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## FLEXIBLE LEARNING SYSTEM FOR PHILOLOGY STUDENTS IN A CRISIS SITUATION

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**Abstract.** *The article outlines the features of flexible training and examples of the possible application of its didactic principles to training philology students in a crisis situation. Flexible learning ensures adaptation of the educational process when access to traditional forms of training is limited by combining the following features of both traditional, distance and open learning: lack of direct contact between the teacher and students (at least during some instructional processes), abundant use of electronic means of communication, including online platforms and services, sustained feedback between participants, a less rigid learning timetable, learning outside the premises of an educational institution, which, however, controls the educational process and students' achievements.*

The significant changes taking place in the higher education system pose a new challenge for Ukrainian educators: they have to organize the educational process in such a way as to minimize the consequences of the lack of direct contact with students, as well as to promote the most effective organization of their autonomous learning.

The main difficulties that teachers of Ukrainian higher education institutions have to overcome today are the following:

- the diversity of groups and the physical absence of some students on the territory of Ukraine, which, in particular, raises the question of the difference in time zones and the language environment in which students are located.
- scheduled and emergency electricity cuts, which often make it impossible for students to access the Internet promptly during distance learning;
- enemy air attacks force teachers and students to stay in hiding for a long time.

Each higher education institution develops its strategy to overcome these challenges by modelling forms and methods of teaching and assessment that provide the most efficient use of available resources.

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The study aims to outline the elements of flexible English language learning that can be offered to university students in crisis conditions when synchronous learning is impossible.

Researchers have been increasingly promoting the use of various e-learning tools, seeing many advantages. In particular, electronic technologies individualize learning and expand students' experience through extensive learning content and their involvement in a number of online communities and networks [1]. At the same time, the degree of technological sophistication of the learning process can vary from highly automated when using artificial intelligence to quite successfully controlled by the participants themselves in flexible learning.

AI-assisted learning is based on educational software that individualizes learning through neural networks and decision-tree technology [6]. Encouraging students to use such software builds autonomous learning skills and makes learning content more relevant to the needs of the individual. However, most practitioners do not recognize this kind of learning as being able to replace the teacher-student communication process completely.

Therefore, most modern research is devoted to various ways of organizing, advantages and disadvantages of distance learning. In particular, according to an empirical study by Putra R.W.P., the organization of the educational process using the Google Meet service (compared to the independent study of educational material) increased the motivation of students of different courses by 61.8%-79.4%, resulting in increased learning activities of students, interaction with classmates and the teacher, greater diligence of students in providing feedback to teachers' questions and even in the correct verbalization of their own statements [4].

The study by Utami A.R. et al. showed the positive potential of using educational videos in learning English as a foreign language, as it helps to increase motivation, learn new vocabulary and improve the pronunciation of English words [8] which can be fully utilized in the modern world, where most people have access to streaming services and video hosting sites such as YouTube, Facebook Shorts, TikTok, Instagram.

Students can use video materials and create them as part of asynchronous learning tasks. In particular, an experimental study showed a significant positive impact on the cognitive component of mastering specific physics topics in English by students who completed a project-oriented task with a final presentation on a YouTube channel [5].

Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the elements of flexible learning that can provide academic freedom and control in times of crisis.

Defining the essence of the concept of "blended learning," it should be noted that it is considered a form, model, methodology, and process. The "Recommendations for the Implementation of Blended Learning in Professional Higher Education Institutions" issued by the Ministry of Education and Science states that blended learning is a direct interaction between students and teachers in the classroom using online technologies (2021). Common approaches to understanding the essence of blended learning are based on the interaction of subjects in the educational process through distance learning (online) and traditional learning (offline). The concept of "blended learning" was first formulated in the book "Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs" by American scientists Curtis J. Bonk and Charls R. Graham in 2006, which states that blended learning combines traditional learning (face-to-face instruction) with online learning (computer-mediated instruction). Over time, new synonymous concepts such as

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hybrid, combined, and flexible learning have emerged. However, the concept of "blended learning" has become widely used.

By the term flexible learning, we mean an organizational form of learning that ensures the adaptation of the educational process to crisis circumstances in order to avoid loss of efficiency by combining the following features: partial separation of the teacher from students (at least during some educational procedures), use of electronic means of communication by participants, unique online platforms and services, mandatory two-way communication between participants, less controlled learning schedule, learning outside the walls. Thus, flexible learning combines the features of both traditional and distance and open learning.

The principles of organizing flexible learning correspond to the principles of organizing distance learning: systematic, reproducible, individualized, economic feasibility, psychological validity, academic, updated, and controlled [2].

Forms of organizing flexible learning can be as follows:

1) split classes - the teacher's classes with the group take place synchronously in turn in offline or online mode;

2) split groups - synchronous communication between the teacher and students is organized with the help of technical means simultaneously in offline and online formats, depending on the student's location;

3) group conferences - synchronous training of the entire group using Google Meet, Zoom, and Skype.

4) group projects - asynchronous communication of participants in the educational process to complete a specific task with a subsequent joint presentation, for example, as part of problem-based learning [7];

5) planned interactive individual tasks - asynchronous completion of tasks created by the teacher on the online platforms of his/her choice, for example, Moodle, within a specific time;

6) individual learning on "external" resources - asynchronous completion of tasks selected by the student following their perception of their relevance, which can be evaluated by the teacher as part of independent work, for example, taking courses on educational platforms;

7) individual two-way communication - asynchronous counselling of the student by the teacher using electronic means of communication.

