

Academic e-learning experience in the enhancement of open access audiovisual and media education

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1. Abstract

The paper presents how the academic e-learning experience and didactic methods of the Centre for Open and Multimedia Education (COME UW), University of Warsaw, enhance the open access to audiovisual and media education at various levels of education. The project is implemented within the Audiovisual and Media Education Programme (PEAM). It is funded by the Polish Film Institute (PISF). The aim of the project is to create a proposal of a comprehensive and open programme for the audiovisual (media) education.

2. Background

The abilities to research, evaluate and process information and to use the media in a safe and creative manner are basic skills of a member of an information society. The development of a knowledge-based society is one of the objectives of the European Union and national strategies. Hence, reinforcing interactive education (which refers to media education, e-learning and life-long learning) has been an important goal for the Polish education (reported in: *Social Capital Development Strategy, Poland 2030*).

Research proves that a lack of motivation, directly related to a lack of knowledge and skills is one of the main barriers to accessing new technologies. There is even more recognition as to what opportunities and threats are connected with the use of new technologies, but the knowledge on how to acquire and develop these essential skills is quite poor (Lipszyc J., et. al., 2011). Publishing the *Digital Future* (Dąbrowska A. et. al., 2014) - a catalogue of media and information literacy competences, by the Modern Poland Foundation (<https://nowoczesnapolska.org.pl/>), was a step forward. The creative use of the media was mentioned among the crucial competences. The catalogue was approved by the Polish National Commission for UNESCO as a significant input into the *Information For All* international program.

The report on the state of the media and information literacy among Poles was the basis to the launch of the Digital Future programme the aim of which was to implement the concept of the *convergence of competence*. As a result, a set of media educational materials has been prepared for all educational levels including: pre-school, primary and secondary school as well as for other educational institutions, such as community centres and libraries. The materials contain a proposal of topics and ready-made lesson plans and scenarios, including the suggestions for task types and interaction patterns to be used (questions, exercises, team work, references, time needed) as well as organizational matters to be taken into consideration. They are available on the web at <http://edukacjamedialna.edu.pl/>. They are of great didactic and methodological value, meet the needs and expectations of the age group and include achievement tests in each lesson. However, they do not contain, any kind of multimedia resources (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The website <http://edukacjamedialna.edu.pl/> with the scenarios for lessons on media education for pre-school, primary and secondary schools.

At the same time, the Polish Film Institute (PISF) identified several gaps in both formal education on audiovisual, media and film recourses, as well as in the creative use of the media and interactive education (understood as a skill of using multimedia in creating the content and in supporting teaching and learning in various areas of education) (Litorowicz A., Majewski P., 2011).

Its first move was the School Film Library (Filmoteka Szkolna) project. The project provided the secondary school learners with a set of fifty-five Polish classic movies (feature films, documentaries, cartoons) supplemented with the topics to be discussed on their basis. Additional materials on film education, useful for teachers of various subjects such as literature, history or social studies, can be accessed on the project website www.filmotekaszkolna.pl (Figure 2).

As a complementary initiative to the School Film Library (Filmoteka Szkolna) project, an Audiovisual and Media Education Programme (PEAM - first stage) project was launched in 2012, with the University of Warsaw (represented by the Center for Open and Multimedia Education (COME UW)) as the PISF partner.



Figure 2. The website of the School Film Library (Filmoteka Szkolna) project www.filmotekaszkolna.pl

3. The Audiovisual and Media Education Programme (PEAM) project

PEAM is a complementary initiative to the School Film Library (Filmoteka Szkolna) project. Within PEAM we are searching for the best formula for film and media education in Poland, particularly important for the ability to critically analyse the media in a period of rapid transformations in public life. Although there are plenty of well-functioning grass-roots initiatives that exist in Poland, no solutions have yet been implemented to treat the phenomenon systemically.

Thus, the purpose and rationale behind the PEAM Programme is to combine resources available in Poland with analytical traditions as well as the up-to-date multimedia with e-learning technologies (meeting the criteria for Open Educational Resources). The introduction of the PEAM Programme acknowledges the status of the media participant as a creative agent in the process of interactive education.

The aim of the first stage of the project was to create a proposal of a comprehensive and open programme for the audiovisual (media) education and the programme for the use of the media and audiovisual resources at all levels of education.

