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## EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE ONLINE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF UKRAINE: CURRENT CHALLENGES

*The article considers the application of distance learning technologies within foreign language learning in higher education institutions of Ukraine. The regulations for the development of distance education, examples of its application, services used for online learning, as well as the problems that arose in the organization of study process during the COVID-19 pandemic were analyzed.*

*In particular, the possibilities of using the Internet in the study process were studied; the available resources and tools for learning foreign languages were presented. It is noted that with the advent of quarantine restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant change in the education strategy. At the same time, the emergency transition to online work, which took place in 2020, should be distinguished from properly planned online learning, requiring much longer time and careful preparation. The shortcomings and problems having arisen as a result of the rapid transition to online learning were identified. On the other hand, the experience of planned and prepared use of distance technologies in higher education is presented, which provides for long-term training, careful development of educational support and appropriate qualification of scientific and pedagogical staff.*

*It is emphasized that learning a foreign language remotely should be distinguished from self-training. The role of the teacher is important, especially due to the need to provide feedback and choose effective learning tools. In this context, it is noted that the effective distance learning of foreign languages depends primarily on the quality of training of educators in technical and methodological terms.*

*Both synchronous and asynchronous learning tools were analyzed. The advantages and disadvantages of their use were identified. On the basis of the conducted research the ways for optimization of distance technologies use in modern conditions were outlined.*

**Key words:** *online learning, distance education, foreign language learning, learning tools, quarantine restrictions.*

Full-time education is today the most common in higher education institutions of Ukraine. It is chosen by the majority of enrollees every year. In this context, it is important to note that the specifics of teaching a foreign language differ significantly from the ones of teaching other subjects. First of all, it is about the use of teaching methods that involve work in the classroom, interactive tasks and direct contact with the teacher.

At the same time, the world has long and successfully used educational technologies involving full or partial distance learning. This form of education arose due to the needs of society and in a short period of time combined the benefits of using modern technologies in the study process.

The experience of using distance educational technologies is covered in numerous works of Ukrainian scholars, defended doctoral and candidate dissertations. In particular the issues related to the latest information technologies in higher education institutions were dealt by: M. Koval, A. Kovalenko, V. Kukharenko, I. Postolenko, L. Romanenko, S. Romaniuk, V. Rybalko, O. Tokmenko, O Yankovets, and many others.

Theoretical and practical aspects of distance learning have been considered in the studies of foreign researchers: F. Bodendorf, H. Dichanz, J. Kettunen, C. Mac Domhnaill, E. Zarzycka, J. Krasodomska and others. At the same time, despite the multi-vector approaches, the method of teaching foreign languages using a remote format of work with the whole set of problems has not yet been systematically considered and requires detailed study. It is especially topical taking into account new realities in the education caused by the restrictions imposed during COVID-19 pandemic.

In order to study current challenges of using distance technologies in foreign languages learning the methods of comparison and analysis were used. A descriptive method was used to present the results of the online services and platforms analysis and determining their didactic potential.

Until recently, distance learning was not widely used in Ukraine, which can be explained by a number of reasons, including the lack of development and dissemination of information and communication technologies. Today in our country the technical prerequisites for the introduction and widespread use of

distance learning have been created. The Internet resources are becoming increasingly popular among young people. Their advantages include accessibility, free of charge and ease of use [9].

A wide range of opportunities is provided by the World Wide Web. The mediatized virtual environment allows for synchronous and asynchronous teaching, providing tools for creating and delivering learning materials, tracking grades, and feedback. The active involvement of teachers-practitioners in the development of the Internet space has led to the creation of resource bases. Dictionaries, encyclopedias and other materials can be found online today.

The Internet has played a special role in changing the education image. Today it offers access to many free educational materials, some of which are provided by recognized educational institutions and leading universities. People all over the world are using various tools to learn new languages or improve those they already speak. The importance of information on the Internet is that you can always use the latest information and pick up a certain digest of skills on this issue.

Teachers can not only use existing resources, but also create their own, where students can receive information tailored to the needs of a particular audience. Students, in turn, due to authentic materials have the opportunity to be in a virtual language environment, read, see and hear samples of modern foreign language speech. In this way, the student can improve the full range of language skills: writing, reading, listening and speaking.

