

INTERACTIVE PLATFORM MY ENGLISH LAB (MEL) IN ORGANIZING INDEPENDENT WORK OF FUTURE PHILOLOGY TEACHERS

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Summary

The article investigates the pedagogical and methodological potential of the interactive online platform MEL in the process of developing grammatical competence and learner autonomy among first-year philology students supported by Moodle Learning Management System (LMS) under conditions of blended learning.

LMS is “a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, and reporting of training programs, classroom and online events, e-learning programs, and training content” (*Ellis, 2009, p. 1*).

Particular attention is devoted to the transformation of higher education in Ukraine in response to contemporary social challenges, including frequent air-raid interruptions and the growing necessity for flexible digital learning environments. The study analyses the role of MEL as a component of a dual LMS model integrated with Moodle and examines its influence on the organization of students' independent work.

The research highlights the relationship between digital educational technologies and the formation of professional, communicative, social, individual, and personal competences of future teachers. Special emphasis is placed on learner autonomy, self-regulated learning, reflective educational practices, and the transformation of the teacher's role from knowledge transmitter to facilitator and mediator within the digital learning environment.

The article also characterizes the structural and functional components of MEL, including assignments, grading systems, diagnostic instruments, automated assessment tools, and multimedia educational resources.

Key words: MEL, learner autonomy, grammatical competence, professional communicative competence.

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1. Introduction

Considering a current situation in Ukraine, particularly the frequent air-raid alerts and the increasing implementation of blended learning models within educational institutions, we have to admit to the fact that the integration of modern digital technologies into the educational process has become especially significant. Under such conditions, virtual learning environments created by LMS are no longer viewed merely as supplementary instructional tools but rather as an essential component of contemporary education.

Under such conditions, Ukrainian higher education pedagogy is increasingly integrating into the global system of science and education and demands an actively advance of foreign language teaching methodology oriented toward fostering in learners a stable need for lifelong self-education, as well as the ability to acquire knowledge autonomously for professional and social self-realization. A focus on learner reflection and autonomous learning has become a central research issue in the recent history of foreign language learning (*Dmitrenko et al., 2020*).

Moreover, a rapid development of web-based educational platforms has substantially transformed students' attitudes toward grammar instruction and independent learning. As teaching practice shows, students give preference to learning applications and don't show much enthusiasm towards traditional paper vocabulary and grammar exercises, considering them less attractive and more time-consuming. Digital learning environments provide both educators and learners with new opportunities for flexibility, accessibility, and individualized instruction, while simultaneously creating a range of pedagogical, technological, and organizational challenges. Consequently, the implementation of online learning models requires the reconsideration of traditional teaching approaches and the adaptation of methodological practices to the realities of modern education (*Qaddumi & Smith, 2024*).

Due to the reduction of face-to-face hours allocated to academic disciplines, the amount of classroom time that can reasonably be devoted to completing and checking language exercises is also decreasing. It results in teachers facing a pressing challenge of ensuring the development of future teachers' grammatical and lexical skills through independent extracurricular study (*Khalymon, Shevchenko, 2019: 246*).

First-year students of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University and Kyiv National Linguistic University take the course of Practical Grammar as a part of their academic curricula. The primary aim of the course is to ensure students' mastery of the educational content in practical grammar through both classroom instructions and independent study that create premises for their professional competence development.

The professional competence is correlated with such terms as 'system', 'personal qualities', 'readiness', and 'abilities'. Within this framework, communicative competence encompasses interconnected rules, categories, and language units, their functions and regularities, linguistic knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as different types of competences. It is a complex personal characteristic acquired through the process of grammar competence developing. It includes linguistic, communicative, and sociocultural knowledge, professional abilities, personal attitudes, and is based on learners' experience and their overall readiness for successful professional activity in a multilingual environment (*Dyvnych, 2018: 7*).

Four types of professional competence are distinguished in the modern methodological science.

Subject competence of a future teacher is reflected in the level of knowledge within a particular learning subject, as well as in the ability to present educational material effectively

and communicate knowledge clearly to learners. Equally important is the teacher's ability to apply subject-specific knowledge in practical educational contexts.

Social competence of a future teacher is manifested in their inclination toward social and professional engagement, the ability to establish effective communication with students and colleagues, as well as the capacity to respond appropriately to social responsibilities and fulfil public or institutional assignments in a timely manner.

Individual competence of a future teacher is expressed through the ability to apply methods and strategies of self-regulation aimed at extending professional effectiveness while maintaining psychological well-being and emotional stability.

Personal competence of a future teacher lies in the capacity for self-development, a well-developed tendency toward self-expression, and the ability to actively resist processes of professional deformation that are often characteristic of teaching activity within the context of the modern secondary school environment (*Výdolob & Greilich, 2022: 124*).

