Formation of Communicative Competence of Foreign Students in Conditions of Distance Learning

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Abstract: The article addresses to the issue of communicative competence formation of foreign students in the conditions of distance learning. The introduction of distance learning is emphasized to be one of the ways to modernize higher education. The concepts of "distance learning" and "competence" has been clarified. The problems which arose at the beginning of the widespread implementation of distance learning are noted. One of the adaptation advantages of distance learning is holding frequent large-scale online meetings. Articles of domestic and foreign scientists on distance education and communicative competence formation to foreign students are covered. It was found that the main factors influencing the communicative competence formation to students are professional orientation, humanistic style of communication and focus on the cultural aspect. The requirements for teacher's of higher educational institutions have been defined in order to form communicative competence in foreign students. The relevance of distance learning implementation in the educational process has been emphasizes. The scientist, who first started the research on distance learning, found out the differences between online and traditional learning. Emphasis is placed on synchronous and asynchronous modes of distance learning. The essence of complex learning has been also revealed. The advantages and disadvantages of distance learning are investigated. The process of organizing educational activities online is presented – which is a foreign language learning. Educational platforms for the distance learning organization are presented. The advantages of working on the platform "Moodle" and "Coursera" are revealed. Conclusions are made regarding the raised issue.

Keywords: *competence, communicativeness, foreign students, Internet services, distance learning, blended learning, asynchronous, synchronous.*

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Introduction

The education of foreign students in Ukraine is known to be of strategic importance – the training of the intellectual elite and the spread of the Ukrainian language and culture contributes to the international recognition of Ukraine not only in Europe but also in the world community. According to the latest data posted on the website of the Ukrainian State Center for International Education of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (USCIE, 2021), 76548 foreign students from 155 countries are currently studying in Ukraine. The most popular universities among them are: V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University – 4277 students, Kharkiv National Medical University – 4215 students, O.O.Bogomolets National Medical University – 3061 students, Odessa National Medical University – 2935 students, Zaporizhzhia State Medical University – 2860 students.

Modernization of the Ukrainian educational space, which is carried out in the context of technological innovations of the world education system on the basis of intercultural and interdisciplinary integration, informatization of the educational process, implementation of the competence approach, requires understanding of the growing role of e-learning, which becomes one of the priority tasks of modern domestic pedagogical science. The implementation of distance learning is one of the ways to modernize higher education in Ukraine in the context of globalization and rapid development of information technology. Distance technologies are now widely used in many fields of education, including the teaching of a foreign language to foreigners. Creating an effective learning system based on information technology is an urgent task for all levels of education (Onishchuk, 2020; Gerasymova, 2019; Nerubasska, Palshkov, & Maksymchuk, 2020; Nerubasska, Maksymchuk, 2020).

Today, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, quarantines have been introduced in Ukraine, and thus have changed the lives not only of every inhabitant of Ukraine, but also of the way of life of all people on the planet. Quarantine measures have particularly affected education; in particular, higher educational institutions have to make innovative decisions to provide educational services to foreign students.

According to the Provision of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine (Tabachnyk, 2013) distance form of learning – is a form of organization of the educational process in educational institutions (universities, vocational schools, colleges), which provides distance learning and foresees opportunities of obtaining of state documents on the relevant educational or educational and qualification level by graduates.

In order to ensure distance learning in Ukrainian higher educational institutions during quarantine, teachers have been implementing offline and online courses through various web servers, platforms, resources and social media: Moodle, Zoom, Skype, Viber, Telegram, Messenger, Google Classroom, etc.

The important fact is that at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, as a Ukrainian scientist notes (Prokopenko, 2020), in most Ukrainian universities, elements of distance learning had already been introduced, because in the educational process there had been used online forms for holding seminars. But the scientist identifies two problems that have manifested themselves at the time: technical support and psychological aspect. The first problem –lectures and seminars were replaced by conference calls, university teachers mostly used the Google Classroom service to create thematic sites, and the studied material was checked with the use of tests posted in a Word Office document, project presentation was via Skype. The second problem includes students' complaints about the lack of "live" communication with teachers, the inability to perform a missed practical task, the inability of individual communication with teachers. However, the author emphasizes the advantages of distance learning: the development of students' self-education who can get education at a convenient time, equal access to knowledge, regardless of residence place and health.