3.1. The university approach to open education on the media and film

COME UW proposed an innovative approach to the media and film education moving the didactic process to the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and with the engagement of the audiovisual means, basing on the fact that digital world is a “natural” environment for the young generation (Tapscott, 1997, 2008), which is at the same time the target group of the programme.

The choice of e-learning as a form of education was made after a comprehensive analysis of its advantages and limitations. The fact that e-learning stays in line with the European Union's policy on the development of the information society, which significantly contributes to the strengthening of the knowledge-based society was also taken into account. It also meets the objective on the improvement and development of different forms of education.

The digital world imposes gaining new competences on its users. Currently, the ability of constructive analysis (including logical linking "pieces of information") is much more desirable than the static mastery of knowledge and its reproduction. The use of e-learning platform gives you more opportunities to reflect on the content (text files, tasks, tests, discussion forums), which in turn fosters the maturation of analytical thinking. Simultaneously, the psychology of individual differences clearly points to the fact that what makes people (even of the same age) different from each other is not only the level of intelligence but the amount of time they need to acquire information. Therefore, the PEAM project's goal is to make the educational program meet the needs of an individual student. E-learning provides the opportunity for self-study and self-testing of knowledge and grants the flexibility of time within the learning process (also through the easy access to materials via mobile devices such as smartphones). What is more, it reduces the social exclusion (e.g. people with physical disabilities can easily access the course via the Internet). Moreover, the materials embedded on the platform can supplement other forms of teaching (e.g. workshops).

3.3 Academic methodology

Therefore, in the first stage of the implementation of the PEAM project, e-learning was considered to be one of the forms of learning based on the application of new technologies. Benefiting from the didactic and methodological e-learning experience gained at the university, COME UW offered to introduce an open source educational Moodle platform to the teaching and learning process, recognizing it as the most appropriate tool for media/film/audiovisual education. The platform allows for rich combination of materials (audio, video, text files) that might be embedded there, which is not feasible within the traditional coursebooks. In the case of film education, the emphasis is put on video files.

Moreover, the platform flexibility meets the expectations of both teachers and students (time-flexible mode of teaching/learning, access possible through mobile devices). A course can be organised both with the teacher involvement, engaging participants in the activities in the forums and in the open tasks to be completed and it can serve as an on-line self-study course with the highly developed self-check part and individual access to the course materials. Easy access to information changes the role of the teacher, whose main duty is not only to deliver knowledge but to be the mentor as well, who assists learners in the process of acquiring knowledge/competence, inter alia, by identifying gaps and giving feedback on the student's progress.

3.4. The pilot e-course

Taking into account the above mentioned advantages, a pilot on-line course entitled: *Film as a story - how to read a film* (in Polish) was created within the first stage of the PEAM project. The content was prepared by experienced academic teachers - specialists in film education in the Department of Film and Visual Culture at the Faculty of Polish Studies of the University of Warsaw.

The main value of the course is that it uses movie extracts to illustrate and explain the meaning of the phenomena that are present in the film making process, e.g. the importance of light and sound in creating film atmosphere, the significance of the metaphor, the impact of scenery on the perception of the film reality (Figure 3), etc.

