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## EVENTS

### MULTIMODAL, TRANSMEDIAL, AND TRANS-EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES FOR ONLINE LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING: 2d YUFE - UKRAINE SEMINAR

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#### Abstract

This review explores the Second YUFE – Ukraine seminar, held from November 12th to 14th, 2024. Young Universities for the Future of Europe is a European University alliance of 10 higher education institutions. Hosted by the University Centre for Foreign Languages at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń—one of Poland’s largest state universities—and supported by the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA), the seminar marked a significant trans-European collaboration. This event brought together foreign language educators and researchers from Poland, Ukraine, Cyprus, Finland, Georgia, and Belgium, focusing on the theme of *online language teaching and learning*, which underscored its relevance.

Although multimodal and transmedial teaching and learning practices have become popular for ESL and other educational contexts, several additional questions have emerged, including the development of students’ multimodal literacy through online learning, the need for a more critical approach to the assessment of student achievements, and a focus on fostering both professional skills and cultural and social values among students.

The event centered on the application of modern multimodal and transmedial tools in teaching foreign languages and translation. These tools include digital technologies such as H5P, ChatGPT, augmented reality, artificial intelligence, as well as innovative pedagogical approaches like project-based learning and design thinking. Discussions culminated in identifying prospects for joint international projects, particularly in teaching business English (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The proposed initiatives aim to involve students from various European partner universities in collaborative language education.

**Keywords:** *multimodal, transmedial, online language education, professional skills, Second YUFE–Ukraine seminar.*



## 1. Introduction

The last few decades, marked by rapid technological advancements, have profoundly influenced educational processes, stimulating extensive interdisciplinary research in fields such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English as a Second Language (ESL). Online language teaching and learning, in particular, has emerged as a critical area of exploration. The Second YUFE (Young Universities for the Future of Europe) – Ukraine seminar on cooperation in online language education served as a dynamic platform for university practitioners, researchers, and students to share their experiences, address challenges, and explore future strategies for ESP and ESL teaching and learning.

This three-day event, held from November 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> at the University Centre for Foreign Languages of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland, facilitated the exchange of ideas, best practices, and solutions for the evolving field of online foreign language education. Key topics included the integration of tools such as ChatGPT and AI, as well as the digitalization of multilingual programs in European higher education institutions. Insights from participating countries—Poland, Ukraine, Cyprus, Finland, Belgium, and Georgia—enriched the discussions, emphasizing the significance of collaborative innovation in language education.

## 2. Multimodality and transmediality in online education

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, online education is becoming increasingly important. Apart from meeting the requirements of today's digitalized society, online education provides a unique opportunity to continue the educational process when offline learning is not possible, as recent European events, including COVID-19 and warfare, have shown. Education in the digital age necessitates the use of a full range of relevant semiotic resources (Early et al., 2015). Consequently, multimodality and transmediality shift from being theoretical constructs to practical tools for online teaching and learning (Fleming, 2013; Tombleson, 2024). This involves using various Internet platforms, mobile apps, social media, video games, and Artificial Intelligence, particularly ChatGPT, in the online classroom. On the one hand, this shift presents new challenges and, on the other hand, it offers new opportunities for language teaching and learning at different levels of language proficiency.

Multimodality in education (van Leeuwen, 2015) and “transmedia teaching practices” (Rodrigues & Bidarra, 2016; Sánchez-Caballé & González-Martínez, 2023) have become popular for ESL and beyond. At the same time, additional questions emerged. As van Leeuwen (2015) puts it, should educators develop students' multimodal literacy beyond entertainment where they are already proficient? Should educators take a more critical stance to students' production? Should educators focus on students' professional skills or rather cultural and social values such as “decolonized education”? These issues were addressed by the participants of the II YUFE–Ukraine workshop.

Transmedial educational experiences have attracted the interest of professionals worldwide, and at the II YUFE – Ukraine workshop; they were the subject of a two-strand discussion: online education in ESP/EAP teaching (a multimodal perspective) and in ESL translation teaching (the perspective of transmediality). In the section below, we will focus on each of these perspectives, though their separation is artificial and only intended for heuristic purposes.

