PEDAGOGICAL DESIGN OF OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES FOR HUMANITY STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITIES IN RUSSIA

Anastasia Blagoveshchenskaya[1], Irina Ainoutdinova[1], Aida Nurutdinova[2], Elena Dmitrieva[3]

[1]Kazan Federal University (RUSSIAN FEDERATION)
[2]International Academic Centre for Language and Development (RUSSIAN FEDERATION)
[3]Kazan State Power Engineering University (RUSSIAN FEDERATION)

Abstract

The relevance of this study is due to the rapid changes in social life, including education, caused by the evolving processes of globalization, informatization and digitalization. Russia as part of the international community is on its way to a digital economy. One of the tasks of digital transformation is aimed at creating proper conditions for training competent professionals able to meet the requirements of the new era. Thus, universities face the need to change the traditional pedagogical paradigm for a new technology-based one. Open Educational Resources (OER) seem to be able to push this process.

The term "Open Educational Resources" was first coined at the UNESCO's 2002 Forum on the impact of open courseware for higher education in developing countries to describe the new global phenomenon of sharing online educational resources among stakeholders openly and for free. OERs are known today as teaching, learning and research materials normally freely available for educational use to any interested party including teachers, students or self-learners. The pioneers of OER insisted on their accessibility for anyone aimed at "the free exchange of ideas and knowledge"; they also developed five core rules of open publishing to follow: reuse, redistribute, revise, remix and retain.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the existing trends in the digitalization of education and identify the applicable strategies and forms of OER deployment on university e-platforms in Russia. The idea behind this paper is to analyze the history and impacts of OER on educational process worldwide. Russia, being a UNESCO member state, supports the strategies and initiatives of the organization in its attempt to promote OER and provide multiple quality learning modes and opportunities at lower cost to anyone, anywhere and anytime. A wide range of OER online formats allows diverse options.

The methodology of the work is based on the theory of connectivism and communicative, collaborative and competence-based approaches. During the empirical stage, the authoring course named "English for Media & Journalism" for university students has been designed and successfully implemented. The course was deployed on the e-platform of Kazan University (Russia) and though it was mainly addressed to humanity students, the authors followed all rules of OER publishing and made it open and free to any stakeholder. In its form, the course resembles xMOOC and has all necessary components. The students were later interviewed what they really liked about the course. They highlighted such benefits as easy access to learning, habitual Internet environment, ability to self-modify course materials, multidisciplinary character of the educational content and cost savings. The results of the work may be interesting to teachers, educators and e-learners who support innovations and feel free to create, collaborate, communicate both online and offline.

Keywords: university, students, pedagogical design, course, open educational resources (OER), learning outcomes, humanity.

1 INTRODUCTION

The growing interest of Russian teachers and educators in various electronic online forms of teaching and learning is due both to the general trends in the development of the modern information society and the desire of universities to change the vector of their activities towards innovation, technology, accessibility, flexibility and professionalization of education [1].

Pedagogical design is a collaborative process for course development using specific learning objectives and pedagogical theories to identify teaching strategies, activities and assessments to achieve desired educational outcomes. The process uses design principles to promote student engagement and can include development of practices, structures, digital learning objects and

multimedia resources to improve teaching and learning. Online Learning works closely with instructors and departments to develop tools that are right for each course and academic discipline [2].

The relevance of this study is due to the rapid changes in social life, including education, caused by the evolving processes of globalization, informatization and digitalization [3]. Russia as part of the international community is on its way to a digital economy. One of the tasks of digital transformation is aimed at creating proper conditions for training competent professionals able to meet the requirements of the new era. Thus, universities face the need to change the traditional pedagogical paradigm for a new technology-based one. Open Educational Resources (OER) seem to be able to push this process.

