

Real Country Experiences: On-line Teaching in Wartime After Pandemic in Ukraine

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Abstract—The manuscript points on the new challenges in higher education in terms of wartime in Ukraine after the world pandemic. The real country experience in English on-line teaching and learning is defined as it was important during the lockdown and it is suitable now in wartime in Ukraine. The aim of the research is to show helpful ideas, experience, to stress the advantages for English on-line teaching and learning. Some general theoretical methods as analysis and synthesis, and the empirical one as questionnaires discovered the advantages of the issue under study. The research has pointed out to the results: on-line teaching and learning prove the development of all the English language skills; off-line teaching and learning are basically useful for the students with high motivation. The Moodle platform (version 3.7), the University platform “Educational Electronic Information Complex” (EEIC), Zoom, Meet, Skype, Microsoft Teams are used for on-line teaching and learning. The most common advantages are the prospect to watch learning material on a laptop or mobile phone screen, to start any type the recordings as audio as video in the best quality. The conclusion is it is necessary to find a balance between on-line and off-line learning, communication, and interaction.

Keywords—e-learning, on-line, university student, teaching English

1 Introduction

The war in Ukraine in 2022 has changed everything. And the higher education too. After the first shock from the Russian troop attack on February 24, 2022, air bombing and shelling, the higher education in Ukraine stopped, so-called ‘holidays’ were announced.

From April 1, 2022, teaching and learning at universities started again. Of course, it was on-line. Education in wartime, thanks to the gained pandemic experience, fortunately, is real, digital tools help to continue teaching and learning at universities in Ukraine. The first week of teaching in wartime, starting April 1, 2022, after so-called

‘holidays’ was the most difficult for Ukrainian students and teachers. Students and teachers were depressed, upset, somebody had a post-traumatic syndrome.

However, on-line communication in classrooms became a kind of rehabilitation. Students shared their feelings, spoke about their emotional conditions, fears, anxieties, thoughts. And they felt better. University teachers tried to support the students, talk to them, ask them about their feelings and emotions. After the first week of learning students began to smile, joke, study the learning material, and do the home task. The students confessed that learning was the way out, the turn from heavy thoughts about the war [20].

The war and previous pandemic not only have transformed the lives, but influenced the education, when face-to-face teaching and learning are impossible in Ukraine. So, the on-line teaching and learning started at universities in Ukraine. Some students who had poor Internet got and sent the tasks individually via email. University teachers offered various activities of on-line learning [27], [14]. Undoubtedly, it is on-line education that ensured the continuity in wartime, strengthen academic continuity in case of disaster.

Thus, it is topical to consider the advantages for teaching and learning in higher education in wartime in Ukraine due to the gained pandemic experience. The unique of this study is Ukraine is the only country in Europe with the long-term experience (nearly one year) of on-line education in a big continental war as the Russian-Ukrainian war has been lasting for a year. The manuscript proposes the experience of teaching English with digital tools in Ukrainian universities.

Undoubtedly, the main advantage of on-line education in wartime has been providing all students with on-line teaching nevertheless of their location or life circumstances. The majority of students and teachers have underlined it. However, both students and teachers at the end of the semesters have highlighted that they are willing of face-to-face communication and learning. Though everyone understands it is not possible while the Russian-Ukrainian war is still going on.

So, the aim of the research is to show helpful ideas, experience, to stress the advantages for English on-line teaching and learning.

2 Literature review

The problems of on-line teaching and learning are based on earlier contributions about distance education, digital learning resources [30], technological pedagogical content knowledge [4], instructional design principles [9], design thinking, teaching, and learning [12], use of information and communications technology [35], [39]. The up-to-date literature review demonstrates two kinds of the manuscripts. The first one describes distance teaching and learning, teachers’ training in education [28], [33], perspectives and prospects [18], [37], distance courses, educational platforms, cloud computing [6], [15], [23], [41], on-line and off-line principles, educational tendencies, learning styles [40], [19], students’ perception of distance learning and teachers’ attitude to distance teaching [1], [7], [10], [16], [32], [42]. The second one describes lockdown experience. The teaching and learning experience in some countries as

Ukraine [22], Turkey [3], Ecuador [8], Nigeria [17], [25], [36], Philippines [24], Colombia [34], India [11], Thailand [38], Vietnam [26] and the United Arab Emirates [13], Mexico [2] is shown. Nevertheless, there are some gaps need to be filled in order to solve the hottest teaching and learning problems.