The online language learning has a number of obvious advantages. They are similar to the benefits of online learning in general – the availability of numerous learning materials or the ability to listen to music, watch movies and read books written in a foreign language. Because of the autonomy involved in the process, learning a language online is great for building self-knowledge and self-confidence, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning process. Students can create their own lesson plan and prioritize skills that they consider most important or challenging.

Repetition is crucial in learning foreign languages, and online environments clearly approve of this – students can repeat lessons or lectures many times, learning at their own pace in a comfortable environment. So, by incorporating a variety of multimedia and offering new teaching methods, learning online can be an easy solution to learning a new language.

Distance learning can take various forms and be supported by different systems and applications. It can be referred to as e-learning, blended learning or mobile learning. The common feature of all these approaches is the fact that the delivery is remote. The focal point of remote delivery is to facilitate the exchange of information, which enables the interac-

tion and exchange of knowledge between students at any time. In addition, remote delivery is compatible with other teaching methods and technologies of prior learning in the sense that it can continue to support traditional learning tools. This type of interaction extends learning beyond the walls of the university and removes some of the restrictions imposed on learning, such as distance and space but we do not have a detailed account whether it enables communication and collaboration between the educator and the student, as well as among students. Communication and collaboration are essential competencies not only for education but also for professional success in the labor market [11].

Among the models of distance learning of a foreign language, two varieties should be mentioned: traditional-distance learning and e-learning. Characteristic features of traditional distance learning are asynchrony in time, delivery of educational material by mail and other means of information transmission. E-learning takes place asynchronously and synchronously, the connection between the teacher and students and the exchange of educational material is carried out through information and communication technologies [4].

The COVID-19 pandemic has already changed the world order and could change education for the better, the sphere being conservative and resilient to changes for centuries. Technology transforms the laptop screen into an audience where students and teachers see each other and collaborate in learning interactions. The pandemic has forced everyone to master digital tools, new techniques and technologies [3].

One of the most often used terms after the pandemic is the term “new normal”. The new normal in education is the increased use of online learning tools. All around the world, educational institutions are looking toward online learning platforms to continue with the process of educating students. Today, digital learning has emerged as a necessary resource for students and schools all over the world. For many educational institutes, this is an entirely new way of education that they have had to adopt. In recent months, the demand for online learning has risen significantly, and it will continue doing so in the future [2].

The COVID-19 related quarantine restrictions have led to a significant change in education strategy. People realized the necessity and urgency of information technologies and, in particular, distance learning. In the shortest possible time, both teachers and students had to quickly switch to online work.

Emergency distance learning during a pandemic has significant differences from properly planned online learning. At the same time, the term “online learning” began to be used every time, when there was a lack of face-to-face contact with the teacher, which led to a change of concepts and incorrect conclusions. In this situation, it would be unreasonable

to use the term “online learning” even for the use of mass open online courses, as emergency transfer of students to them in the middle of the semester without prior organizational measures and proper support does not allow feeling the benefits of this technology. This is a consequence of force majeure, which forced the universities to mobilize all resources for a breakthrough in the mass introduction of distance learning technologies, but not in the systematic use of online learning tools, which takes much longer.

Forced distance learning has become a challenge for all study process actors. Organizing quality distance learning with the use of digital technologies, inspiring and motivating students and dealing with technical problems was not easy. Ukraine is not an exception – no educational system in the world was ready for such a situation [3].

The above situation immediately revealed serious problems, the main one being technical. In order to take advantage of online learning, a student must have a technological device, such as a computer, tablet or smartphone, and have access to high-speed Internet connection. Even in Europe, where the level of digitalization is traditionally high, it has been recognized that providing higher education students with high-speed Internet remains relevant.

The European Commission has argued that emergency situations such as COVID-19 demonstrate the necessity for universal access to high-speed broadband, with online education cited as one motivation. Previously, the EC also identified access to online learning as a motivating factor in its vision for a broadband speed of at least 100 megabits per second available to all European households [5].

In Ukraine, the quality of Internet communication did not always allow for effective online classes. In addition, not every student had a personal electronic device, especially when several family members had to work online at the same time.

Teachers were forced to organize the learning process with the help of distance technologies based on different methods of electronic content delivery and available communication tools. As for the technical staff that could support teachers during this difficult period, the number of such staff in universities is small and it was only a matter of accompanying a restricted number of interested teachers. Others had to use primitive e-mail content delivery.