The term "Open Educational Resources" was first coined at the UNESCO's 2002 Forum on the impact of open courseware for higher education in developing countries to describe the new global phenomenon of sharing online educational resources among stakeholders openly and for free. OERs are known today as teaching, learning and research materials normally freely available for educational use to any interested party including teachers, students or self-learners. "Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. Since 2002, when the term first emerged, to today, OER has increasingly been recognized by the international community as an innovative tool for meeting the challenges of providing lifelong learning opportunities for learners from diverse levels and modes of education worldwide" [4]. The pioneers of OER insisted on their accessibility for anyone aimed at "the free exchange of ideas and knowledge"; they also developed five core rules of open publishing to follow: reuse, redistribute, revise, remix and retain.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the existing trends in the digitalization of education and identify the applicable strategies and forms of OER deployment on university e-platforms in Russia. The idea behind this paper is to analyze the history and impacts of OER on educational process worldwide. Russia, being a UNESCO member state, supports the strategies and initiatives of the organization in its attempt to promote OER and provide multiple quality learning modes and opportunities at lower cost to anyone, anywhere and anytime. A wide range of OER online formats allows diverse options.

2   METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the work is based on the theory of connectivism and communicative, collaborative and competence-based approaches [5, 6, 7, 8, 9]. Connectivism is a kind of learning theory that was created by George Siemens. It can also be understood as educational theory or view or global strategy. Connectivism was a core principle used for designing the first MOOCs (unlike the "modern" versions that come out of elite universities and rather represent in our opinion a propaganda purpose) G. Siemens proposes connectivism as a learning theory for the digital age, a successor to behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism [5]. Among the main principles of connectivism he names the following:

1   Learning and knowledge rests in diversity of opinions.

2   Learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources.

3   Learning may reside in non-human appliances.

4   Capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known [6].

During the empirical stage, the authoring course named "English for Media & Journalism" for university students has been designed and successfully implemented. The course was deployed on the e-platform of Kazan University (Russia) and though it was mainly addressed to humanity students, the authors followed all rules of OER publishing and made it open and free to any stakeholder. In its form, the course resembles eXtended Massive Open Online Course (xMOOC) and has all necessary components. These MOOCs are based on traditional university courses. While they significantly broaden the number of students who can be exposed to university-level courses, critics argue that xMOOCs are inferior to the university courses they mimic because they eliminate teacher-student interactions and involve limited student-student interactions. xMOOC examples can be found on platforms like edX, Coursera, and Udacity provide xMOOCs [10].

3   RESULTS

The main result of the study is the design and implementation of the course "English for Media & Journalism" [11] intended for the first and second-year students of Journalism, of the Institute of Social and Philosophical Sciences and Mass Communications of Kazan Federal University (Russia).

The open educational resource "English for Media and Journalism", supplementing the basic course of English, is intended to train future journalists to work with authentic texts on the specialty, expand their lexical vocabulary and apply the studied media techniques and mastered vocabulary in practical situations. The course is also addressed to all those interested in the problems of modern journalism.

The e-course consists of six modules and contains professional-oriented authentic texts and videos in English, namely, material on the types and forms of communication, news media, audience types of media, as well as on the newspaper, magazine and television industry of English-speaking countries, such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The suggested levels of proficiency in English are Intermediate and Upper-Intermediate.

The purpose of the course is the development, consolidation and automation of lexical units in the specialty, the development of the ability to understand the text, the improvement of oral and written skills in the specialty and the promotion of the linguistic, sociolinguistic and socio-cultural competence of students. The proposed texts, videos, interactive tasks, references to literary sources and Internet resources develop the skills of all types of speech activity: reading, listening, speaking and writing. This OER presents texts for the development of various skills of communicative reading and translation with a dictionary, accompanied by the pre- and post-text tasks. Lexical exercises allow you to work out the necessary vocabulary and expand the vocabulary of students. The video accompaniment of the electronic educational resource allows the students to expand their horizons regarding the development of journalism in the English-speaking environment, contributes to the development of English language skills, as well as oral communication skills in the context of the subjects studied. This open educational resource is intended for students at an advanced stage of education, but may be of interest to all those interested in the media.

The introductory part of the course contains the program of the discipline, concise course notes, the competences which are necessary to master the course, the guidelines for students and the guidelines for teachers. There is also a list of the main bibliography, a list of end-of-course questions, final tests, the glossary and the news forum. Every module consists of the guidelines for students, pre-reading task, the glossary, the texts for reading, after-reading tasks, final tasks, a video, online resources and news forum.

