

TECHNOLOGICALLY ENHANCED ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The article deals with the technologically enhanced online opportunities for language learning in inclusive education. The author supposes the theoretical background of the issue to be processes of globalization and digitalization, and as the result - learners need to be additionally aware of human rights and to act as cultural agents, contributing to a more peaceful and tolerant cultural existence.

The author stresses, that overall objectives of global education overlap with the goals of an inclusive and diverse education: being a global citizen means being an advocate of tolerating the individuality of people on different dimensions of cultural exchange. This joined perspective on sameness and difference is crucial to understand the necessity of inclusion and by following the objectives of global education, the EFL classroom can provide learners with the mindset and attitudes to achieve this view on a changing world. He also gives the description of online course, consisting of 6 compulsory modules. The module structure pattern (goals, theoretical background, practice, EFL application, reflection) is given. It is stated, that other teaching resources such as sample units of secondary school materials or teacher guidelines have also been elaborated.

Keywords: *online language learning; inclusive education; literature; teacher education.*

Theoretical Background. As early as 1994, the *Salamanca Statement* proclaimed that every person has “the fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning” regardless of this person’s “unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning need” (UN 1994: VIII). The *UNESCO Guidelines for Inclusion* (2005) furthermore state, schools and other educational institutions need to “creat[e] an environment [...] in which children are both able and enabled to learn” (UNESCO 2005: 10), so that young individuals can grow up to freely develop their own identities and ideas and, in the process, become themselves advocates for making an increasingly interconnected world a place of non-discrimination and acceptance.

Fostering diversity and inclusion is an objective which concerns all school subjects alike and the EFL classroom offers the potential to negotiate and reflect upon diversity and inclusion from two perspectives: 1) examine *cultural* forms of diversity (e.g., diversity based on gender, religious beliefs or ethnicity) and 2) discuss the central role *language* plays in the representation and active construction of diversity (Byram & Kramersch 2008). Indeed, the contemporary EFL classroom becomes an ideal educational space in which learners can get to know and reflect upon individual differences resulting from dynamic processes of cultural categorization and negotiation. In the European context, Byram shaped the idea of *intercultural communicative competence* as an overarching goal of teaching English (Byram 1997). His concept is based on the idea that speakers of different languages also belong to different cultures. These cultures are seen as relatively stable entities, which differ from each other in terms of the values, rituals, lifestyles or beliefs they represent. Given these basic differences between cultures, EFL learners are supposed to not only know about the culture-related differences between different speakers of English, but also develop specific communicative competences that allow them to negotiate with and understand the ‘other’ (Byram, 1997).

In recent years, however, the intercultural paradigm has been repeatedly criticized for its strictly binary understanding of culture, centred around the clear-cut distinction between the self and the other (cf. Blell/Doff 2014). Thus, critics have voiced the opinion that a belief in fixed cultural boundaries can no longer be maintained in a highly globalised world. As a result, several researchers have argued for a *transcultural* approach to understanding culture, which replaces the notion of culture as fixed entities with an image of cultures. Cultures are conceived of as hybrid networks of ever-changing cultural practices (Freitag-Hild 2018) in which individuals are no longer representatives of a fixed cultural collective but become “floating identities” (Grünewald, Küster & Lüning 2011: 69). This transnational approach considers cultures as complex processes, and seeks to enable learners to perceive diversity as being deeply embedded in a constant exchange of different cultural influences.

Finally, the more recent processes of globalisation and digitalisation have increasingly triggered interest in the approach of *global education*. According to Gaudelli (2016), global education aims at making learners *global citizens*, who act on both a local and a global level. In this context, as Osler and Starkey (2003; 2018) point out, learners need to be additionally aware of the role human rights play in the global sphere, which turns them into cultural agents contributing to a more peaceful and tolerant cultural existence on various levels of personal action (cf. Jackson 2019). At this point, the overall objectives of global education overlap with the goals of an inclusive and diverse education: being a global citizen means being an advocate of tolerating the individuality of people on different dimensions of cultural exchange. This joined perspective on sameness and difference is crucial to understand the necessity of inclusion and by following the objectives of global education, the EFL classroom can provide learners with the mindset and attitudes to achieve this view on a changing world.

