

UDC 378.018.43

DOI <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4863/50-54>

Viktoriia LIULKA,

orcid.org/0000-0003-4581-6583

Candidate of Philological Sciences,

Associate Professor at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Poltava State Agrarian University

(Poltava, Ukraine) viktoriya.lyulka@pdaa.edu.ua

Alla DEDUKHNO,

orcid.org/0000-0002-9254-3381

Candidate of Philological Sciences,

Associate Professor at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Poltava State Agrarian University

(Poltava, Ukraine) dedukhno.alla@pdaa.edu.ua

THE SPECIFICS OF ENGLISH DISTANCE LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF UKRAINE

The article considers the methodology of teaching a foreign language in the conditions of distance learning in higher educational institutions of Ukraine, the characteristics of distance learning are identified, the main tasks of the teacher in the process of this type of education are named. Issues that reflect the peculiarities of the organization of the educational process in distance learning are also considered.

Organizational and pedagogical approaches to effective distance learning are studied. Scientific views on the peculiarities of students' perception of educational material are analyzed. The main problems and difficulties that arise for teachers and students during distance learning of English are described. The role of independent work to achieve high-quality study of a foreign language at a distance mode is substantiated. The authors emphasize the need to develop a single mechanism for online methodological support in the information and educational environment of Ukrainian higher education.

The article also distinguishes between the concepts of distance and hybrid (blended) courses. Particular attention is paid to one of the greatest advantages of the latest language learning technologies – the ability to use multimedia to adapt educational materials to the needs and levels of students' training. The ability of teachers to update audio and video materials by adding subtitles, repeating individual sections and asking questions on the topic is analyzed. Using the technology of modification of authentic texts allows students to study the necessary educational material in accordance with their own language abilities and capabilities.

The study shows that the problem of effective distance learning of English requires considerable attention and research. Prospects for further new research are the study of theoretical and practical aspects of distance learning of English, the development of effective distance learning courses.

Key words: *distance learning, English, online learning, educational environment.*

Вікторія ЛЮЛЬКА,

orcid.org/0000-0003-4581-6583

кандидат філологічних наук, доцент,

доцент кафедри гуманітарних і соціальних дисциплін

Полтавського державного аграрного університету

(Полтава, Україна) viktoriya.lyulka@pdaa.edu.ua

Алла ДЕДУХНО,

orcid.org/0000-0002-9254-3381

кандидат філологічних наук, доцент,

доцент кафедри гуманітарних і соціальних дисциплін

Полтавського державного аграрного університету

(Полтава, Україна) dedukhno.alla@pdaa.edu.ua

ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ДИСТАНЦІЙНОГО ВИВЧЕННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ У ВИЩИХ НАВЧАЛЬНИХ ЗАКЛАДАХ УКРАЇНИ

У статті розглянуто методіку викладання іноземної мови в умовах дистанційної освіти у вищих навчальних закладах освіти України, визначено характерні особливості дистанційного навчання, названо основні завдання

викладача в процесі цього виду навчання. Також розглядаються питання, що відображають особливості організації навчального процесу при дистанційній формі навчання.

Досліджено організаційно-педагогічні підходи до ефективного дистанційного навчання. Проаналізовано наукові погляди на особливості сприйняття учнями навчального матеріалу. Описано основні проблеми та труднощі, які виникають у викладачів та студентів під час дистанційного вивчення англійської мови. Обґрунтовано роль самостійної роботи для досягнення якісного вивчення іноземної мови у дистанційному режимі. Автори наголошують на необхідності вироблення єдиного механізму онлайн-методичного супроводу в умовах інформаційно-освітнього середовища української вищої школи.

Також у статті розмежовуються поняття «дистанційні» та «гібридні (змішані) курси». Особлива увага приділяється одній з найбільших переваг новітніх технологій вивчення мови – можливості використання мультимедіа для адаптації навчальних матеріалів до потреб і рівнів підготовки студентів. Проаналізована можливість викладачів оновлювати аудіо- та відеоматеріали, додаючи субтитри, повторюючи окремі розділи та ставлячи запитання з теми. Використання технології модифікації автентичних текстів дозволяє студентам вивчати необхідний навчальний матеріал відповідно до власних мовних здібностей і можливостей.