Different level of computer literacy of research and teaching staff was also noted. While working with computers and the Internet has long been commonplace for the younger generation, for many older educators just simple tasks, such as saving and downloading files, not to mention video conferencing, have become a major challenge. Teachers lacked digital skills, time to learn new tools and to restructure the study process, as well as support from university technical services, which play an important role in the new technologies introduction.

Training in such a short time was not possible, being reduced to instructive internal meetings, short webinars from the expert community, recommendations and instructions for working with various services and platforms.

It is also important to take into account the independence of the education, which is a big risk for those students who find it difficult to maintain a high level of motivation.

In the current circumstances, Google’s educational tools have proven to be useful and effective. According to the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine, during distance learning, the GoogleClassroom platform was used by 100% of educators to transmit information, check papers, conduct testing and evaluation. This is the platform that foreign language teachers liked the most. Teachers also conducted online lessons, video conferences and individual consultations via Skype (11.1%) and Zoom (44.4%) platforms [7].

Numerous Ukrainian universities use the Moodle Distance Learning Platform (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) for online learning. This platform by Australian developer Martin Dougiamas is one of the most popular in the world, used in more than 100 countries and having more than 18 million users. The platform allows to create quality distance learning courses, its capabilities are not worse than the functionality of many commercial systems, in addition, it can be adapted to the needs of a particular training project and supplemented with new services. The interface of the program is simple, convenient and efficient, the design has a modular structure that is easily modified, and language packages that can be connected allow you to achieve full localization (today Moodle supports dozens of languages, including Ukrainian) [9].

The main opportunities of the platform for teachers include: registration of students with the possibility of personalization and differentiation of access rights to educational materials, creation and conduct of online courses, reporting and statistics on learning, control and evaluation of knowledge, questionnaires, integration with other information systems. Students have the opportunity to edit their accounts, add photos and change numerous personal data, read reminders about events in the course, download completed tasks, view the results of tests and courses, communicate with the teacher through personal messages and chat [Romaniuk]. There are other free and commercial platforms, whose functionality is constantly being improved.

Ukrainian legislation has a certain regulatory framework for the distance education development. It is guaranteed by the Law of Ukraine “On Education”, “Concept for Development of Distance Education in Ukraine”, “Regulations on Distance Learning”, the State Program “Education” and other documents.

Therefore, distance learning is not something completely new in the education system of Ukraine. In particular, the National Academy for Public Administration under the President of Ukraine and its regional institutes introduced distance-correspondence learning in 2003. Distance-correspondence learning is a form of the study process organization implemented on the basis of a combination of the basic correspondence form principles jointly with the use of distance learning as an educational technology. The introduction of distance-correspondence learning allowed achieving the following benefits:

- reduction of the duration of face-to-face sessions (up to 1 week);
- uniform rhythmic distribution of study workload during the semester and improving the quality and efficiency of training;
- full provision of the student with electronic educational and methodical, informational materials necessary for mastering the educational program;
- learning at the students' own pace, in accordance with their features and capabilities, in favorable conditions, without separation from the main professional activity;
- constant advisory support by teachers throughout the training period [6].

This is a good example of planned long-term use of remote technologies, careful development of educational support and appropriate training of scientific and pedagogical staff.

However, during the pandemic, a lot of new issues immediately arose. How to conduct an evaluation? How to ensure attendance control? How to encourage students to complete tasks on time? It was important to analyze which material needed to be explained and worked out during videoconferencing, and which one could be transferred to classroom assignments. So, the teaching of grammar, written speech and various types of reading can be taken to the classroom, and the teaching of oral speech is better done by videoconferencing. Provided a competent organization of the study process, there is no doubt that in the near future the distance form will be successfully used in integration with the full-time learning,

and will be able to replace it, if necessary [8, p. 184].

Among the teaching methods used during distance learning, there are two main categories: synchronous and asynchronous. The synchronous ones are videoconferences, conducted via Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, etc. Asynchronous teaching methods include e-mail, social media groups, forums, and online testing.

Asynchronous methods allow students to receive and process learning materials at any convenient time. The advantages and disadvantages of both synchronous and asynchronous online teaching methods are presented in the table.