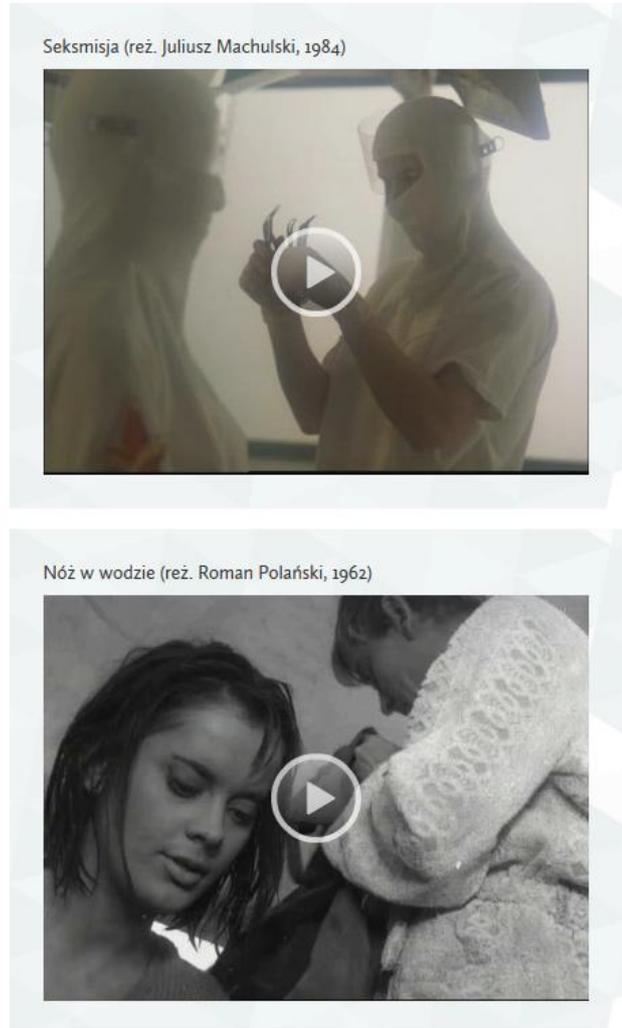


Figure 3. Examples of the movie extracts used for the needs of the pilot e-course: *Film as a story - how to read a film*.

The e-course is divided into modules focusing on the chosen aspects of the film such as film forms or film narration. They contain smaller sub-modules with the explanations of the film-making theoretical background and video lectures. For better understanding of the content and its memorization, the infographics have been introduced (Figure 4).



Figure 4. An infographic with the linked descriptions of the components of the film scenery.

The course provides typical multiplechoice tests (Figure 5.) as well as specially tailored interactive questions based on the films extracts (Figure 6.).

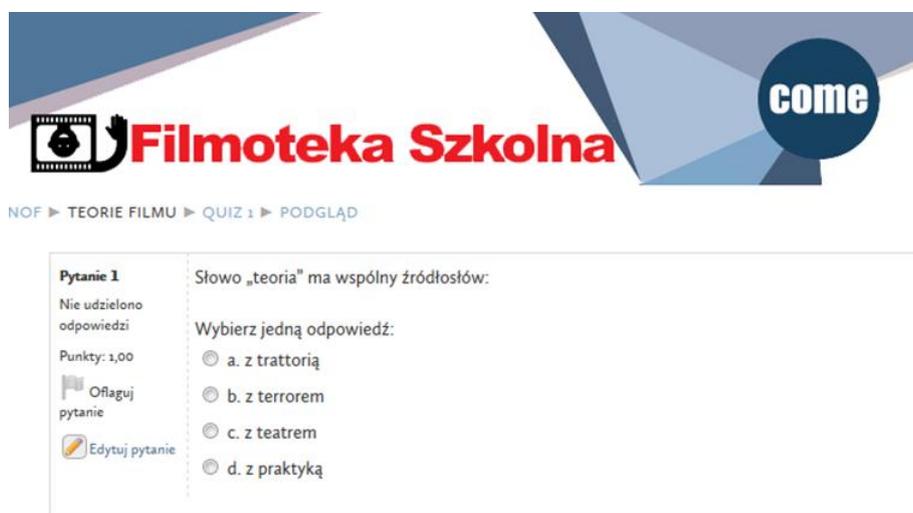


Figure 5: The example of a self-check test.