Based on the study of scientific literature and the principles that learning is the guiding ideology and normative requirements for the organization in the implementation of the educational process, we have identified the following didactic principles of blended learning:

- humanism (focused on a person, on creating comfortable conditions for students to master the chosen specialty, developing their intellectual and moral qualities, creative personality);

- stimulation and motivation (students' interest in continuing their studies, development of positive thinking in a blended learning environment);

- consciousness (conscious attitude to the study of the discipline, mastering of educational material, formation of responsibility);

- activity and independence (mastery of knowledge as a result of active independent cognitive activity of the student);

- individual approach (self-management of learning activities, choice of individual pace of work, organization of individual learning trajectories of students in professional activities);

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- persistence in learning (returning to any consolidation at the stage of studying the educational material);
- visibility (use of various types of visualization);
- systematic and consistent (studying the educational material is carried out consistently within the certified curriculum);
- flexibility (management of the learning process, convenient time, place, and pace);
- interactivity (interaction between teacher and students, with asynchronous feedback and synchronization mode);
- accessibility (free access to devices and networks);
- the integrity of the educational space (effective combination and consideration of various components of the education system, taking into account the functions they perform);
- adaptability (customization of the blended learning process following the cognitive characteristics of each student, the realization of individual needs and potentials);
- mobility (ensuring the mobility of all learning subjects);
- compliance with learning technologies (combination of traditional and distance learning forms, methods, and tools);
- the openness of the educational process (the ability of students to interact with educational material remotely).

We believe that the didactic conditions for flexible learning include the following:

- a high level of digital skills of all participants,
- a high level of students motivation,
- availability of the necessary technical support,
- adaptation of educational programs to new conditions, and
- assistance from educational institutions to teachers in redistributing class time and organizing schedules.

Here are some examples of tasks that students of different specialties can use for flexible English language learning.

**Example 1:** YouTube's video hosting resource, the YouGlish app, allows students to find numerous videos for a specific word or phrase they search. This way, students can hear the word in various natural contexts, spoken in different accents. All videos are accompanied by subtitles, which allows students to train their listening and pronunciation skills and reading and spelling skills. In asynchronous learning, students can get the following task:

*Study the list of phrasal verbs for today's lesson. Translate it. Choose 10 most difficult phrasal verbs for you to exercise. Browse the site YouGlish (<https://youglish.com/>) for each of them. Watch at least 5 videos for each phrasal verb, write down the sentences with these phrasal verbs, translate them, practice reading these sentence with the same speed as the speaker in the video.*

**Example 2:** Successful learning of a new grammar or vocabulary topic can be facilitated by independent project work based on the A to Z Teacher Stuff website (<http://atozteacherstuff.com/>), which, firstly, will encourage students to analyse and select the most challenging learning material on the proposed topic, and secondly, will ensure interaction between participants without additional workload for the teacher. Example of the task: *Study the list of the active vocabulary for today's lesson. Translate it. Choose 10 most difficult lexemes. Use one of the services called "Worksheet makers" on the site <http://atozteacherstuff.com/> to make a digital worksheet for your fellow student. The teacher will randomly appoint the person who will get your worksheet. Share your task with him/her, make sure you point to his/her mistakes when the task is done and is sent to you via any messenger convenient.*

**Example 3:** Interview preparation via ChatGPT. This artificial intelligence tool can promptly create a guidance for interview preparation which will enhance the student's monologues speech. For instance, a request "Create a list of IELTS Interview questions for me" resulted in a list of 17 questions including the following: 1) What made you choose the country and the institution you are applying to study?; 2) Can you please tell me about your hometown?; 3) What is your greatest achievement related to your English proficiency?. The student's task may be the following: *Using ChatGPT create a list of questions to your partner, select 5 most interesting ones, ask your partner these questions, let him/her tell or write either truth or falsehood, guess whether the answer was true; take turns.*

**Example 4.** The TEDEd website ([bit.ly/3jsCspU](http://bit.ly/3jsCspU)) allows you to select videos of TED talks on the chosen topic, which encourages students to choose a video on their own, which is further accompanied by a system of exercises, links to additional resources and the opportunity to participate in open discussions on the chosen topic. The task can be formulated as follows: *Use the TEDEd platform to select a discourse related to today's topic. Complete the tasks suggested there. Express your accomplishments. Prepare and record a mock TED talk on the same topic and send it to your group members.*

Organizing flexible learning is challenging, given that finding the right resources and formulating the right tasks to support asynchronous student work is time-consuming, creative, and unpredictable, requiring the teacher to expand their knowledge and skills constantly. However, a pre-formed database of such resources, supported by systematic work on educational platforms such as Moodle, can provide a virtual educational environment when crisis circumstances significantly affect the ability to provide traditional classroom instruction.

It is currently impossible to accurately calculate the time students spend completing tasks in an asynchronous format, which can lead to their overload or, on the contrary, a dishonest attitude to learning. It is also evident that the teacher's workload is also difficult to account for and can increase significantly when developing a large number of new tasks due to irregular working hours. Hence it is necessary to develop clear criteria for creating "flexible" courses and automate their assessment phase as much as possible. Here we see the prospects for further research.

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