All four of them are closely connected and work to reach an appropriate level of phonological, lexical, and grammatical competences on B2 level.

2. Pedagogical characteristics of the grammar course design

The grammar course students take at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University is designed to foster the development of all four constituents of professional competence required for future specialists in the field of philology supported by MEL subject and procedural aspects.

Students gain practical grammar skills doing sessions on Moodle. It has created a double construction which, on the one hand, builds more profound premises for developing learner autonomy, on the other hand, changes the role of a teacher in the classroom drastically.

The expansion of the traditional range of methods, tools, and techniques for independent learning through the extensive use LMS, particularly MEL, contributes to the improvement of the educational process in higher education institutions. It creates conditions for developing students' ability to work independently, which stems from the specific features of working with computer-based programs. It also makes it possible to implement differentiated and individualized approaches both in the selection of learning materials and in the pace of work of individual students. Furthermore, it contributes to the expansion and deepening of professional knowledge and places students in a position where a solid command of a foreign language becomes essential, as obtaining professionally oriented information is impossible without it (*Bykonya, 2011: 412*).

Using MEL helps both teachers and students satisfy the need to organize students' independent work under conditions of blended learning. It has become particularly relevant due to several factors:

- the necessity of developing practical language-use skills required for professional communication;
- the heterogeneity of student groups in terms of language proficiency, which encourages instructors to search for effective teaching strategies and apply differentiated approaches to instruction;
- studying within groups supervised by different instructors and academic coordinators;
- discrepancies between students' actual grammar level and the requirements established by the curriculum;
- necessity to foster learner autonomy.

Considering mentioned above factors, teachers can focus their attention on conceptual principles for organizing students' independent work and shape their cognitive learning

activities. These activities can be regulated and controlled by indirect instructor guidance and the teacher directly.

Within the framework of the systemic approach, the teacher can examine the ways in which the elements of the educational system function as an integrated whole, including the interaction of all components of students' independent extracurricular learning process. Among the central principles of this approach, the principle of conscious learning dominates. As a result, students become aware of the goals and objectives of LMS instruction.

Through the use of specialized educational tools, MEL makes it possible to create conditions for developing students' abilities to identify their own goals, formulate learning tasks, select appropriate methods and strategies for achieving them. A shift is done from the accumulation of knowledge, skills, and competencies within a specific period of study to the development of learners' readiness for lifelong learning.

Researchers distinguish three levels of learner autonomy:

1) partial autonomy, characterized by internal self-regulation combined with external automated control, where the instructor determines objectives, tasks, and methods of implementation while monitoring both the process and outcomes of independent work;

2) semi-autonomy, in which the instructor defines goals and tasks but provides students with relative freedom in selecting strategies, including those proposed independently by learners, while continuing to supervise task completion and evaluate results;

3) conditional full autonomy, which presupposes students' independent determination of immediate and long-term learning goals in accordance with curriculum requirements and individual needs, opportunities for consultation upon request, independent implementation of tasks, self-monitoring, self-correction, and self-assessment of outcomes (Zadorozhna, 2015).

Dealing with an interaction platform MEL leads to implementation of a semi-autonomous learning model in the process of developing professional competence, supports development of partial learner autonomy and internal self-monitoring throughout the learning process (Prokopchuk, 2020: 110).

The interactive platform MEL, developed by Pearson, is a comprehensive educational system enables the effective organization of online and hybrid instruction creating favourable conditions for students' independent acquisition of educational content.

The platform integrates digital educational resources, assessment tools, communication instruments, and progress-tracking systems into a unified learning environment. Such integration can provide circumstances for fostering learner autonomy and gradual shift from partial autonomy to semi-autonomy. At the same time, MEL provides pedagogical and methodological advantages in fostering a grammar and professional competences, because it:

–ensures the integration of multimedia educational content, including video materials, audio recordings, interactive exercises, and voice recording/playback tools. Such resources contribute to the development of grammatical competence, listening comprehension, pronunciation, and communicative skills. Multimedia support increases students' motivation and promotes more active engagement in the learning process through multisensory perception of information.

–creates opportunities for flexible lesson planning and individualized learning trajectories. Students can independently select topics, regulate the pace of learning, revisit difficult material, and organize their work according to personal educational needs. Such flexibility supports differentiated instruction and allows learners to adapt the educational process to their cognitive abilities and academic goals.

–*incorporates* communication tools that facilitate interaction among all participants in the educational process. Students can communicate both individually and in groups through messaging systems, notifications, and reminders regarding deadlines and assignment completion. These instruments strengthen collaboration, maintain continuous contact between teachers and learners, and support the development of digital communication skills.