3 Method

Some general theoretical methods as analysis and synthesis that contributed to our understanding methods of on-line English teaching and learning, their advantages for teaching different skills in English at higher education; and the empirical one as questionnaires that discovered the advantages of the issue under study are used in the paper.

4 Findings

4.1 Theoretical issue

The basis for on-line teaching and learning were developed during the quarantine, it makes possible to develop necessary competences and skills using mobile phones, tablets, computers, digital tools, Internet.

The main advantage as it was known for distance teaching and learning during the pandemic is that students could learn at any places even if they have bad Internet connection. The connection depends on the places as, for example, in faraway villages, highland areas, it depends on rainy or snowy climate.

The pandemic experience of distance teaching and learning at the tertiary level shows that the communication among university professors and students is possible on-line too, especially if the connection is good, it is suitable, easy, fast as in face-to-face teaching and learning. In fact, university professors together with students they both manage on-line technologies and means in the pandemic in March 2020.

It was found out two teaching and learning possibilities. They are on-line and off-line. The experience showed in the context of pandemic the mix of them is the best. In on-line teaching and learning it is effective to communicate, to have different pair and group works, interactions. In off-line teaching and learning it is effective to use famous platforms and tools as they have apps, templates.

As the mentioned studies have proved, the success in distance learning depends, first of all, on the teaching skills of instructors, technology structure, university support and, least of all, on students' characteristics, we tried to do our best to make on-line education successful.

For example, well-known Moodle platform. On its basis (version 3.7) it was created in Ukraine its own platform "Educational Electronic Information Complex" (EE-IC) (<https://neik.nlu.edu.ua/moodle/>) for off-line teaching and learning, so for inner users it has the national interface. And academic staff of all the University departments had to fill it in with different coursebooks, assignments, tests and recommendations. The EEIC has the similar advantages as Moodle: written communication in

forums and chats, learning material assignment for lectures, files, web pages, archives, and tests. Really, it as well as Moodle has the advantage with built-in seminars, forums, wiki mechanisms.

Definitely, Moodle “indicators (the effectiveness, the accessibility, the resource intensity, the promptness, the democracy in communication, the integrative software) of the quality assessment of implementation of the distance learning in the educational process are specified and identified within the platform” [31].

4.2 Practical issue

So, distance English teaching and learning involve five skills that are trained such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and use of English. We should underline that English is not a compulsory subject at many universities. During the pandemic period most students were not quite motivated as they understand that they could not go anywhere to travel, to learn abroad etc. But now in wartime in Ukraine students are highly motivated as they understand that any time, they may become refugees abroad and they need to know English as an international language.

To understand students’ wishes about on-line learning during the pandemic in 2020 the questionnaires were used. About 90 university students answered them. University students were asked about their preferences to on-line learning course. Their answers are presented at figures: content (Figure 1), time planning (Figure 2).