У дослідженні показано, що проблема ефективного дистанційного навчання англійської мови вимагає значної уваги та дослідження. Перспективами подальших нових наукових досліджень є вивчення теоретичних і практичних аспектів дистанційного навчання англійської мови, розробка ефективних дистанційних курсів навчання.

Ключові слова: дистанційне навчання, англійська мова, онлайн-навчання, освітнє середовище.

Introduction. Due to the coronavirus pandemic as well as military operations on the territory of Ukraine, modern educational institutions are increasingly appealing to online distance learning courses to save time and study space. Curricula using the Internet do not require the use of classrooms for learning, they can be available at any time, and also provide students and teachers with the opportunity to work independently. Despite these benefits, there are many issues with online courses that need to be addressed successfully.

Adaptive quarantine has given us not only challenges but also new experiences. Now almost every teacher knows how to use online learning services. This takes pedagogical activity to a qualitatively new level: now we can teach, organize educational work, communicate with colleagues and parents of students, share experiences under any circumstances. All the students need is a computer, phone or other device with Internet access.

Issues of distance learning technologies in the process of learning foreign languages are considered in the works of both Ukrainian and foreign experts, including O. Sokyrskya, M. Kolisnyk, Yu. Kornyska, O. Andriev, Ye. Dmitrieva, V. Kukharenko, V. Svyrydiuk, Yu. Horvits, N. Maiier, N. Mulina, K. Kozhukhov, Ye. Polat, A. Khutorskyi, G. Dudeney, N. Hockly and others.

In their work, modern domestic scholars Sokyrskya O., Kolisnyk M., Kornyska Yu. (Sokyrskya, 2022) outlined the challenges ESL students faced in learning English at Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute when using online learning platforms and found out ways to overcome them.

The relevance of the article is due to the need to introduce information and telecommunications technologies in the educational process, to ensure

high efficiency of English language teaching, as well as to increase students' interest in learning. However, new effective distance learning programs remain to be developed. In our article we will focus on the models of online courses, the characteristics of effective programs, as well as the characteristics of effective programs for learning English (Bykov, 2008: 14).

The aim of the article is to determine the specifics of distance learning programs in English and justify the content, principles, effective methods, forms and means of their implementation.

Research analysis. The term “distance education” has not yet been fully established in both Ukrainian-language and English-language pedagogical literature. There are such options as distant / distance education, distant / distance learning. Some foreign researchers, citing the special role of telecommunications in the organization of distance learning, define it as teletraining. However, the term “distance learning” is most often used. Today it is possible to receive not only higher education in absentia, but also to study foreign languages, prepare for university entrance, etc. However, due to the lack of interaction between teachers and students and the lack of control over the learning activities of part-time students in the period between exam sessions, the quality of such training is worse than that available during full-time study.

Distance courses and hybrid (blended) courses often combine, but they can be different and need to be distinguished. When we talk about distance learning courses, also called online courses, we mean courses in which there is no direct interaction between teacher and student. The interaction between them and the learning process takes place through the use of various technological tools. Hybrid courses, which can also be called mixed courses, are significantly different from distance learning courses because they

involve direct interaction between participants in the learning process.

Modern approaches to teaching English are based on the concept of communicative learning. Instead of learning English as an object through grammar exercises and translation tasks, students are involved in communicating with each other or with the teacher. The use of communicative activities is based on research in the psychology of education, according to which students are not “empty vessels” where you can “pour knowledge”, but active participants in the learning process, learning through practical tasks and personal experience. However, despite the communicative nature, the activities of learning English are often structured in order to teach specific grammatical concepts without rational structure or consequences (Yano, 1994: 191).

One of the main methodological principles of teaching English on the basis of the tasks is to conduct the necessary analysis of educational material before creating an online training course. Thus, teachers and course designers will be confident that students work with the tasks they need and which they will be able to perform outside the classroom (Bykov, 2008: 75). Thanks to the course of teaching English on the basis of the tasks, students can learn the language in practice, namely through interaction and feedback, as well as communication with each other and native speakers. A successful course is a virtual classroom in which learning is based on practical tasks that resemble real communicative situations outside the classroom, such as opening a bank account, reserving a hotel seat while traveling, buying goods at the market, or supermarket, ordering computer services during computer repair, etc. Many of these situations can be performed at a distance or virtually, or by transforming the online course into an environment for learning English, guided by the tasks (Bonk, 2003: 342).