## 3. Multimodality and transmediality in the language classroom

Most of the developments and practical ramifications of trans-European cooperation in online language teaching and learning presented at the seminar were inspired by the I YUFE – Ukraine seminar a year ago. The presentation titles listed below—intercultural projects, remedial courses, and language clubs—illustrate the variety of approaches to this problem:

- Associate Professor Dr. Liliia Sandycha, (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine) and Assistant Professor Dr. Joanna Wińska, (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland) explained that their international collaboration began at the first YUFE-Ukraine ESP

Contact Seminar in December 2023, titled *Bridging Borders through Internationalization* and hosted by the University Centre for Foreign Languages at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. As a result of this partnership, an online intercultural project titled *Restaurant of Your Dreams* was launched for 60 Business English students from both Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. This project provided students with a unique opportunity to enhance their presentation and negotiation skills in an international environment, express their creativity, explore a different culture, and broaden their academic and cross-cultural horizons.

- *Independent Online English Remedial Course Created with H5P: Experiences from Teachers and Students* was the focus of Katja Suvanto's presentation (University of Eastern Finland). The aim of her presentation was to introduce a completely automated, independent English remedial course for B1-B2-level students in Finland. The course was created by Katja Suvanto and Jasmin Pyöriäinen, university teachers at the Language Centre of UEF. The tool used to create this course was H5P. The speaker also noted that the automated nature of the course has certain limitations; such as the lack of oral and longer writing tasks that require teachers' input. However, according to the students and teachers, the course has been found to be helpful and effortless to use. Based on this, H5P tools can be recommended to language teachers in higher education.

- Associate Professor Dr. Olena Zhygadlo (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv), Kamila Szczepanowska (Legal English lecturer, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń), and Olga Kadukowska (a student at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) presented the COIL project titled *Virtual Language Club for Law Enthusiasts*. It united law students from Poland and Ukraine who volunteered to analyze the EU Cybersecurity Act and its impact on national legislation. The students developed legal analysis, intercultural communication, digital collaboration, problem-solving, and academic writing skills. Their collaborative comparison of domestic cybersecurity legislation was later published as articles in the conference materials for students and young researchers, preparing them for international legal challenges and deepening their understanding of EU and national laws.

- Associate Professor Dr. Oryslava Bryska (Ivan Franko National University of Lviv) delivered a presentation titled *Project-Based Learning for Translators' Training*, emphasizing the importance of competence-based learning. She proceeded from the importance of management and claimed that a shift towards competence-based learning made it necessary to concentrate on teaching by mocking the real-life situations and cases that the students will face in their professional career paths. Not less important is the development of transversal skills applicable in any work-related environment students might find themselves in. Project-based learning is an apt solution here. Working on a project is about coordination of communication in a team, collaborating, and planning their outcomes that requires critical thinking and creativity.

- In her engaging talk entitled *Chat GPT: a useful tool for our students ... and for us! Some practical ideas*, Dr Françoise Jammot (University of Cyprus) shared some practical examples of how ChatGPT can be a useful tool to enhance students' writing and speaking skills (both at home and in class, focusing on beginner and intermediate levels). ChatGPT can be particularly effective in helping students practice their writing and speaking skills. In addition, she briefly explored some activities (and prompts) that teachers could implement to enhance their teaching in designing creative activities, while making sure they provide long-lasting skills to the learners.

- Dr Anna Olkiewicz-Mantilla (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) presented her vision of *Introducing Elements of Design Thinking in the ESL Classroom*. Critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication and social skills are the most highlighted twenty-first-century competencies of an innovation-driven economy. The presentation outlined the five key stages of DT—Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test—and demonstrated their application in project-based ESL activities. Benefits include fostering student engagement, enhancing language

skills, and problem-solving strategies. The author also shared tips for preparation, implementation, and assessment, illustrating how micro-projects in DT empower undergraduate students of security studies to approach the complex challenges they may encounter in their professional careers.

- Dr. Shaunna Joannidou (University of Cyprus) shared her project *Design, Development and Implementation of AR Scenarios - Exploring our Experience and Practices in the DIMPE*. The DIMPE (Digitalization of Multilingual Programs in European Higher Education Institutions) aims to promote internationalization through the provision of quality practices and digitalization in HEIs that are carrying out or planning to introduce multilingual programs. The project seeks to deploy novel digital tools that can serve as powerful mechanisms to facilitate this challenge in promoting multilingual education. This presentation discussed the three intellectual outputs of the project and focused on the design, development, and implementation of six Augmented Reality Learning Scenarios for Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC).