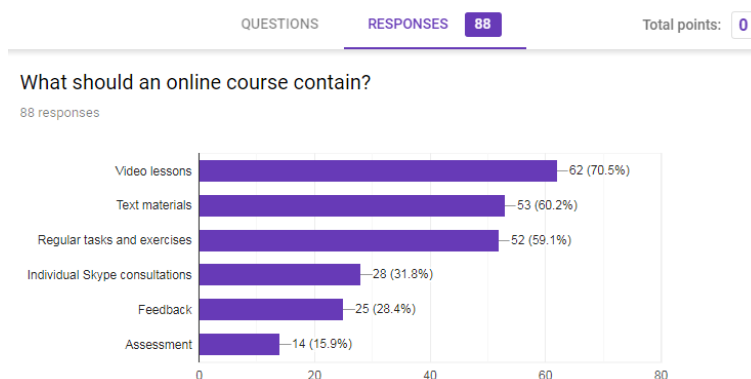


Fig. 1. Students’ requests about the course content

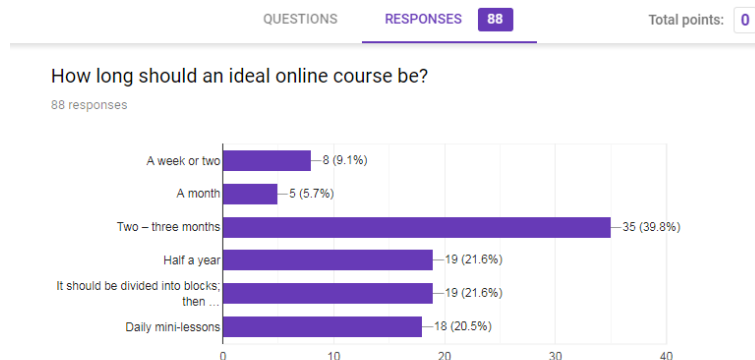


Fig. 2. Suitable time planning for students

So, it was decided to combine on-line and off-line teaching and learning. For teaching general English we use on-line lessons using well-known authentic course books with a lot of digital tools. And for off-line teaching and learning we used different educational cloud computing. Although there are numbers of similar services for learning foreign languages.

For example, at many universities Quizlet is used very often. There are some exercises to improve vocabulary based on pronunciation, memorizing, reading, writing, and testing. For teaching, for example, law English vocabulary, the module ‘Modern legal systems’ was designed in Quizlet <https://quizlet.com/365483135/module-1-modern-legal-systems-flash-cards/?i=25k3cp&x=1jqY>. The assignments have a competitive character, there are some games for small groups. What is more, a university teacher can get Quizlet results.

One more good example is a computer game Gravity in Quizlet. It develops students’ vocabulary too. According to the game, students have to print the word translation before the falling meteorite falls. The game increases vocabulary quite well and the students’ progress is fixed [16], especially for highly motivated students.

To develop the rest English skills, for example speaking and listening, we use Zoom, Meet, Skype, Microsoft Teams, and another video conferencing on-line. It seems like usual teaching and learning, but at a distance. The advantages are the same: educational goals, pair and group learning, interactivity, feedback. Video conferencing considers quite effective for practice lessons, seminars and workshops, speaking club, extracurricular activities. So, all skills can be taught and learned on-line. As for reading skills, video conferencing is effective too, it is shown at Figure 3.

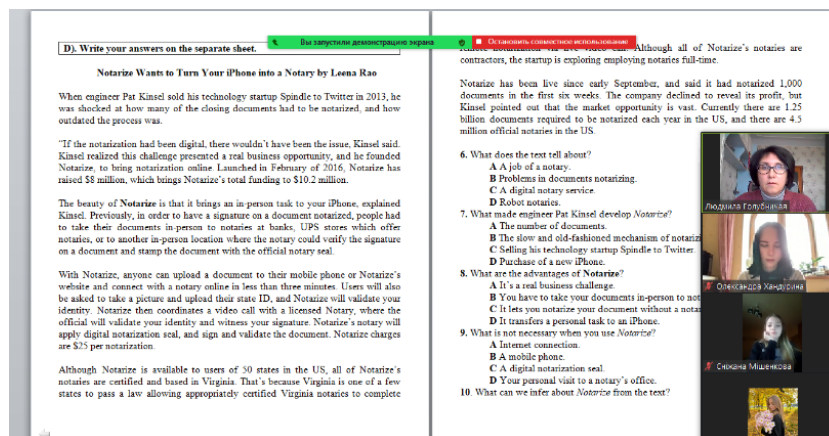


Fig. 3. Reading scanning, comprehension, and discussion (Source: <https://www.slideshare.net/guest52c665/the-legal-systems-of-the-world>; <http://study.com/academy/lesson/religious-law-definition-purpose.html> and authors' own conception)

In Figure 3 there are small texts for reading scanning, comprehension, and discussion according to curriculum in legal English and the tasks for them.

It is very convenient for both students and teachers to develop different skills using on-line teaching and learning. Writing skills are trained too, for example, answering the questions on-line.

Firstly, students have a text-book where there is a step-by-step instruction for writing; secondly, on their computer screens as a previous home task students can see the text clearly; thirdly, a university teacher can help to write, explain, correct on-line. One of the biggest advantages of an on-line lesson is that students can work independently, but simultaneously. For motivated students it is very significant, because in the face-to-face classroom they are often interrupted by students with poor English.

What is more, Zoom options, which allow university teachers to help students' writing further and to create separate discussions, add possibilities for monitoring students' results. Figure 4 can be seen as an example, where there are questions for developing writing skills.