Results and discussion. It is important to note that distance learning courses require a learning management system, or a course management system, to host the content you need (such as Blackboard, Moodle, or Sakai). In addition, sometimes such systems still have a course website, Wikipedia, forum or blog. Content is uploaded to online courses and teachers can use it with students, as well as communicate with each other, as well as correspond, exchange instant messages, use e-mail and telephone. E-courses are based on written assignment modules and e-textbooks.

The biggest advantage of online courses is flexibility. They can be completely asynchronous (meaning that teachers and students do not need

to be online at certain times), self-hosted, and individualized. While the teacher in the classroom should provide information to all students at the same time, online course teachers can provide instruction individually to each student, as well as have feedback.

In a hybrid course, some tasks are traditionally performed in the classroom, and some are tasks that are performed using computer programs. The format of hybrid courses differs from those conducted in the form of classes with direct contact between teachers and students and virtual classes, where there is interaction between participants in the learning process several times a semester for students to take tests or oral exams. Depending on the format, hybrid courses include a number of components of online courses based on the amount of time spent on traditional classes (Bonk, 2008: 332).

An important element is the interaction between the participants of the educational process, as well as the practical result of language acquisition. American researchers Swain and Lapkin conducted their research at Canadian universities and came to the conclusion that it was through language practice that students were able to test their hypothesis about how language works and develops. Interactive tasks helped students to communicate and acquire new skills and abilities in practice (Swain, 1995: 380).

P. Zvavahera and F. Masimba are studying the possibilities of using open and distance learning technologies to provide scientific guidance for PhD students. The authors distinguish three levels of readiness of the education system for the application of these technologies: the level of teachers, the level of students, and the level of universities (Zvavahera, 2019: 37).

There is also feedback when learning English. Sometimes it occurs when communicating with native speakers, but research has shown that purposeful negative feedback in such situations occurs quite often. Feedback is by nature responsive (occurs after a mistake in language), sometimes it occurs before an error occurs, which often occurs during classroom activities. Responsive feedback can be explicit (direct error correction) or implicit (reformulation of an incorrect statement). The main dilemma for teachers is when and how to make such corrections. Teachers working with distance learning courses cannot predict exactly when feedback will be needed in their work, they simply correct mistakes when students are ready to do so in the process of communication. It all depends on the type of lesson and the pedagogical approach of the teacher. An effective English curriculum should provide students with opportunities to repeat and correct their mistakes in the presence and assistance of a tutor.

Creating effective online and hybrid courses should be based on the principles of effective English language learning, as well as the benefits and advances of new technologies. Students who work online have access to original language resources such as newspapers, magazines, radio shows, television programs, video clips, movies, cartoons, lectures, literature, and websites. However, such material is not always available to language learners. English teachers should provide students with the necessary learning resources, using technological tools to make authentic texts more accessible.

One of the biggest advantages of the latest technologies in language learning is the ability to use multimedia to adapt learning materials to the needs and levels of preparation of students. For example, teachers can update audio and video materials by adding subtitles, repeating individual sections, and asking questions about the topic. Such modifications turn records into available resources for introducing authentic material and cultural context. Teachers can also add annotations to written texts and the necessary interpretations and translations of individual words and phrases. The use of the technology of modification of authentic texts allows students to study the necessary educational material in accordance with their own language abilities and capabilities.

Teachers should give students specific tasks based on specific resources, such as completing web-based questionnaires, which they should look for on selected thematic websites. Such tasks allow students to develop cultural and linguistic abilities and skills, as well as prepare for certain activities, such as creating a presentation, website, posters, etc.