- Ms. Agnieszka Pawlikowska (Legal English lecturer, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) introduced *Collaborative Syllabus Design for Future-Ready Administration Graduates*, emphasizing a Business-to-University (BtU) framework aimed at bridging skill gaps among Public Administration graduates entering the Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Know Your Client (KYC) sectors. The program targets second-year undergraduate students, integrating 120 hours of specialized training, including 20 hours dedicated to BtU projects. Key components include analyzing job advertisements, CV preparation, job interview practice, and thematic lectures on specialized terminology, corporate jargon, and AML/KYC processes. The latest findings revealed gaps in linguistic and conceptual readiness, which hinder graduates' recruitment, retention, and career advancement. The program emphasizes the development of sector-specific vocabulary and cross-disciplinary skills, benefiting students through enhanced job readiness, employers through reduced training needs, and universities via improved graduate profiles and partnerships. Challenges include curriculum integration, resource allocation, and equipping faculty to address future job requirements. This presentation also demonstrated how integrating specialized training into university curricula can enhance job readiness while addressing industry needs.

- Ms. Rusudan Janjibukhashvili (EFL Teacher), Dr. Inga Koniashvili (Academic English lecturer), and Ms. Mariana Menteshashvili (EFL Teacher) from Ilia State University, Tbilisi provided insights into the current state of online foreign language teaching in Georgia. Their presentation outlined potential collaborations with YUFE to develop effective ESP/ESL teaching methodologies and foster international partnerships. In particular, Ms. Ana Laitadze (EFL Teacher), addressed major cognitive and behavioral issues caused by the intervention of AI in the teaching and learning process of EFL. She argued that on the one hand, there is a cognitive issue, which refers to the usage of the AI by students as a risk to the quality of the attained knowledge. On the other hand, a behavioral issue refers to an increasing role of AI in class and at home, which undermines academic performance and involvement in students' face-to-face communication. She suggested a complex response: (1) integrating AI at all stages of an online lesson, i.e. online platforms "padlet.net" and "wordwall.net" represent user-friendly, free resources and effective tools of achieving all teaching aims and learning objectives; (2) involving students in planning the learning process by suggesting a choice of web resources at all learning stages.

Dr. Inga Koniashvili presented a talk on *Learning Tools for Academic Writing and Effective*. In it, she showcased effective learning tools for academic writing and presentations, emphasizing the use of Padlet.net for collaborative writing. This online tool helps students brainstorm, organize, and provide peer feedback, promoting interactive learning. She also demonstrated strategies for narrowing down broad topics into focused ones, engaging presentation themes. Additionally, she highlighted the importance of having back-up activities to ensure seamless learning and make e-learning platforms support both online and offline settings. She argued that these tools and strategies are adaptable and foster a dynamic learning environment, enhancing both writing and presentation skills in any format.

Transmedial perspective in ESL was the object of analysis of Associate Professor Dr. Oksana Molchko (Ivan Franko National University of Lviv). She shared the results of *teaching English and translation/interpreting in virtual and in-person environment in the time of war*. Her MA-level Translation Practice course in Lviv University builds upon the knowledge, skills, and competencies gained during undergraduate studies, aiming to enhance these abilities at a more advanced level. It focuses on refining translation and teaching translation skills, with an emphasis on producing high-quality English in thematic projects. The course also involves the input from experienced professional translators, who share their expertise in specialized areas, fostering practical discussions among MA students. This collaborative environment encourages students to critically assess their career trajectories, whether in translation or education, guiding their professional development and future goals.

- Associate Professor Dr. Olha Hrabovetska (Ivan Franko National University of Lviv) argued that *the use of virtual reality and artificial intelligence* opens up new opportunities for translation training, however, online education has its challenges. The main problems are technical barriers, engagement and motivation of students and skill assessment. To address these issues, one may use effective Internet platforms like Zoom or MS Teams for real-time learning, Google Classroom, and Moodle for self-paced learning. Unless overly relied on, AI tools prove effective for developing translator skills. Teaching strategies include interactive classes, regular feedback loop, peer learning, role-play, and group projects. She claimed that despite the benefits of online training, a blended approach combining online (synchronous, asynchronous) and face-to-face formats, offers the most optimal solution for teaching translation.

