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**DIFFICULTIES OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN HIGH  
SCHOOLS OF UKRAINE IN THE CONDITIONS OF DISTANCE  
EDUCATIONAL PROCESS**

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**Abstract.** In the spring of 2020, the educational system of Ukraine faced a new challenge in the form of distance learning at all levels of education. The reason was the global pandemic COVID-19, which affected all spheres of human life.

Previously, the problems and advantages of distance learning were studied by Ukrainian scholars P. Dmytrenko, I. Kuzmina, V. Kukharenko, V. Iyynyk, Y. Pasichnyk, O. Rybalko, N. Sirotenko, P. Stefanenko and others. All of them explored the features of distance learning of students. This can be explained by the fact that one of the main requirements for this form of learning is the ability to learn independently, strong motivation and self-organization.

The topic of the research is the difficulties of teaching English to high school students in Ukrainian schools in the conditions of distant educational process.

The article describes the difficulties arisen in teaching English to high school students. Thus, teachers and high school students faced difficulties of technical (problems with technology and the Internet), organizational (non-compliance with the online schedule, violation of the daily routine, late assignments) and psychological (fatigue, isolation, restriction of live communication) nature.

The paper provides recommendations for overcoming the difficulties of distance learning, namely the combination of synchronous and asynchronous interaction with a clear indication of all terms, tutorials, platforms, additional resources, ways of additional communication, taking into account possible technical and personal difficulties; close interaction with parents. It is necessary to explain the course and features of the distance learning process, tasks, requirements and clear deadlines not only for students but also for parents to help their children organize their time and space for productive work; if the student does not have access to digital technologies, it is advisable to inform him of the list of topics, the sequence of their study in the textbook available to the student, as well as the list of tasks that must be performed to achieve the intended learning outcomes. If possible, communication is conducted by phone or e-mail, but the student carries out most of the learning activities independently.

Thus, the article identifies the main difficulties that arose in the process of teaching high school students English (technical, organizational, psychological) and outlines the possibilities of overcoming them. It is emphasized that teachers play an important role in solving difficulties.

**Key words:** teaching English; secondary schools; high school students; distance educational process; difficulties.

**Statement of the problem in general.** During the last decade, the issue of distance learning has received increasing attention from scientists and methodologists.

Their research was mainly focused on the organization of the distance learning in the institutions of higher education. The students of the secondary schools were left out of consideration because there was no need for distance learning. Firstly, students usually attend school located not far from their homes, so they spend minimum time on the way to it. Secondly, it is traditionally believed that school students should acquire knowledge, skills, competencies under the direct guidance and assistance of their teachers. This is especially true at the elementary level, when the foundations for further learning are laid. The events of the last year have forced scholars and practical teachers to reconsider their approaches to the organization of distance learning, paying more attention to the expansion of its opportunities. The situation in the world caused by the pandemic has become a real challenge for all mankind, affected all spheres of human activity in general and changed the situation in education in particular. Earlier the distance learning was considered as an alternative to traditional learning for university students only, but in the spring of 2020 it began to be practiced at all levels of education. So, the problem is that there are certain achievements for students of higher education, but there are still many problems in the field of primary and secondary education.

As it known, distance learning is «an individualized process of acquiring knowledge, skills, abilities and ways of human cognitive activity, which occurs mainly through the indirect interaction of distant participants in the learning process in a specialized environment that operates on the basis of modern psychological, pedagogical and informational-communication technologies» (Regulations on Distance Learning, 2013).

**Analysing the latest researches and publications.** In Ukraine, the problems and advantages of distance learning were studied by P. Dmytrenko, I. Kuzmina, V. Kukharenko, V. Oliynyk, Y. Pasichnyk, O. Rybalko, N. Syrotenko, P. Stefanenko and others. The object of their studies is the peculiarities of the distant learning of the university students. It is due to the fact that one of the main requirements for this form of learning is the ability to learn independently, strong motivation and strong self-organization.

**Putting aims of the article.** The aim of the paper is to describe the difficulties in the process of teaching English in high schools of Ukraine in the conditions of distance educational process. The ways of overcoming different types of difficulties are to suggest.

**Results of the study.** During pandemic time social distancing became necessary, making it impossible for students of the same form to be in the same room. The

Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has proposed to introduce distance learning in all educational institutions of Ukraine. But secondary schools were not ready for the introduction of distance learning. Students and teachers were accustomed to constant personal interaction, teachers had neither tools nor experience in implementing distance learning. In addition, at first neither the Ministry nor the local authorities were able to give precise recommendations on the organization of the educational process. Only in May 2020, the Ministry of Education and Science published guidelines “Organization of distance learning at school” (Zvyniatskivska, 2020), according to which:

- teachers were recommended to “choose a platform for online learning, as well as create a group in the messenger to quickly inform all participants of the educational process” (Zvyniatskivska, 2020); “adjust their own calendar-thematic plans, optimize the material and expected results planned for the period of distance learning” (Zvyniatskivska, 2020);

- the parents’ task was “to create conditions for children study at home” (Zvyniatskivska, 2020).

