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Modern Technologies for University Students' Language Learning in Pandemic

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Abstract: In the paper the role of modern technologies in educational sphere in pandemic society has been shown. The purpose of the research is to share to experience of higher education system survival and development in physical isolation. The research methods include those necessary for theoretical study (analysis, synthesis, and observation). As distance learning and teaching became possible due to cloud computing, application of different cloud services (Zoom, Skype, Hangouts Meet, Google Classroom, Google Forms, Quizlet) in work with University students during quarantine measure were described. The results of University students' language learning in pandemic may be interesting for different specialists of educational sphere both in pandemic and post-pandemic society.

Keywords: *Modern technologies; cloud computing; distance learning and teaching; language learning; University students.*

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1. Introduction

Today our world has faced unprecedented challenge – a pandemic. New disease has greatly affected all spheres of the society. Long quarantine measures have changed everybody's way of life and made us work and communicate distantly. A lot of people have lost their job. They are strongly depressed and are afraid of collapse. However, physical isolation must not and cannot leave us without our future.

Postmodern society is transforming significantly by pandemic. It exacerbates and actualizes the characteristic features of a postmodern society, namely distance and virtual communication as well as globalization. Nowadays it is topical to demonstrate that this pandemic will not deconstruct our world. Instead virtualization of social communication is becoming more familiar to us; modern technologies are getting closer for more people as prolonged quarantine measures together with physical isolation contribute the development of distance and virtual communication both for personal and public purposes.

Speaking about the sphere of education and the role of Universities in pandemic times, since Universities were always centers of progress and development, they do their best to organize teaching and learning in order to continue living in a knowledge-based society. That is why we consider that the experience of Universities will be useful for postmodern educational system and society in general.

So Universities all over the world do not stop their activity. Their role has not changed. Their academic staff has quickly switched to new forms of teaching. Today teachers and professors widely use cloud computing for educational purposes as cloud services have proved themselves to be effective for distance learning (Shim & Lee, 2018). In addition, modern IT market has already developed and proposes a wide variety of cloud services for education.

1.1. The previous studies

There are a lot of researches of using cloud computing for students' teaching and learning. They discover different aspects of applying cloud computing for educational purposes such as problems and advantage in the classroom (Abdullahi et al., 2018), effectiveness of various cloud computing services (Holubnycha et al., 2019; Khaleel et al., 2018) etc. used in parallel with traditional classroom forms of work. So it is naturally that there are no researches considering cloud computing using as the only teaching method what is happening during a pandemic.

As such works are rather topical but the period of our experience is quite short and we cannot make any objective conclusion, our paper does not represent an experiment. It is theoretical-argumentative. So we have only used general theoretical methods of the study (analysis and synthesis of the previous researches) and observation as well.

1.2. The purpose

The purpose of the paper is to share our experience of survival and development through using cloud computing for University students' foreign language learning and teaching during the quarantine measures.

2. Theoretical backgrounds of distance learning

The significance of applying technological modernization to higher education and distance learning spread was underlined in the European Union several years ago. In 2014 it became a subject of consideration of the European Commission. In accordance with the provisions of the report "New Modes of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education" (High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education, 2014), three new models of learning were formulated, among which: 1) a combination of the traditional form of higher education and online technology (i.e. distance learning and teaching); 2) teaching certain online courses in higher education institutions; 3) online courses, regardless of higher education institutions.

These new models of learning and teaching became topical because they had a number of advantages: could make education cheaper and expand access to education. And that was cloud computing, which made the development of distance learning and teaching possible.

3. The experience of distance learning applying

Although Universities applied online technology more or less active they got used to dealing with traditional classroom forms of teaching. So they used to join both forms. Working with modern technologies their focus used to be largely on an interactive whiteboard and certain cloud services for education.

However, it should be noted that in today's pandemic environment, which makes classroom training impossible, training with the use of online technologies, namely cloud, comes to the fore. Since organization of distance learning and teaching is familiar to Universities they applied this model of education as soon as our society faced the necessity of physical isolation.

Today distance learning and teaching have replaced classroom training. Now we combine several cloud computing instruments, which help the professors and teachers of the Foreign Languages Department # 3 at Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University (Kharkiv, Ukraine) to organize our work with students.

For example, traditional classroom training as well as extra classes and extracurricular activities have been replaced by cloud conferences of *Zoom*, *Skype*, *Hangouts Meet*, etc. These conferences allow 1) to hold distance classes where the teacher communicates with his student group, explains new program material, the students train and develop certain lexical and grammatical units in communicative tasks, communicate in pairs, play communicative games, present monologue on program topics; 2) to hold distance individual consultations for students where all usual problems are discussed; 3) to organize extracurricular activities, such as a student scientific conference, speaking club etc. It is shown in Figure 1.

Source: Zoom Conference – Authors own conception

Figure 1. Meeting of a Speaking club

For constant sharing and completing written assignments (files) at a distance another cloud application such as *Google Classroom* is used by the Department teachers. It also enables to set deadlines for program materials and conduct ongoing online assessments.

To perform tests, we liked using *Google Forms* cloud service, which allows the teachers not to check the works personally, but to get it checked and to analyze students' mistakes.

In addition our professors and teachers constantly use different cloud services like the *Quizlet*. The experience of the department's previous work allowed us to evaluate the effectiveness of this cloud service for developing students' vocabulary (Holubnycha et al., 2019). The system of assignments was developed by the authors on the basis of the mentioned cloud service. They contain flashcards with different activities (as matching, translation, checking the definition), a number of tasks for learning the words spelling and pronunciation as well as test. One of the flashcards for learning legal terms from topic Investigator is demonstrated in Figure 2.

Source: Authors own conception

Figure 2. Flashcard in topic Investigator

4. Experience comparison

Analysis of the researches has shown that modern technologies for foreign language learning and teaching are rather effective. For example, the study of Facebook with educational purposes (Kabilan & Zahar, 2016; Kostikova et al., 2019; Mykytiuk et al., 2020; Sim & Pop, 2014) has demonstrated that social networks not only developed different language skills but also encouraged the students' learning. Moreover, modern educational technologies are able to engage students in the language learning and keep their interest (Tashakori & Haghighat, 2019). Growth of Students' motivation, confidence and satisfaction is underlined practically in all researches.

Our observation shows that students really learn the foreign language remotely with interest. They like gaming cloud services, they feel free in different cloud applications. We suppose that our experience can be interesting not only for teaching foreign languages in Universities but also for secondary school teachers as well as for different specialists from the sphere of education.

5. Conclusions

Thus, the experience demonstrates that Universities have not got lost in such unusual and unprecedented situation. They started using distance learning and teaching. Moreover, the experience received by Universities could be useful for higher educational system. In our opinion, it will definitely affect the forms and methods of teaching in higher education in post-pandemic society.

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The authors have the consent from the people whose image appears in Figure 1 for their personal data (image) to be published in a research article and they took all the necessary steps to comply to the European General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679.

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