An appropriate proof that distance learning requires powerful software is an article by Owen P. (2020), in which he confirms that many universities in the COVID-19 pandemic turned to online software development communities to remain competitive and provide quality services to students. The ability to use different platforms, Internet services, of course, is useful for students, because today employers give preference to students (graduates) who are able to quickly adapt to unstable conditions and who do not feel insecure in solving problems and skillfully use the Internet.

The teachers' work is worth paying attention to (Brammer S. and Clark T., 2020) of the School of Management at the University of Bath, who claim that the closure of borders, reduced aviation capacity, mandatory quarantine upon entry, restrictions on mass gatherings and social distancing - all this creates problems for foreign students in higher educational institutions. A particularly difficult task was to return foreign students abroad at the time of the pandemic. Unfortunately, the wide economic consequences of COVID-19 have resulted in a significant number of international students being in the country where they study throughout the

pandemic. It is known the pandemic has caused a significant burden on universities in terms of clarity and communication timeliness between students and teachers. One of the most enjoyable benefits of distance learning adaptation is the success of frequent large-scale online meetings with Teams or Zoom, which allow open question and answer formats that convince staff on students adaptation to this form of learning. Communication with students was more difficult due to their special learning paths and the need for individual attention to their ongoing support. Today, as it is noted by the authors, universities need flexible and proven models of education that would allow continuous adaptation to distance learning.

Communicative competence formation of foreign students

A literature review confirms that many scholars have studied the communicative competence formation of foreign students.

To begin with, let us clarify the meaning of the terms "competence". In the New Explanatory Dictionary of the Ukrainian language (Iaremenko, 1998) the term "competence" is explained as: a) one who has enough knowledge in any area; one who is well acquainted with something; clever one; b) who has certain powers; full-fledged, "competence" is: a) good knowledge of something; b) the scope of authority of any organization, institution or person.

The concept of "competence", as Halytska M. notes (2015, p. 42), is a broader concept that characterizes and determines the level of professionalism of a person who has the knowledge, skills and abilities that allow him/her to demonstrate professionally competent thinking, evaluation, opinion. A competent specialist who does not have the necessary competencies inherent in his profession will not be able to fully and socially realise significant aspects.

According to Passov Ye. (2001), the main factors that effectively influence the formation of communicative competence of students are professional orientation, humanistic style of communication, focus on culture as a professional value.

The study of Kravchenko-Dzondza O. (2014), tells that communicative competence consists of the following components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, discursive, strategic and social. The author emphasizes the choice of methods of communicative competence formation, which should be based on learning objectives, content of educational material, professional motivation of students, the need to develop communication skills and abilities.

By examining this question, it is worth mentioning the work of Hurii M. (2013), who proves that the content of the communicative method is, of course, the development of oral and "live" casual communication, when during the class the much attention is payed to the student's conversation.

The analysis of communicative competence was performed by Voronina H. (2012), who rightly notes that the communicative approach requires a quality selection of language and speech material from the teacher in order to use it during the class, as well as the use of innovative methods, techniques and exercises. The author emphasizes the conduct of game situations as a powerful teaching method. He notes that this form of work helps to improve communication skills, critical thinking, memory development, improves the emotional state of a student's team.

From Vdovina O. (2019) publication we note the internal factors of influence, which are - the internal position of an individual, the development and formation of an individual, the presence of clear internal beliefs; the external factors are - the society in which communication takes place, the difference between native speakers in age, social status, cultural level, the difference in speech behavior of communicators, which depends on the communication situation.

Thus, the communicative competence formation is possible under the condition of modeling in the educational process of real communication situations. As you know, the educational activities of foreign students should be organized so that they perform actions that are motivated to solve communicative tasks that are aimed at achieving the goals and intentions of communication.

The essence of the distance learning organization in higher educational institution

Distance learning is becoming increasingly popular as it allows young people to pursue higher education, even while being away from university. This form has already gained wide popularity and is used by many educational institutions in different countries.