Particular attention should be paid to the use of online dictionaries, as the translation of texts on the specialty remains an important component of language training in higher education institutions. Paper dictionaries are outdated, while electronic ones are characterized by frequent changes and availability of versions for a wide range of users.

At the same time, e-dictionaries should be distinguished from online translators. Students often use printed dictionaries or online translators while translating original texts. The quality of such work is low and does not meet the required translation standards. Electronic dictionaries, allowing getting several meanings of the term, feeling the nuances of its use in accordance with the context and even practicing pronunciation are widely available in the market of software. They are a good basis for simplifying foreign language learning.

It is important to note that the successful development of distance learning does not mean that a foreign language can be learned exclusively through online technologies, without leaving your home or office. With this approach, students do not have the opportunity to communicate with the teacher and to find out what mistakes they have made. Learning a foreign language involves not just memorizing lexical and grammatical units, composing phrases or translating texts, but above all the formation of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, which is impossible without the supervision of a teacher. Each person is an individual linguistic personality, formed on the

Table 1

<b>Synchronous teaching methods</b>	
<b>advantages</b>	<b>disadvantages</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal contact between teacher and students</li> <li>• instant feedback from audience and teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fragmentation of learning – students may be in a situation where their attention is distracted</li> <li>• communication time is limited, there is little time for reflection</li> <li>• additional technical equipment is necessary</li> </ul>
<b>Asynchronous teaching methods</b>	
<b>advantages</b>	<b>disadvantages</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• time and opportunity to prepare the answer are available</li> <li>• students with different language skills can be easily involved in the course</li> <li>• students who find it difficult to speak orally feel a certain comfort when communicating in writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of personal contact and verbal communication</li> <li>• longer term is needed to make group decisions</li> <li>• feedback can be postponed for several hours or days.</li> </ul>

basis of native language and culture. Therefore, each student will make individual mistakes that require correction. That is why, any form of foreign language distance learning requires the participation of a teacher.

The teacher should create conditions for the practical mastery of the language by each student and choose such methods that would allow everyone to show their own creativity. The teacher's role in online learning consists, in particular, in the effective use of electronic resources. The effective work of the teacher results in:

- a) Integration of Internet materials into the training program;
- b) Development of students' abilities to independent search for information;
- c) Development of students' independent preparation for studies;
- d) Students' familiarization with speech etiquette, culture and traditions of the country of the studied language;
- e) Formation of sustainable motivation based on the systematic use of "living" materials that are of interest to students.

So, professional training, the level of digital literacy of the teacher is an important element for the effectiveness of the study process. Much attention has been recently paid to this issue in Ukraine. In particular, the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine has created a National online platform for the development of digital literacy "Diia. Digital Education". This project provides free access to digital literacy for every citizen in order to effective and safe use of modern digital technologies in work, education, professional and personal development [1].

A separate section of the project, dedicated directly to educators, offers a review of several educational series with further testing of acquired knowledge and skills. After reviewing the presented material, educators have the opportunity to improve their skills, learn online tools and interactive learning methods, get acquainted with modern online platforms, services and software, master the algorithms and communication between teachers and students within distance learning and more. In case of successful mastering of the material, the applicant receives a certificate with the specified number of ECTS credits.

So, distance learning today is becoming an equal form of education, and learning a foreign language with the help of distance technology is possible and even has certain advantages. O. and A. Yankovets highlight the following advantages of distance learning: accessibility (online classes are available to all who have access to the Internet, regardless of their location); mobility (this means the ability to practice at a convenient time and place, as well as the ability to save video lessons and watch them in your spare time, when there is a need to repeat the material or when the lesson was missed for some reason); sav-

ing time (it is meant time to get to University sometimes from other cities) [10].

There are also disadvantages as well: technical support (almost everyone has a smartphone, but not everyone has a personal computer or tablet. It is not convenient to do homework systematically exclusively through smartphones); sanitary norms (staying in front of a computer or smartphone monitor for 5-6 hours a day contradicts the recommendations of ophthalmologists, who recommend using electronic gadgets for no more than 4 hours a day, and ideally the duration of stay in front of a monitor should not exceed 2 hours); psycho-emotional and physical condition (during long quarantine the usual rhythm and mode of the day is broken. Students are deprived of live communication, which also affects their mood, perception of information, cognitive activity) [10].

