020). The importance of combination of online learning with work in the classroom. *II Annual Conference on Current Foreign Languages Teaching Issues in Higher Education: Conference Proceedings of the International Scientific and Practical Conference*. Kyiv, 56–58.
7. Sokyrskya O., Buha S. (2021). The Peculiarities of Distance Language Education: Listening, Speaking and Pronunciation an ESL Teaching. *III Annual Conference on Current Foreign Languages Teaching Issues in Higher Education*. Kyiv, 114–116.
8. Toffoli, D., & G. Sockett. (2015). University teachers' perceptions of Online Informal Learning of English (OILE). *Computer-Assisted Language Learning*, 28 (1), 7–21. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2013.776970>
9. Ghouname, N. (2020). Moodle or Social Networks: What Alternative Refuge is Appropriate to Algerian EFL Students to Learn during Covid-19 Pandemic. *Arab World English Journal*, 11 (3), 21–41. URL: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.2>
10. Kornieva, Z., & Vashchylo, O. (2021). Development of Speaking Skills Assessment Criteria for Engineering Students. *Arab World English Journal*, 12 (2), 72–82. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no2.5>