UNESCO shared 10 recommendations to ensure that learning remains uninterrupted during the pandemic period: examine the readiness and choose the most relevant tools; ensure inclusion of the distance learning programmes; protect data privacy and data security; prioritize solutions to address psychosocial challenges before teaching; plan the study schedule of the distance learning programmes; provide support to teachers and parents on the use of digital tools; blend appropriate approaches and limit the number of applications and platforms; develop distance learning rules and monitor students’ learning process; define the duration of distance learning units based on students’ self-regulation skills; create communities and enhance connection (COVID-19: 10 Recommendations to plan distance learning solutions, 2020).

It is known, that under the conditions of distance learning classes can take place synchronously (all participants in the educational process are simultaneously in the web-environment) or asynchronously (the educational process is carried out according to the schedule convenient for teachers and students). In addition, it should be born in mind that in some cases, including objective reasons, students or teachers may not have the technical capacity for digital interaction at all.

Synchronous interaction presupposes that students and teachers work according to a pre-arranged and agreed schedule, which takes into account all the subjects of the student’s workload. The Ministry’s methodological recommendations emphasize the expediency of “somewhat optimizing the schedule compared to full-time education. If

the scheduled lesson is present once a week, it is enough to allocate 20 minutes a week for an online consultation. The lesson, which takes place 2-3 times a week, can be transformed into 1-2 online lessons, supplemented by independent processing of materials and tasks. If the discipline has 4 or more lessons per week - it is worth having 2-3 online meetings” (Zvyniatskivska, 2020). Platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Skype, etc. are recommended for synchronous interaction.

It should be noted that teachers have been quite active in the use of synchronous interaction from the very beginning of the distance learning. At the first stage of the transition to distance learning (spring 2020) there were many difficulties, mainly of a technical nature, such as: one laptop for several children in the family; the phone is broken and needs repairing; children can access the Internet only from their parents’ smartphones, but they are at work until the evening; due to the financial situation of the family there is no smartphone or Internet, etc. There were cases when the electricity was turned off and the groups of students were not able to be online for the lessons. The only and right way to overcome such a set of problems is flexibility and understanding on the part of teachers, because not everything depends on them, especially on children. Another problem was the inability of children (of all levels of education) to organize their daily routine: they could miss the first lesson, not keep track of time or just forget about one of the next lessons.

Such problems do not exist while asynchronous interaction, which allows flexible planning of working hours and tasks for both students and teachers. Interaction between participants in the educational process takes place asynchronously, without online meetings, according to the schedule, but with a specific deadline for the reporting on the task. For asynchronous interaction, platforms such as Google Classroom, Moodle, Edmodo, Padlet, etc. are recommended.

But with asynchronous interaction, various difficulties also arise, primarily related to the inability of students to rationally organize their learning activities, and in some cases, the inability to be controlled by parents. Children often put everything off until the last minute and then do not have time to pass the task due to certain circumstances (the electricity was turned off, the computer or phone broke or froze, platform “was hung”, etc.).

As it known, each subject has its own peculiarities of teaching. The subject “English” aims to “form a readiness for intercultural communication within the typical areas, topics and situations of communication defined by the curriculum” (Curricula in Foreign Languages for Secondary Schools and Specialized Schools with In-depth

Study of Foreign Languages 10 - 11 grades, 2017). To achieve this goal, while teaching English in secondary schools, teachers use various forms (individual, group, pair work) and methods of work (conversation, imitation, various games and exercises, dictation). The transition to distance learning has necessitated the adjustment and adaptation of forms and methods of work with students.

For high school students, “distance learning opens the possibility to implement their own learning trajectory, focusing on those subjects that meet personal interests” (Zvyniatskivska, 2020). According to the Ministry’s recommendations, during the strict quarantine study, the number of daily lessons for students was reduced, the amount of homework in non-core subjects was also reduced, allowing more time to be devoted to preparation for external independent assessment.

Speaking about the difficulties of working with high school students, one should state, that in most cases there were no organizational problems with this group of students. This is due to the fact that high school students mostly have the skills to organize their working day, following the schedule. Nevertheless, some teachers faced the situations, when students could not join the class at the appointed time. The reason could be the absence of the necessary device, shutting down of the electricity, problems with the Internet, as well as disorganization of students, if the parents were at work and could not control their child’s daily routine;

Problems related to the technical side of learning could be due to reasons beyond the control of the student, namely problems with the Internet made it impossible to conduct a lesson according to a pre-arranged plan, poor Internet made it impossible to adequately transfer information and the necessary interaction between teacher and students in real time.

Distant working with high school students is characterized by a variety of methods used. English teachers actively used the method of projects, brainstorming, discussions, essay writing, as well as self-mastery of new grammatical and lexical material and grammar and lexical exercises. Tests in GoogleClassroom, feedback forms, online consultations were used to check the completed tasks.