- The presentation of Stephanie Hughes (Business English lecturer, University of Antwerp) titled *Assessing students' written work – the challenges of AI* managed to achieve three primary objectives: to analyze contemporary trends in the integration of language and technology within professional environments, to explore the challenges faced by educators in the current context of artificial intelligence (AI) and large language models (LLMs), and to investigate the complexities involved in designing and evaluating company-relevant student assignments. The presentation began with an overview of language instruction at the University of Antwerp, Belgium, providing contextual background. This was followed by a presentation of preliminary findings from a recently-conducted online survey of alumni regarding their experiences using foreign languages and AI in the workplace. The final section of the presentation concentrated on strategies currently in use in the second-year English for Business and Economics course within the Faculty of Business and Economics, strategies designed to align assignment tasks with the anticipated professional roles and responsibilities students are likely to encounter in their future careers

#### 4. Conclusions

The seminar in Toruń marked a noteworthy milestone in fostering academic collaboration between European and Ukrainian institutions in the field of online foreign language education. It highlighted how multimodal and transmedial approaches enhance opportunities to teach students contextually rich, authentic language while fostering critical thinking, communication skills, creativity, and cultural awareness. The innovative insights shared by the seminar participants contribute to the theoretical and practical understanding of online learning environments as effective mediums for teaching academic content and developing the foreign language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Through different projects led by Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, the seminar has facilitated the exchange of best practices with Ukrainian universities and successfully established educationalists' connections. They have the potential to open new avenues for *further research* in the field of online foreign language education. Hopefully, this academic project will serve a successful trans-European model for shaping a holistic and inclusive future for European students and learners grounded in socially responsible university cooperation.



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### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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## МУЛЬТИМОДАЛЬНІ, ТРАНСМЕДІАЛЬНІ І ТРАНС-ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКІ ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ОНЛАЙН-ВИКЛАДАННЯ І ВИВЧЕННЯ МОВ: 2-Й СЕМІНАР YUFE – УКРАЇНА

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**Анотація**

Ця оглядова стаття сфокусована на другому семінарі YUFE – Україна 12<sup>го</sup>–14<sup>го</sup> листопада 2024 року (альянс YUFE – Молоді Університети Європи за Майбутнє). Другий YUFE – Ukraine семінар був проведений центром іноземних мов університету Миколи Коперніка в Торуні – в одному з найбільших університетів у Польщі і організований за сприяння Польського національного агентства академічних обмінів (NAWA). Ця друга зустріч освітян і викладачів іноземної мови для спеціальних цілей стала транс-європейською подією, яка поєднала професіоналів з Польщі, України, Кіпру, Фінляндії, Грузії, Бельгії. Провідна тема семінару – онлайн викладання і навчання мов визначила його непересічну актуальність.

Хоча мультимодальні та трансмедійні практики навчання стали популярними для ESL та інших освітніх контекстів, виникло кілька додаткових питань. Серед них такі питання, як розвиток мультимодальної грамотності учнів через он-лайн навчання; більш критичне ставлення до оцінювання досягнень студентів, зосередження уваги як на професійних навичках студентів, так і на культурних і соціальних цінностях.

В ході семінару обговорювались сучасні мультимодальні інструменти і трансмедіальні засоби викладання іноземної мови та перекладу, які передбачають використання у навчальному процесі цифрових технологій H5P, ChatGPT, штучного інтелекту, доповненої реальності, а також застосування проєктного підходу та елементів дизайн-мислення. В результаті обговорень і дискусій намічені перспективи спільних міжнародних проєктів та заплановані декілька ініціатив спільного викладання ділової іноземної мови (зокрема, ESP) та іноземної мови для академічних цілей (EAP) із залученням студентів з різних європейських університетів-партнерів.

**Ключові слова:** мультимодальний, трансмедіальний, мовна онлайн освіта, професійні навички, II YUFE– Україна семінар.