–*includes* a broad range of assessment and diagnostic instruments that automatically collect data concerning the number of attempts, completed assignments, time spent on tasks, and overall academic progress within each module. Such analytical tools enable teachers to monitor students' performance systematically and identify difficulties at different stages of learning.

–*provides* continuous monitoring of language competence development by recording both quantitative and qualitative indicators of student performance. Teachers can analyse recurrent grammatical, lexical, and communicative errors, evaluate students' progress dynamics, and adjust instructional strategies accordingly. This contributes to a more evidence-based and learner-oriented approach to teaching;

–*contains* built-in testing instruments that allow objective assessment of students' academic achievements. Automated testing procedures ensure transparency and consistency in evaluation while simultaneously reducing teachers' workload. The obtained results can be integrated into the overall system of formative and summative assessment, particularly in evaluating students' independent work.;

–*implements* a continuous feedback loop: the software automatically checks completed tasks, provides corrective feedback, and directs students to relevant learning materials when additional practice is required. Furthermore, the platform generates reminder notifications about deadlines, incomplete assignments, and available attempts, which contributes to the development of students' self-regulation and time-management skills.

–*supports* the implementation of a student-centred instructional model. The platform encourages learners' active participation in the educational process, promotes autonomy in decision-making, and shifts the focus from teacher-directed instruction to learner engagement and responsibility for educational outcomes;

–*contributes* significantly to the development of learner autonomy and self-directed learning skills. Students become more capable of planning their academic activities, monitoring their own progress, evaluating results critically, and independently overcoming learning difficulties. These competences are particularly important in the context of lifelong learning and the digital transformation of modern education.

In accordance with the requirements of the curricula, within each unit the teacher, whose role is a facilitator, assigns tasks corresponding to the topic of the particular class (Session). Once assignments have been issued by the teacher, students may locate and complete them in the Assignments section. Here it is important to give students clear instructions to follow. For example,

Please be advised that it is recommended not to open tasks in the Course section to avoid completing assignments that have not been assigned by the teacher.

Or give a set of instructions in the form of an algorithm to follow making them short and clear as in a computer game discourse. For instance,

1. *Navigate to the Assignments tab.*
2. *In the Assignments & Events section, a list of your assigned tasks will be displayed.*
3. *Click the Open button to access the assignment.*

3. Structural elements of interactive platform MEL

MEL is a system of structural elements which let students navigate withing the platform and develop grammar competence supervised by the teacher or autonomously. In case the tasks are assigned, students go to the Assignments tab. It contains a list of all tasks assigned by the teacher. There are some subsections. Such as,

1. *Assignments & Events*: this section displays all assignments and events scheduled for a particular period.

2. *Select view*: Calendar / List: this option allows users to choose the most convenient way to display assignments. In the Calendar view, events and tasks are presented according to dates and linked to all course activities. In the List view, assignments are organized in a list format.

3. *Activity history*: this tab displays recently completed tasks that have already been checked by the system. By selecting Activity history and clicking the See report button (View Report) (students can open the Assignment report and obtain information regarding completed assignments, including submission dates and received grades.

4. *Filters* (Filter by course): the filtering system allows users to sort assignments according to specific criteria. If a user does not select a course in the Filter by course section, all tasks assigned within the course will be displayed. Users may also monitor the status of their assignments through the Filter by status option, enabling them to identify tasks that have been saved but not yet completed and return to them later.

5. *Assignment and Events List* (List of Assignments and Events): users may click the View more button (Additional Information) to expand the list.

6. *Open*: students click the Open button to access the assignment.

The platform features an intuitive and user-friendly interface with an accessible button panel like those commonly used on Moodle, which enables students to navigate the system efficiently and with minimal difficulty. Within the Gradebook tab (Performance Journal), students can review their grades and monitor their academic progress. They can navigate such folders as:

1. *Change course*: allows students to switch to a different course.

2. *Expand details*: enables students to view additional information, including attempt history, the number of completed exercises, and the amount of time spent on each task.

3. *Data*: displays grades and assessment results.

4. *Diagnostics*: provides a quick overview of students' performance, including average scores and the time spent completing assignments.

5. *The rows Assignments / Practices / Tests*: allows students to filter grades efficiently:

o Practice: displays practical exercises only;

o Assignments: displays assigned tasks only;

o Tests: displays tests only;

o Markers: enables users to review completed exercises.

6. *Filtering/Sorting*: allows students to filter assignments according to the following criteria:

o Last attempt;

o First attempt;

o Average score;

o Highest score.