The founder of distance learning is considered to be the Irish academician Keegan D. (2002), who identified the difference between distance education and traditional education. In addition, he founded the international magazine "Distance Education". In the article (Keegan D., 1980) the author presented the key aspects of distance learning. The researcher identified the main aspects of distance education, including spacial separation of students and teachers; use of software and

technologies; virtual communication between students and teachers. Given that distance learning takes place in the virtual environment, Keegan (2002) highlights the degree of learner autonomy to which it may lead.

The article of Watts L. (2016) is worth to note, which points out that distance learning is common in higher educational institutions at that time, where more and more students use the flexibility which is provided by e-learning. Keeping students in touch with classmates and teachers has been a challenge for e-learning, but as technology evolves, the methods by which teachers engage students, both synchronously and asynchronously, have also improved. The author considers different types of online learning: synchronous, asynchronous, mixed, mass open online courses (MOOC) and online courses on an open schedule. As you know, synchronous briefings usually imply meeting online at a scheduled time. In the asynchronous mode, students work at their own pace, at a convenient time.

Academician Keegan D. (1980) points out that videoconferencing should not be considered as face-to-face interaction, even though it allows the participants to see each other.

Asynchronous learning means that that students and teachers do not meet synchronously and, thus, students can access educational courses via the Internet and study at any time convenient for them, when they want or need it. Communication between participants takes place mainly through e-mail and online forums, usually moderated by an instructor (Watts L., 2016).

It is worth noting that Randy G. (2000, 12) proves that "asynchronous collaborative learning may well be the defining technology of the post-industrial era of distance education".

Blended learning was also studied by Kurt S. and Yildirim I. (2018, 439) to determine whether students are satisfied with such learning and also to determine the important features of the mixed format. The results of the study show that Turkish students view blended learning as rather effective. The success of such distance learning depends on both teachers and students. Blended learning has the potential to grow and offers the opportunity to reach many people living in remote areas and cannot attend educational institutions because of financial reasons.

The mixed form of learning is emphasized by scholars (Randy G. and Heather K., 2004, 97), who define such education as teaching students in the classroom and at home. There is no specific definition of working time on the Internet in a blended learning model. According to scientists, blended learning is a quite effective integration of face-to-face and Internet technologies.

The study (Tseng H., 2016) noted that blended learning format uses different teaching strategies and learning technologies to help people with different learning styles, needs and interests.

According to Cormier et al. (2010), the MOOC platform (Massive Online Open Courses), which originated in in 2006, is convenient and effective. This platform contains free-of-charge online courses available to many participants.

The advantages and disadvantages of distance learning are highlighted in the article of Liesbeth P. (2018). The advantages include: self-study, flexibility of time and space, saving time (no home and school traffic). Disadvantages include: feelings of isolation, struggling motivation, lack of personal interaction, difficulty receiving instant feedback, technical problems with access to technologies and, ocassionally, certain difficulties with certification.

After comparing online learning and full-time learning, Horspool (2012) discover that students took online courses to dedicate more time to travelling and avoid problems with time planning. Most students, both in person and online, did not have any technological problems. Both groups indicated that communication with teachers was sufficient enough. Online students mentioned teachers' prompt responses to their questions. Both groups of students enjoyed their study experience.

Research of Dobbs (2009) confirms that online learning is convenient for students because they have an opportunity to not come to university, but may complete tasks at a convenient time. As noted by both traditional and online students, traditional courses were easier to master, while online courses required a little more effort. Those online students who had more experience in this area acknowledged high quality of courses. At the same time, traditional students, who never attended online courses, assessed their quality as quite low.

In Kopylova's (2019) article the author notes that most of the foreign language curriculum is learned remotely by students. When organizing the learning process of foreign students, teachers use a standard text, which creates a block of tasks aimed at developing various skills, and helps to teach the correct construction of thought, not just forms of expression. The student receives an additional block of information in the form of tables, structural and semantic schemes, samples needed to analyze the semantic, communicative and structural integrity of the text. A special system of tasks develops in students the skills of independent production and design of communicatively integral texts. Each block of tasks involves working out a certain set of operations with language and information