Let us consider Module 1 "Forms of Communication" as an example. The module reveals the concept of communication, its types and features. Students practice relevant vocabulary, learn to conduct discussions in English and improve the skills of understanding foreign speech by ear.

Key words of the module are communication, forms of communication, mass communication, interpersonal communication, audience, source, receiver.

Topics for discussion are the following:

1   Forms of Communication.

2   Nature of the Mass Communicator.

3   Mass Communication Audience.

4   Video "The Evolution of Communication".

The Guidelines for students to Module 1 "Forms of Communication" include:

1   Literature on the topic.

2   Pre-Reading Task: Answer the questions.

3   Glossary: Study the words and phrases.

4   Text 1: Read and translate the text.

5   After-Reading task №1: Answer the questions.

6   After-Reading task №2 "Matching exercise": Match the items on the right to the items on the left.

7   After-Reading task №3 "Gap-fill exercise": Fill in all the gaps, then press "Check" to check your answers. Use the "Hint" button to get a free letter if an answer is giving you trouble. You can also click the "[?]" button to get a clue. Note that you will lose points if you ask for hints or clues!

8   After-Reading task №4 "Mixed-up sentence exercise": Put the parts in order to form a sentence. When you think your answer is correct, click on "Check" to check your answer. If you get stuck, click on "Hint" to find out the next correct part.

9   Text 2: read the text.

10 Task on Text 2: write a summary of the text.

11   Final Task: make a report or presentation on one of the themes (mentioned above).

12 Watching Video: Watch the film.

13 Watching Video Task: do the task.

14 Forum: Discuss the topics with your groupmates.

As we have seen, the structure of the course is quite easy to understand. Following the instructions, humanity students can implement all the tasks individually in the class or at home [16] and send them to the teacher or tutor to check and evaluate.

The students have been successfully studying the course for 6 months. They were later interviewed what they really liked about the course. They highlighted such benefits as easy access to learning, habitual Internet environment, ability to self-modify course materials, multidisciplinary character of the educational content and cost savings.

4   DISCUSSIONS

The "OER movement" - which has subsequently been referred to as the "OER community" - emerged, by some accounts, in 2002. Since that time, UNESCO has contributed to fostering dialogue among participants in the movement/community through a series of online discussion forums and by creating and sustaining an online community of interest. D'Antoni and Savage (2009) describe the role of this OER community as one solution to extending the reach of education and expanding learning opportunities through OER. The UNESCO OER Community now constitutes a recognised space for international exchange of information, resources and views on the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Platform of Communities. Through this and other vehicles, the concept of OER has been debated and refined, related issues clarified and discussed, and barriers to OER use and production identified. Other significant initiatives in higher education, such as OER Africa and the Open CourseWare Consortium emerged at a similar time and have promoted the use, reuse, repurposing and contextualisation of OER. Such initiatives have been predominantly, but not exclusively, in higher education [12, 13, 14, 15].

Despite significant progress made in the introduction of OER into higher education, within the UNESCO OER community and through a range of other similar initiatives, the OER concept is still not widely known and understood, especially by policy makers and institutional managers. Furthermore, where OER projects and initiatives are implemented, they are mostly marginal and donor-driven [15].

Consequently, in 2010, UNESCO, in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), launched the initiative Taking OER Beyond the OER Community: Policy and Capacity. This initiative aimed to increase the level of and widen the understanding of OER by educational decision makers and quality assurance experts in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. The initiative built on the results of previous and ongoing work of the two organisations in OER, as well as ongoing collaboration between them [12].

5   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The open educational resource "English for Media & Journalism" was deployed on the e-platform of Kazan University (Russia) and though it was mainly addressed to humanity students, the authors followed all rules of OER publishing and made it open and free to any stakeholder. In its form, the course resembles xMOOC and has all necessary components. The structure of the course is quite easy to understand. Following the instructions, humanity students can implement all the tasks individually in the class or at home and send them to the teacher or tutor to check and evaluate.

The students have been successfully studying the course for 6 months. Among the advantages of the course, students highlighted such benefits as easy access to learning, habitual Internet environment, ability to self-modify course materials, multidisciplinary character of the educational content and cost savings.

The results of the work may be interesting to teachers, educators and e-learners who support innovations and feel free to create, collaborate, communicate both online and offline.

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