Student-Centered Online Assessment in Foreign Language Classes

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Abstract---In 2020 educational institutions in many countries had to implement online learning due to quarantine restrictions caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The research aims to study the peculiarities of the distance learning technologies used by Ukrainian foreign languages teachers for formative and summative assessment and their impact on students. At the end of 2020, a survey about online resources used for creating different types of tasks for foreign language classes in Ukraine was conducted by the authors of the study, and the main characteristics of the most popular online resources were analyzed. According to the survey, the majority of Ukrainian teachers use such platforms to create tasks for assessment: Kahoot, Google Forms, Quizlet, Classtime, Quizizz, Socrative, Quizalize, Gimkit, Blooket, Liveworksheets, and Wizerme. Some of these resources provide a strong element of competition that makes them perfect for formative assessment, while the others better suit summative assessment as they have a clear interface and don’t include distracting elements. While designing online tasks for the assessment, teachers should also take into consideration the possibilities online resources provide to reduce their students’ anxiety and stress caused by performing test tasks.

Keywords---distance learning technologies, formative assessment, interactive worksheets, online platforms, online test, stress reduction, student-centered teaching.
Introduction

In the spring of 2020 teachers all over the world were faced with many problems related to the need for distance learning organizing due to the coronavirus pandemic. To help students cope with the challenge of distance learning, teachers had to focus more on a motivation increase and on combating their students’ anxiety and stress (Dushkevych et al., 2020). The psychological state of teachers as well as of students at that time was marked by fear for their life and health, uncertainty, confusion, depression, and stress symptoms (Aleksandrov, & Okhrimenko, 2021). The constant switches from offline learning to online learning and vice versa during short periods that year were perceived differently by every participant of the learning process. Not all the teachers and students could use successfully distance learning technologies at the moment of the online studies implementation in spring 2020 (Tsilmak et al., 2020). Most students in Ukraine didn’t have significant problems dealing with distant learning technologies, while teachers were challenged greatly as most of them were not prepared for distance work.

There was a desperate need to introduce new teaching methods as soon as possible, and every educational institution tried to make its best to prepare teachers for such a way of work. At the same time, the Ukrainian legislation in the field of education tried to adapt to new changes, and a document, which emphasized the main features of online learning, appeared on September 8, 2020 – the Order of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine “Some issues of distance learning” № 1115. The autumn semester of 2020 was easier than the spring one from a psychological point of view because during the summertime the students and the teachers had some time to rest, and the educational institutions could prepare substantially for the future online classes. Yet the educators felt some pressure from the administration as it was constantly looking for ways to increase the level of their teachers’ IT competency and to change the format of courses by making them more flexible and appropriate for possible changes (Rayuwati, 2020; Trong et al., 2021).

At the same time, living through changes in a learning process signifies getting out of the psychological comfort zone which is always considered stressful (Okhrimenko & Lyhun, 2021). Even if there are opportunities for professional growth, it still affects teachers’ work and students’ motivation and causes anxiety and stress (Okhrimenko et al., 2021). After all, online learning in a new reality is not something that a teacher or a student chooses of their own free will, but a forced manner of teaching and learning during a global pandemic. Before 2020, Ukrainian students have always been free to choose between different formats of study. According to Article 9 of the Law of Ukraine “On Education” of September 5, 2017, a person has the right to receive education within the diversity of educational forms or in a combination of some forms. The main forms of education in Ukraine are institutional (full-time, part-time, distance, network); individual (external, in family, pedagogical patronage, at a workplace); dual (Law of Ukraine, 2017). With the quarantine restrictions, all students were forced to accept the existence of distance learning with its advantages and disadvantages. The most prepared for unexpected online classes in the spring of 2020 were those students who already had had some experience of online learning, in particular,
those who had chosen distance learning before it became a forced measure caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Thus, such students had part-time education which is defined in the Ukrainian legislation as a way of organizing the education of students by combining full-time education during short sessions and self-mastery of the educational program in between (Law of Ukraine, 2017). A certain number of students also studied in a distance form of education that is an individualized process of education, which occurs mainly through the indirect interaction of distant participants in the educational process in a specialized environment that operates on the basis of modern psychological, pedagogical and information and communication technologies (Law of Ukraine, 2017).

According to the Order of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine, the organization of the educational process during distance learning may include the majority of traditional ways of education: training (including practical and laboratory) classes, correctional and developmental classes, independent work, research, project activities, educational games, consultations and other forms of organization of educational process, defined by the curriculum, as well as webinars, online forums and online conferences. Nevertheless, most teachers found it rather challenging to adapt traditional ways of teaching for the online classes (Rietveld & Hormelen, 2019; Suryasa et al., 2019).