For example, students can answer questions about today's events using newspaper articles and reports; get information about travel through official travel websites, blogs, and magazine resources; compare prices for goods and services through advertising; study pop culture based on talk shows and music videos. Each student can have separate tasks for work, and in the process of their implementation – to communicate with each other and create joint posters and presentations for the whole group. Tasks of this type are interesting and attractive; they are aimed at cooperation between students, independent work, as well as to expand the horizons and knowledge of the student.

However, there are disadvantages of this type of teaching. Creating assignments for students on websites takes a lot of time from teachers. This is especially noticeable only at the initial stage of working with the site, when you need to fill it with the necessary tasks. In the future, teachers simply check that websites and web quests remain functional while students study and work with them.

Teachers are required to provide students with links to a large number of additional resources for learning English. A course such as bibliography is

very useful for students because it gives free access to language learners to basic language resources. Thus, teachers should provide students with links to the necessary pedagogical materials (textbook website, language learning websites, and language learning games); teaching aids (dictionaries, thesauri); authentic materials (popular newspapers, radio stations, websites); communication tools (chat rooms, blogs, wikis). When teachers provide such materials, students have the right to determine when they can be used most effectively (Bartlett, 2005: 327).

Important tasks for students are listening to audio recordings to understand English text, as well as watching English video. Teachers create special tasks for students, such as, for example, a short recording of the listened text, determining whether the statements are correct or incorrect, answers to questions to the listened text, etc. In addition, teachers can use audio and video recordings to provide information to students about the course and for ads (Arnesen, 2019: 35). The task of teachers is to make means of synchronous and asynchronous communication easily accessible to students. After all, students need to see if their classmates and teachers are available to communicate online. Students most often use Google Chat.

Quite a useful task for students is to create blogs and work with them. A blog is an Internet tool that you can use to publish material. Learning material from blogs helps students master the language better. Blogs can also include multimedia and be a reflective source, like a magazine where students can track their own learning progress. The blog can be used as a forum to discuss cultural and educational issues.

With the transition to online learning, there is a need to use tools with the functions of group chats, calls and conferences. One of the most learning-friendly and easy-to-use tools is Google Meet. There are many benefits of Google Meet:

- 1) Organization of video meetings, online classes with students and listeners. Up to 150 users can take part in the meeting at the same time;
- 2) Classes can last continuously up to 300 hours – unlike Zoom, where classes can last no longer than 40 minutes;
- 3) It is possible to display materials on the PC desktop during classes and seminars: during the meeting you can provide access to your screen to show presentations or other information on the desktop;
- 4) Schedule classes in advance and link to Google Calendar. Scheduled classes are synchronized automatically on all devices, so you can start the meeting on a computer and end it on another device, such as a phone;
- 5) Record video storage classes on Google Drive;
- 6) A person can connect both through a browser and through an application for Android or iOS.

A person should have a Google Account to use the service. Online classes can be conducted from a

standard Google account. Classes can be scheduled in advance using Google Calendar. At our Poltava State Agrarian University, we have been using Google Meet for distance learning for several years. When it comes to teaching English, this type of learning has a huge number of advantages compared to teaching in the classroom. Students have access to educational materials; it is much easier to organize listening to audio materials, watching videos.

Conclusions. Based on the analyzed literature sources, we concluded that online and hybrid English courses are quite effective and affordable, however, the creation, implementation of such courses requires a lot of time and effort. First of all, universities need to create a technical infrastructure for online courses. The developers of such courses must combine the latest technologies with the necessary training materials. Once all the materials are ready, teachers need time to train and mentor so that they can eventually start learning online. Finally, it is important to note

that creating a balance of independent, interactive activities takes more time than is required to conduct classroom activities. Online and hybrid English courses provide students with the opportunity to learn English effectively through a variety of activities, thanks to the latest technologies and teaching aids.

It is also worth noting that the use of distance learning in teaching foreign languages is a challenge. The biggest problem is the lack of direct communication with group mates and the teacher. The use of modern tools for synchronous and non-synchronous communication helps to overcome this problem. The experience of the authors relates to teaching English and German, but it is quite applicable to teaching other foreign languages.

In our study, we showed that the problem of effective distance learning of English requires considerable attention and research. Prospects for further new scientific research are to study the theoretical and practical aspects of distance learning of English, and the development of effective distance learning courses.

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