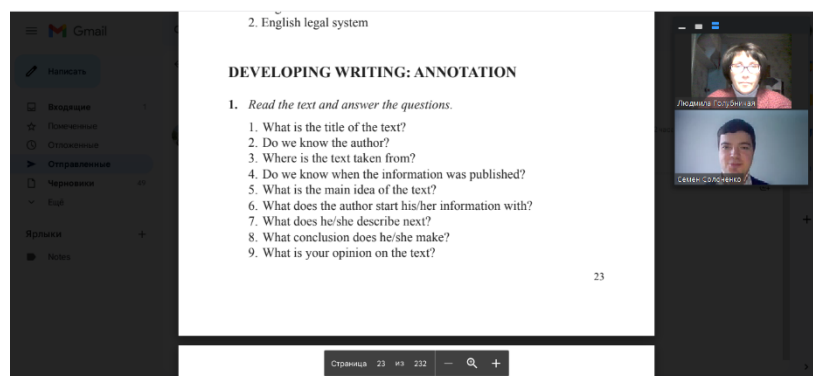


Fig. 4. The task for developing writing skills

Another advantage which is widely used, is communication with students by different social networks not only in Zoom, Meet, Skype, Microsoft Teams, but in Viber, Telegram, WhatsApp. This kind of communication is mostly used for informing students about individual home task, assignments, requirements, extracurricular activities. Students may find out unclear points in the tasks or ask about their progress.

As for listening skills, it is great to use on-line video conferences. And it helps to develop speaking skills too. Definitely, a video conference is needed with good Internet connection. Visual and audio material should be prepared skillfully. And, no doubt, the interaction is highly important for learning English.

5 Discussion

The researchers' achievements are highly impressive. The underpinnings of online teaching and learning are out of discussion [30], [39]. The results with earlier research findings are the basics of effective online teaching and learning [4], [9], [12], [35].

Some scientists as P. Cabrera-Solano, P. Gonzalez-Torres and C. Ochoa-Cueva [8], A. Maatuk, E. Elberkawi, S. Aljawarneh, H. Rashaideh, and H. Alharbiet [21]) and others [29], [24], [34], [18], [3], discuss different issues connected with University staff training to cope with on-line teaching successfully in lockdown.

For example, we agree with a debatable issue of motives [34]. According to the researchers, when participants of education have strong motivation, the advantages overcome disadvantages. We support this statement.

Some scientists have positive experience [17] about using on-line cases. P. Cabrera-Solano et al. [8] recommend creating comic strips on Pixton in order to facilitate developing writing skills through on-line teaching and learning. We absolutely agree with the authors and emphasize that different educational sites have proven themselves rather effective; on the one hand, for motivated students, on the other, for increasing motivation. Moreover, such educational sites help to develop other competences and skills as well.

But there are some discussive points about the advantages of e-learning. For example, the issue of academic dishonesty, impersonality, feeling lack while e-learning [24]. We can't totally agree with authors' opinion. D. Bailey and A. Lee [5] highlight the similar problem as well. But in wartime in 2022 in Ukraine we say that on-line teaching and learning are the only way for education at universities.

No doubt, we absolutely disagree with the researchers' finding as A. Maatuk, E. Elberkawi, S. Aljawarneh, H. Rashaideh, and H. Alharbiet [21] that distance teaching and learning decreased the workload of teachers and increased it for students. We are sure that the workload has raised for both teachers and students.

6 Conclusions

The experience of nearly three years of on-line English teaching and learning leads to the following conclusions that are set: off-line teaching and learning is mostly effective for highly motivated students, on-line teaching and learning is effective for all students as they are similar in many cases to traditional face-to-face ones. On-line teaching and learning develop all English skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing.

Besides, in on-line education we can display the necessary learning material on a computer, mobile, or tablet screen while in face-to-face education we have to maintain the technical equipment, or print and distribute handouts; as well as an opportunity to show video or audio materials on a screen in better quality.

So, the main conclusion is it is necessary to find a balance between on-line and off-line learning, communication, and interaction. In 2023 in wartime in Ukraine only on-line teaching and learning are possible. In order to have higher education, on-line education will be continued in Ukraine. On-line teaching and learning have gained some experience and advantages for more than three years (during two years of the pandemic and one year of the Russian-Ukrainian war). And, nevertheless the war, higher education is going on and will be going on. We believe, the education light will conquer darkness.

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