The XXI century has seen a huge breakthrough in technology, which has given students and teachers access to much more information than ever before, and the traditional education system can no longer fulfill all the needs as it could before. At the same time, traditional schools continue to play an important role in preparing students for life in modern society (Davydenko, 2020), despite the general technology improvement, although, according to Will Richardson, to stay relevant schools should increase students’ learning freedom by giving them more control over learning (Richardson, 2015). Building a successful educational program requires creating a modern environment, using technological tools, providing meaningful professional development for teachers and focusing on effective development of skills that will be needed in the next decades (Bondarenko et al., 2020; Sevilla, 2011; Sheremet et al., 2020; Prontenko et al., 2019). Some scholars also emphasized the importance of psychological support for the foreign language training of the students.

In general, technology has been transforming life at a very rapid pace. In a few seconds, a person can buy something online, find the answer to almost any question in the field of general knowledge and get instant access to an infinite number of books, images, movies, magazines, music and sources of information. But at the same time, the reduction of real human communication and the inability to disconnect from the constant flow of information have become a new norm of life, and it can cause anxiety and stress for many people (Sloman & Fernbach, 2017). The investigation of noun derivation in English and the possibility of a connection between genders of suffixes and the semantic peculiarities of their derivatives were conducted by (Soloviova et al., 2021).

Both during full-time traditional learning and distance learning, not only teaching methods and technologies are of great importance, but also the choice of tasks that should motivate students (Bratel et al., 2020; Fisher et al., 2020). At the
same time the specific strategies and tactics that the student chooses to achieve their goal, should be taken into consideration. Such motivation can be defined as a dynamic state that originates from the students’ perception of themselves and their environment and makes them choose an activity and persevere to achieve the goal (Vasiliu, 2020). So, the motivation in the academic environment is a psychological mechanism that generates a desire to learn a foreign language which in turn guides behaviour during foreign language classes (Raby, 2008). Some aspects of motivation while creating meaningful foreign language environment by means of content-based starters were substantiated by (Karpushyna et al., 2019). Meanwhile, if students’ psychological state is not appropriate for the studies, it can easily affect their reception of new information and influence their behaviour during classes.

Undoubtedly, the general psychological state of students and teachers during forced online learning in the conditions of quarantine restrictions influenced the level of motivation of students (Bondarenko et al., 2020; Khoroshukha et al., 2021; Okhrimenko et al., 2021). The traditional assessment also has to be changed due to the new reality related to possible switches from offline to online education and vice versa. Monitoring progress towards achieving learning objectives has become more challenging for teachers as it has to be done online. Formative assessment which is used to improve student understanding and encourage personal accountability has become more difficult as a teacher and a student cannot have such direct contact online as they used to have during traditional classes. Meanwhile, summative assessment which is usually performed in a formal manner and seeks to outline the extent of students’ knowledge has become more challenging as teachers cannot control students’ tasks performance online such efficiently as it was in real classrooms (Kurt, 2020). Nevertheless, online resources can help to solve these problems. The research aims to analyze the peculiarities of distance learning technologies used by Ukrainian teachers for formative and summative assessment and to describe their influence on students.

**Methodology**

The research methodology is based on a number of methods to achieve the aim and to ensure the reliability of the results and conclusions. The research methods are analysis and generalization of text data, logical systematic method, formal dogmatic method, statistical method and surveys. The Ukrainian legislation concerning the system of education in general and distance learning in particular was analyzed by means of the formal dogmatic method. The logical semantic method helped to clarify the conceptual and categorical apparatus of research. With the help of the generalization method the general features and properties of the phenomena studied in the work were defined and a range of and scientific approaches to the analysis of motivation during online learning was summarised. As part of the study, at the end of 2020 the authors conducted a survey of foreign language teachers working in primary education, basic secondary education, profile secondary education and basic higher education (Konovalenko et al., 2021; Spahiu & Kryeziu, 2021).
The survey concluded a Google Forms questionnaire that was distributed on the social network “Facebook” in closed groups, which unite foreign language teachers from Ukraine as well as from other countries who also could take part in a survey, but this study took into consideration only the answers of the teachers working in Ukraine. The answers of the respondents from other countries will be analyzed in the next study the authors plan to prepare. 162 Ukrainian respondents took part in the survey, 61% of whom work in primary and secondary schools, 34% – in the educational institutions that provide basic higher education, and 5% of the respondents conduct one-to-one classes (Figure 1).

![Percentage of the respondents (162 persons)](image)

Figure 1. Educational institutions that the Ukrainian respondents work for

The questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice questions from which respondents could choose one or several answer options. The questions were dedicated to some personal information about respondents, to online platforms used by respondents in different learning conditions and peculiarities of students’ perception of information and their psychological state during the learning process.

**Results**

According to Ukrainian legislation, during the quarantine restrictions (application of anti-epidemic measures) the educational process in establishments of different levels can be organized in a way that some topics can be studied in class, and others – remotely in an asynchronous mode with the possibility of providing support to students through consultations in synchronous mode. At the same time, full-time and distance learning should ensure equal conditions for the education of all students. That is, teachers in Ukraine have enough freedom to freely decide which classes they want to conduct in a synchronous or asynchronous mode, although there are a fixed number of classes that a teacher must conduct in synchronous mode. In emergencies, an educational institution can organize the educational process using distance learning technologies available to teachers and students, while the amount of classes conducted synchronously is determined by a teacher. As educational institutions in Ukraine
have the right to the final decision on the specifics of teaching during the periods of quarantine restrictions, there were different combinations of full-time and part-time education in 2020. Thus, higher education institutions offered the following options for providing educational services during the quarantine period: full transition to distance learning during any quarantine restrictions; a full-time study in the first year of bachelor’s degree and the first year of master’s degree and distance learning in other years of studies; alternation of full-time and distance learning based on the week, a group and the year of studies (Regehr et al., 2013; Limayem & Cheung, 2008).