4. Content and Assessment Criteria for Independent Work Exercises on MEL

The platform organizes independent tasks according to clearly structured thematic modules that correspond to the objectives of the academic curriculum. Each exercise type is designed to assess particular aspects of students' communicative competence, including grammatical accuracy, lexical proficiency, reading comprehension, listening skills, and practical language application. The image also demonstrates the differentiation of exercises according to levels of complexity and learning outcomes, which contributes to the implementation of a learner-centred and competence-based approach.

Particular attention is given to the assessment system embedded within the platform. The figure highlights the use of automated evaluation instruments that provide immediate feedback, monitor the number of attempts, record students' progress, and generate performance analytics. Such mechanisms support continuous formative assessment and enable both instructors and students to track academic achievements more objectively and systematically.

In addition, the structure presented in the image reflects the principles of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning. Students are able to complete assignments independently, review mistakes, repeat exercises when necessary, and monitor their individual progress through diagnostic indicators and grading tools. Consequently, the platform not only functions as a repository of educational materials but also serves as a dynamic digital environment that promotes reflective learning, academic responsibility, and the development of professional communicative competence. Let's give two examples. The first is for a session description. The second for Self-study section which is provided at the end of each module.

Session 6. The Adjective. Degrees of Comparison.

1. Watch the video and answer the questions.
2. Do Practices 1, 2 (Module 4 Unit 21) on MEL.
3. Do Tests 6.1, 6.2.

Instructions: before making notes, read the questions carefully. Be ready to discuss the questions in a group.

Work layout: when you do practice exercises 1,2, do NOT forget to press the button SUBMIT.

NOTE: in case, you do not submit your answers, they exercises are not considered to be done!

Assessment criteria: total – 11 pts.

Physical presence at the lesson – 1 pt.

Theoretical part – 2 pts (0,5 pt for each task).

Practice exercises 1, 2 – 4 pts (20 correct answers – 4 pts.; 15-19 – 3 pts.; 10-14 – 2 pts.; 5-9 – 2 pts.; 1-4 – 1 pt.) Tests 6.1, 6.2 – 4 pts.

5. Conclusions

1. The conducted research demonstrates that the integration of the interactive online platform MEL into the process of teaching Practical Grammar possesses significant pedagogical, methodological, and technological potential within the context of contemporary higher education. Under conditions of blended and online learning, particularly in Ukraine during periods of social instability and frequent air-raid interruptions, digital educational platforms have become an essential component of the educational process rather than merely supplementary instructional tools.

2. The findings indicate that the use of MEL contributes substantially to the development of students' grammatical competence, communicative competence, and learner autonomy. The platform creates favourable conditions for organizing independent work through the integration of multimedia educational resources, automated assessment systems, communication instruments, and analytical progress-monitoring tools. Such functionality enables students to regulate their own learning process, monitor academic achievements, and independently acquire professionally oriented knowledge and practical skills.

3. Particular importance should be attached to the transformation of the teacher's role within the digital learning environment. In blended learning conditions, the teacher increasingly performs the functions of facilitator, mediator, consultant, and coordinator of students' learning activities instead of acting solely as a transmitter of theoretical knowledge. This tendency reflects the implementation of learner-centred, competence-based, and reflective approaches to education, where students assume greater responsibility for their educational outcomes and learning trajectories.

4. The research also confirms that MEL supports the formation of various types of professional competence among future teachers, including subject, communicative, social, individual, and personal competences. Through systematic interaction with the platform, students develop not only grammatical and lexical proficiency but also self-regulation skills, reflective thinking, digital communication abilities, time-management strategies, and academic responsibility. These competences are particularly significant in the context of lifelong learning and continuous professional development.

5. Considerable attention should be given to the assessment and feedback mechanisms embedded within the platform. Automated testing systems, immediate corrective feedback, detailed performance analytics, and opportunities for repeated practice contribute to greater objectivity and transparency of assessment procedures. Furthermore, such mechanisms encourage reflective learning practices and increase students' motivation toward independent educational activity.

6. The structural organization of MEL, including thematic modules, differentiated exercises, grading tools, filters, diagnostic systems, and progress reports, creates conditions for individualized learning trajectories and supports students with different levels of language proficiency, cognitive styles, and learning needs. Consequently, the platform facilitates the implementation of differentiated instruction and adaptive learning strategies within the framework of higher philological education.

7. MEL may be regarded as an effective digital educational environment that promotes the development of learner autonomy, grammatical competence, professionally oriented communicative skills, and self-directed learning abilities among future specialists in philology and education. Its implementation contributes to the modernization of foreign language teaching methodology and corresponds to the broader processes of digital transformation currently shaping contemporary higher education.

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