material of the text. Texts related to the student's specialty are used for the work. The study of the topic is completed by the knowledge control unit. The educational text is the highest unit for observation and comprehension of the studied lexical and grammatical material, therefore such texts are saturated with special lexical unit-terms and grammatical constructions studied by foreign students of this study stage. In addition, the text is the basis for the formation of certain language skills and is a source of relevant special information, motivating the language activities of students, which determines the cognitive and problematic nature of such texts. Practice shows that foreign students have significant difficulties in learning during the foreign specialist's formation (including studying in the faculty of training), and the main difficulty is to master the language of the specialty in the educational and professional sphere of communicative connection in the curriculum. Activation of the educational process and professional competencies formation of foreign students will contribute to the use of additional interactive learning resources, which can be accessed in the Moodle system. In our case, the use of elements of distance learning, built in the Moodle system, will effectively organize the process of language training of foreign students, implement the ideas of individual approach to learning, enhance students' cognitive activity and involve them in independent work. Material of practical classes, practical tasks, methodical support and questions for self-control students can receive from pages of a course site according to structure of a course and methodical recommendations to its elements. At the end of each practical lesson there is a list of questions for self-control, which students need to work on their own. Students must send the completed practical tasks to the teacher for review within 7 days after receiving the task. Students will receive a response with an assessment and comments within five days after the deadline for the assignment. Each topic of the course is accompanied by an electronic presentation, which facilitates the process of perception of new information and maintains interest in the topic being studied. A permanent forum is provided in the course to clarify current issues from theoretical materials and practical tasks. At the end of the course there is an on-line consultation with the teacher in a chat form or a videoconference for the test training. Also at the end of the course the students wishing to improve their grades will have an access to an individual additional task, which should be sent to the teacher for reviewing. Students who have not completed or sent the practical task by the deadline, should contact the teacher during an individual consultation. The students receive weekly individual consultations in the chat form during the semester at the time specified by the teacher.

Most universities in Ukraine chose free educational platforms (Acollab, ATutor, COSE, DodeboLMS, Dokeos, ELEDGE, Ganesha, ILIAS, LAMS, LON-CAPA, LRN, Moodle, OLAT, Open ACS, Open Cartable, Sakai, The Manhattan Virtual Classroom, etc.).

In the publication of Kolos K. (2011), the author proves that distance learning on the Moodle platform is extremely convenient to implement the principle of lifelong learning. The Moodle system is designed to organize learning and manage it in a networked environment using ICT. It is reliable and easy to use and administer, ensures the security of information and its transmission from teacher to student, evaluates student achievement, and is also compatible with standard software.

The attention is also should be payed to the study of Professor of Computer Science (Andrew N., 2011), who notes the launch of 3 free courses in 2011 offered by Stanford University. The version was posted and launched on ml-class.org. By the way, more than 100,000 students were registered for its first use. Quizzes and control tasks on programming were presented at the course. The platform became one of the first and most successful mass open online courses (MOOC). Today it is Courséra – technology company working in the field of education; founded by computer science professor Andrew N. (2011) from Stanford University in April 2012. Coursera offers its users hundreds of free online courses in various disciplines, upon successful completion of which the user receives a certificate of completion of the course. Coursera for Campus allows any university to offer quality, relevant work, online learning for students, alumni, faculty and staff around the world. Currently, courses are offered in the following fields: engineering, humanities, medicine, biology, social sciences, mathematics, business, computer science and others.

It is worth noting the publication of Hassan A. (2020), which identifies 11 factors that confirm the effective use of online platforms for teaching students in higher educational institutions. The author's research shows that knowledge, understanding, analysis confirm a high level of education. Thus, the scientist determined the level of student achievement by 4 criteria: comprehension, memorization, application and analysis.

Conclusions

Thus, online education is based on a synchronous or asynchronous approach. Synchronous format means cooperation in real time, and in asynchronous mode students work at their own pace and at a convenient time for them.

Of course, remote technologies effectively complement, develop and expand traditional forms of employment. Through online learning, students have constant access to learning materials, and the teacher can test knowledge, make consultations and exchange materials and tasks. The advantages of using distance learning over traditional learning are obvious: the teacher can dynamically switch students from frontal work to individual with materials from various electronic resources.

The communicative competence formation, of course, affects the professional level of future professionals, their self-realization and improvement of professional activity.

Undoubtedly, the successful communicative competence formation is possible under the following conditions: organization of a rationally interdependent learning system, intensification of independent learning activities of students, introduction of a set of communicative problems, involvement of students in various types of extracurricular educational activities (research and modeling one).

Acknowledgement

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