From our point of view, the isolation of students is a major drawback that can affect the quality of education. Isolation creates certain problems in communication, makes it difficult to complete tasks that require group work, and to get feedback. Feedback is one of the means of learning, competent and effective organization of which should increase the influence of the teacher on the student. The competent work of the teacher should eliminate the impact of this shortcoming and ensure the effective work online. Therefore, the most important conclusion, in our opinion, is the necessity of educators training for the effective use of online learning tools, increasing their digital literacy in order to ensure quality learning in all conditions.

Summing up, we would like to emphasize that earlier the use of distance learning was quite a problematic issue, as live personal communication between teacher and student was absent. Today, this problem is solved with the help of state-of-the-art tools for synchronous and asynchronous communication, which are improving day by day to increase interactivity. It should be noted that only through a combination of pedagogical knowledge and modern technologies a successful distance learning of foreign language can be implemented.

However, to optimize the transition to distance learning based on the experience gained during the pandemic, the following questions need to be answered:

- Are the necessary institutional factors available in Ukrainian universities for an effective transition to distance learning?
- Are there internal and external resources for such a transition? In particular, is the IT infrastructure sufficiently developed for technical support? Do staff and teachers have the necessary competencies to carry out their tasks?
- What causes the biggest problems for the study process participants?

– What are the results of the transition to distance learning for students and teachers? What percentage of higher education students are in favor of the transition to distance learning? What issues need to be addressed to improve results?

In our opinion, the last block of questions is the most important for achieving effective distance learning. The stressful situation for all study process participants affected their attitude towards online technologies. Most of them are opponents of this form, because they have personal negative experiences, faced with examples of ineffective online learning, and have not had the opportunity to assess all its benefits.

Online learning is impossible without an IT infrastructure that requires significant investment, including an online or external online learning contract, as well as quality online courses that provide effective learning and support for online learners. In a situation where the transition to online learning is carried out as soon as possible, all these conditions must be created in advance, and educators must have sufficient experience in using online learning tools.

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#### **Маєв А. П. Ефективність вивчення іноземної мови онлайн у закладах вищої освіти України: сучасні виклики**

*У статті розглянуто застосування технологій дистанційного навчання в процесі викладання іноземної мови у закладах вищої освіти України. Проаналізовано нормативну базу для розвитку дистанційної освіти, приклади її застосування, сервіси, які використовуються для онлайн навчання, а також проблеми, що виникли в організації навчального процесу в період пандемії COVID-19.*

*Зокрема, вивчено можливості застосування глобальної мережі Інтернет в навчальному процесі, представлено наявні ресурси та інструменти для вивчення іноземних мов. Відзначено, що з приходом карантинних обмежень, пов'язаних із пандемією COVID-19, відбулася істотна зміна стратегії всієї освіти. При цьому екстрений перехід на роботу в онлайн режимі, що мав місце у 2020 році, слід відрізнити від правильно спланованого онлайн навчання, яке потребує набагато тривалішого часу та ретельної підготовки. Визначено недоліки та проблеми, що виникли внаслідок швидкого переходу на онлайн навчання. З іншого боку представлено досвід планового та підготовленого використання дистанційних технологій у вищій школі, що передбачає багаторічну підготовку, ретельну розробку навчального забезпечення та відповідну кваліфікацію науково-педагогічних кадрів.*

*Окремо наголошено, що вивчення іноземної мови у дистанційному режимі слід відрізняти від самопідготовки. Роль викладача є вагомим, насамперед у зв'язку з необхідністю забезпечення зворотного зв'язку та вибору ефективних засобів навчання. В цьому контексті відзначено, що ефективне навчання іноземних мов в дистанційному режимі, насамперед залежить від якісної підготовки викладацьких кадрів в технічному та методичному плані.*

*Проаналізовано засоби навчання, які поділяються на синхронні та асинхронні. Визначено переваги та недоліки їх застосування. На підставі проведеного дослідження окреслено шляхи оптимізації використання дистанційних технологій в сучасних умовах.*

**Ключові слова:** *онлайн навчання, дистанційна освіта, вивчення іноземної мови, засоби навчання, карантинні обмеження.*