The most serious problem that arose in connection with the transition to distance learning, as it turned out, was the emergence of psychological problems. It has become common for students of all levels of education, as well as for teachers. During the quarantine, especially at the very beginning, students were abruptly deprived of live communication with schoolmates and teachers. They were forced to stay at home constantly, all the tasks they actually performed on their own. This led to the emergence of such negative mental states as irritation, fatigue, incoherence, apathy, feelings of isolation. UNICEF has provided guidance on emotional support for children during a

pandemic, emphasizing the need of support by a sensitive and responsive adult, providing age-appropriate information, establishing clear daily routine in a safe physical and emotional environment, communication with peers by means of remote telecommunication, involvement of children into active and creative activities, a positive mood of the adults themselves (Resources for supporting children's emotional well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF).

It should be emphasized that not only students but also teachers had difficulties during distance learning. From the first day of quarantine, teachers had to organize distance work for all their classes, give advice to parents and consult their students. A real challenge was the checking of works in digital format, which caused rapid eye fatigue. Distancing disrupted the teachers' personal contact with students, which affected the quality of classes and tasks. All this required a lot of patience from teachers, a proven selection of methods of work and the search for new teaching aids.

**Conclusions of this research and prospects for further studying in this direction.** So, in the process of distance learning there were 3 types of problems:

- 1) organizational (non-following the online schedule, breaks of the agenda, deadline breaks);
- 2) technical (problems with equipment and digital technologies);
- 3) psychological (isolation, limitations in communication, fatigue).

The problems that arose were solved in the following ways:

- 1) a combination of synchronous and asynchronous interaction with a clear indication of all terms, manuals, platforms, additional resources, ways of additional communication, taking into account possible technical and personal difficulties;

- 2) close interaction with parents. Teachers have to explain the course and features of the distance learning process, tasks, requirements and clear deadlines not only for students but also for parents to help their children organize their time and space for productive work;

- 3) if the student does not have access to digital technologies, it is advisable to inform him or her of the list of the topics, the sequence of their study in the textbook available to the student, as well as the list of tasks that must be performed to achieve the intended learning outcomes. If possible, communication can be conducted by phone or e-mail, but the student carries out most of the learning activities independently.

A special problem is also the return to the regular form of learning, which caused the need to provide students with "special support, make a plan for individual diagnosis and correction of learning outcomes"(Zvyniatskivska, 2020).

The further studying in this direction could be connected with the problems of teaching different subjects in the conditions of distance educational process, searching new ways and methods of their teaching, combining regular and distant education.

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## ТРУДНОЩІ НАВЧАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ СТАРШОКЛАСНИКІВ В ЗАКЛАДАХ ЗАГАЛЬНОЇ СЕРЕДНЬОЇ ОСВІТИ УКРАЇНИ В УМОВАХ ДИСТАНЦІЙНОГО ОСВІТНЬОГО ПРОЦЕСУ

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**Анотація.** Весною 2020 року перед системою освіти України постав новий виклик у вигляді дистанційного навчання на всіх ланках освіти. Причиною стала всесвітня пандемія COVID-19, яка вразила всі сфери життя людства.

Раніше проблеми та переваги дистанційного навчання вивчали українські науковці П. Дмитренко, І. Кузьміна, В. Кухаренко, В. Олійник, Ю. Пасічник, О. Рибалко, Н. Сиротенко, П. Стефаненко та ін. Всі вони досліджували особливості дистанційного навчання студентів. Це можна пояснити тим, що однією з основних вимог до такої форми навчання є вміння вчитися самостійно, стійка мотивація та сильна самоорганізація.

Темою наукової роботи стали труднощі навчання англійської мови старшокласників у закладах загальної середньої освіти України в умовах дистанційного освітнього процесу.

У статті описані труднощі, що виникли під час викладання англійської мови старшокласникам. Так, вчителі та старшокласники стикалися з труднощами технічного

(проблеми з технікою та Інтернетом), організаційного (недотримання он-лайн розкладу, порушення розпорядку дня, невчасна здача завдань) та психологічного (втома, ізоляція, обмеження живого спілкування) характеру.

У роботі подані рекомендації щодо подолання труднощів дистанційного навчання, а саме поєднання синхронної та асинхронної взаємодії з чітким зазначенням всіх термінів, навчальних посібників, платформ, додаткових ресурсів, шляхів додаткового зв'язку з урахуванням можливих технічних та особистих труднощів; тісна взаємодія з батьками. Необхідно пояснювати хід та особливості дистанційного навчального процесу, завдання, вимоги та чіткі терміни не тільки учням, але і батькам, щоб ті допомагали своїм дітям організувати свій час та простір для плідної роботи; якщо в учня немає доступу до цифрових технологій, доцільно повідомити йому перелік тем, послідовність їх вивчення за наявним в учня підручником, а також перелік завдань, які необхідно виконати для досягнення передбачених результатів навчання. Якщо є змога, відбувається комунікація телефоном чи електронною поштою, проте основну частину навчальної діяльності учень здійснює самостійно.

Отже, у статті визначені основні труднощі, що виникали в процесі навчання старшокласників англійської мови (технічні, організаційні, психологічні) та окреслені можливості їх подолання. Наголошено, що велику роль у вирішенні труднощів відіграють вчителі.

**Ключові слова:** навчання; англійська мова; середня школа; старшокласники; дистанційне навчання; труднощі.

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