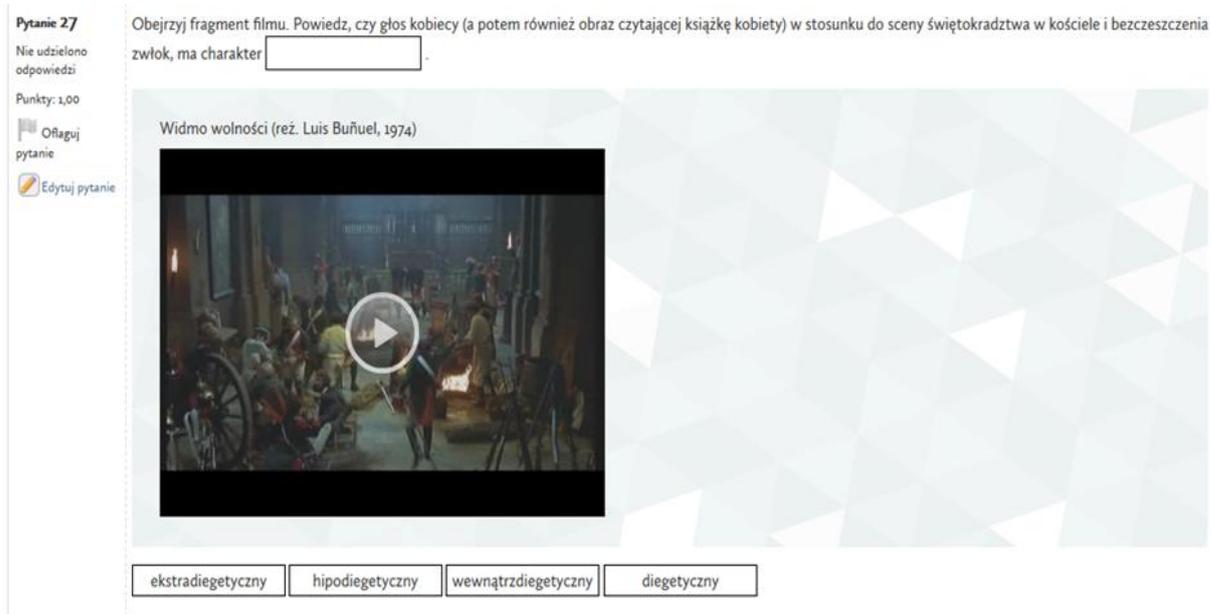


Figure 6. The example of an interactive test question within the *Film as story - how to read a film e-course*.

The course is enriched with descriptions of the skills gained after its completion, wikis, self-check tests after each module, the final test, as well as optional open assignments and a workshop task to be led under the supervision of a teacher (Figure 7). These materials can be easily combined and they are complementary to the traditional face-to-face teaching.

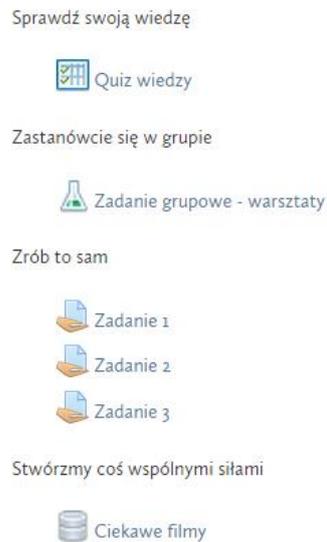


Figure 7. The e-course contains self-check quizzes, group workshops or individual assignments to be evaluated by the supervisor.

The course was reviewed by the students of the Faculty of Polish Studies of UW and got an overall positive feedback. The interesting remark was made on the film extracts. In the opinion of some students, it should include more contemporary movies.

4. Follow-on initiatives

The e-course was positively evaluated by PISF media educators and two other courses were requested to be created on the platform within the second stage of the PEAM project. They are: *The basics of journalism* for young people interested in creating their own journalistic video materials as well as for the teachers and *The methodology of film education* dedicated for pedagogy students, teachers and film educators. On those bases other e-courses are to be prepared.

Within a project, an international conference: *Film and Media Education in Poland and the world - systemic solutions and case studies* is planned.

5. Conclusion

The additional value of moving the learning process into the virtual environment lies in the flexibility resulting from asynchronous mode and access to the course via the mobile devices (also for disabled persons), an implementation of the platform-based evaluation process (feedback forms, surveys), as well as the analysis of the logging-in status. This allows for the supervision of traffic within the course, which might be of significant importance for the project/course feedback and monitoring. On this basis, evaluation of the materials can be made in order to complement or improve them. In terms of massive open education, the courses can be easily transformed to MOOCs on media/film education, if such need for further development arises. The follow-on initiatives within the PEAM project prove the academic didactic experience might be successfully implemented at other levels of education.

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Dorota Sidor, MA, works at the Centre for Open and Multimedia Education, University of Warsaw. She specializes in e-learning methodology. Since 2007 she coordinates a university-wide educational project IBIZA (Interdisciplinary Database of Academic e-Courses). She has taken part in numerous e-learning projects, e.g. Higher Educational Institutions As Integrators for Lfe-Long Learning, Warsaw School of Data Analysis, Audiovisual and Media Education Programme, Ministry of Regional Development e-courses on projects' evaluation, Conducting Research, Preparing the Methodology, Programs and Didactic Materials for Distance Education. Currently she is working on her PhD thesis regarding communication skills of e-learning users. She is a member of Editorial Board of the EduAction open access online journal.