Project. The Erasmus KA2+TOOLS project (Technologically enhanced online opportunities for language learning in inclusive education) aims at supporting the development of such educational environments by examining how inclusive learning settings in schools can be further established, improved and enhanced with the help of digital technologies. In this context, the project follows a broad understanding of *diversity* as a concept, which is used to describe the different and idiosyncratic dispositions and identities of individuals within a society in terms of “race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, indigenous or social origin, property, birth, age or other status” (UN 2008: 2) and *Inclusion*, which is understood as the foundational principle and practice concerned with the acceptance, protection and non-discrimination of these individual dispositions on a social, cultural, political, and economic level of society. The Project stems from the belief that foreign languages, English in particular, form a very powerful platform for enhanced education and personal development for learners with different individual needs. However, EFL educators must have

effective awareness of a variety of needs and cope with them in their lessons. The project main goals are:

- Raise awareness of the necessity of dealing with mixed ability
- Enhance the quality of teacher training in social, digital and cultural inclusion
- Promote ICT as an instrument to favour inclusion
- Organize seminars and activities to advocate for non-discriminatory attitudes in teaching
- Set up a debate platform to share ideas regarding inclusion in the EFL

The partnership consists of seven organisations from five countries and is coordinated by the University of Opole, Poland. The rest of the consortium is composed by:

- The University of Vic-Central University of Catalonia (Spain)
- Kaye Academic College of Education (Israel)
- The Zentrum für Lehrerbildung der Universität Münster (Germany)
- The University of Cyprus SEIT Lab (Cyprus)
- The Municipal In-service Teacher Training Centre (MODN) in Poland
- The Zentrum für schupraktische Lehrerausbildung Münster (ZFL) in Germany.

More specifically, this project is concerned with the development of concrete teaching materials that can assist future teachers of English in implementing a more inclusive approach to teaching and learning in their own English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. For that purpose, an online platform has been created, which does not only allow English teachers from all over the world to easily access all the materials and units designed in the course of this project but also, in doing so, can start a conversation on what diversity and inclusion mean in the context of foreign language education today.

Online Modules. The course consists of a number of modules that have been placed on the project Moodle platform. They may be used for online, hybrid, or face to face teaching and they aim to promote technology use and inclusive education in the area of language learning. In addition, the course endeavours to enhance

international collaboration among pre-service students. The course is planned for 30 hours / 5 ECTS and its implementation may be carried within the framework of university courses. They could also be adapted in such a way that they can be offered in other languages. As for the online course structure it consists of 6 compulsory modules, namely:

1. Introduction
2. Social diversity in education and accent bias
3. Cultural Diversity
4. Digital Citizenship in language education
5. Gender Inequality
6. Universal design for learning

The module structure follows a pattern for all the units:

- Goals: what participants will learn and be able to do by the end of the module
- Theoretical background: key concepts and knowledge or research related to the topic
- Practice: activities meant to reinforce the theory and help participants progress in their understanding of the concept
- EFL application: tasks that connect the topic with the EFL classroom practice and suggest activities for students
- Reflection: students are asked to self-assess themselves and reflect upon their own practice

In addition, other teaching resources such a sample units of secondary school materials or teacher guidelines have also been elaborated to guarantee its sustainability and use by EFL teachers.

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РОЗШИРЕННЯ ТЕХНІЧНИХ МОЖЛИВОСТЕЙ ОНЛАЙН-РОБОТИ У ХОДІ ВИВЧЕННЯ МОВИ В ІНКЛЮЗИВНІЙ ОСВІТІ

У статті йдеться про технологічне розширення можливостей цифрових ресурсів для вивчення мови в інклюзивній освіті. Передумовою дослідження цього питання автор вважає посилення процесів глобалізації та цифровізації, результатом яких є необхідність додаткового знання прав людини аби виступати в ролі культурних агентів, сприяючи більш мирному та толерантному існуванню світової культури.

Підкреслено, що загальні пріоритети глобальної освіти збігаються з цілями інклюзивної та полікультурної освіти: бути громадянином світу – означає бути прихильником толерантного ставлення до індивідуальності людей у різних вимірах культурного обміну. Такий суспільний погляд на однаковість і відмінність має вирішальне значення для розуміння необхідності інклюзії. Дотримуючись мети глобальної освіти, інклюзивний клас допоможе створити підґрунтя для формування саме такого погляду на світ, що змінюється.

Сформульовано основні завдання проекту, як-от:

- підвищити усвідомлення педагогами необхідності працювати зі змішаними здібностями;*
- удосконалити якість підготовки вчителів із соціальної, цифрової та культурної інклюзії;*
- пропагувати ІКТ як інструмент сприяння інклюзії;*
- організувати семінари та заходи для пропаганди недискримінаційного ставлення в навчанні;*
- створити дискусійну платформу для обміну ідеями.*

Автор наводить опис онлайн-курсу, що складається з шести обов'язкових модулів:

- 1. Вступ.*
- 2. Соціальне розмаїття в освіті та акцентне упередження.*
- 3. Культурне розмаїття.*
- 4. Цифрове громадянство в мовній освіті.*
- 5. Гендерна нерівність.*
- 6. Універсальний дизайн навчання.*

Пропонується шаблон структури модуля, який включає цілі, теоретичну базу, практику, застосування інклюзії, рефлексію.

Зазначається, що розроблено й інші навчальні ресурси, наприклад, зразки демонстраційних шкільних матеріалів, рекомендації для вчителів.

***Ключові слова:** вивчення мови онлайн; інклюзивна освіта; педагогічна освіта; література.*

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