Primary and secondary education institutions offered the following options for providing educational services during the quarantine period: full transition to distance learning during those periods of quarantine restrictions when other types of training were impossible; full-time study of primary school and distance learning of secondary and high school; alternation of full-time and distance learning depending on the week, days of the week, classes, groups and subgroups; simultaneous classes for some students who are present in the classroom and for some students who are present online. During hybrid learning, that is when some students are present in the same classroom as the teacher and some are present virtually, the teacher needs to use different means of motivating students at the same time by monitoring them online and offline and providing them with relevant feedback (Hayakawa et al., 2016; Song & Lindquist, 2015). It can be a significant challenge for a teacher to motivate all students at once during such hybrid classes and to assess them properly. At the same time, it can be stressful for students if the teacher doesn’t take into consideration their psychological state and the peculiarities of online and offline classes.

Online platforms that help to build effective work during hybrid classed can be not only those that offer the ability to complete tasks online but also give the ability to print out the same tasks, for example, students who study online can perform tasks on interactive worksheets, and those who study at a classroom – on printed versions of the same sheets. This option is offered by the Liveworksheets platform, which is used by 56 respondents (35%), and Wizer.me, which is used by 12 respondents (7%) that took part in the research. Ukrainian teachers also use interactive worksheets on the platforms of the textbook that the group works on – 24 respondents (15%) (Figure 2).
At the same time, 74 respondents (46%) do not use interactive worksheets at all, although interactive worksheets due to the traditional format and instant feedback can positively affect students’ perception of the value of online work because when working on such platforms, the student sees the need for activities and understands its importance for achieving goals. Moreover, such worksheets are appropriate both for formative and summative assessment as they make it possible to give the task for the students who work online and the printed copies of the same task for those who work offline (Figure 3).

A fast and dynamic quiz that can be used during hybrid learning is QuizletLive on the Quizlet platform. It doesn’t show the results of all the students, so it can’t be used for summative control, but it is a perfect means of self-assessment and a
stirring activity usually loved by students of all ages. The platform generates a test task of 12 questions containing 4 answer options on the basis of the previously created vocabulary or grammar cards. Every student can play on their own, or they can play as part of a team. The platform itself divides students into teams and gives tasks with different answers to each member of the team, but only one of them will have the correct answer. This game is a real delight for students of all ages. It helps to develop teamwork skills and involves all students. It can be played during online learning and in the classroom, as well as during hybrid learning. This game will be perceived differently in different conditions, but students will be equally interested in playing it (Chandna & Salimath, 2018; Mårtensson et al., 2012).

An important feature of Quizlet is that it can make easier teachers’ preparation for classes, thanks to the possibility to copy word lists to the clipboard and create quiz tasks on the Blooket and Quizalize platforms by simply pasting words from the clipboard. Both of these platforms can be used during hybrid learning as well as other platforms for conducting quizzes in the form of multiple-choice questions, which allow a teacher to print the selected quiz in the form of a test task with questions and answer options. This is possible on the Quizizz and Quizalize platforms. The Kahoot platform allows a teacher to print out only questions, with no answer options, but such a printed test can also be used in a classroom. In this case, those who have a question sheet will follow the questions on the teacher’s screen and write the answers at the same time as those participants who answer using their gadgets (Harper et al., 2004; Li et al., 2019).

Nowadays there is a variety of tests, the creation of which is provided by many platforms that offer teachers to follow in real-time on their computer their students’ performance while completing certain tasks, including test tasks. In Ukrainian society, there is a popular belief that test tasks can be performed mainly for summative control, and not for formative assessments aimed at stimulating students’ desire to study systematically improving their knowledge as any assessment is stressful for students. At the same time there so many different resources for the test creation that they can be easily divided into platforms that better suit each type of assessment. For summative assessment a teacher should choose online platforms with simple interface and a small number of distracting elements, and for formative assessments it is better to use platforms that offer elements of gamification increasing students’ motivation (Bratel et al., 2021).

The majority of Ukrainian respondents that took part in the survey (93%) use such online resources to create test tasks: Kahoot, GoogleForms, Quizlet, Classtime, Quizizz, Online platform for the textbook a group works on, Socrative, Quizalize, Liveworksheets, Gimkit and Blooket. The most popular are Kahoot – 51% (98 respondents), GoogleForms – 38% (62 respondents), Quizlet – 36% (58 respondents), Classtime – 35% (56 respondents) and Quizizz – 25% (40 respondents) (Figure 4).
Figure 4. Online platforms the Ukrainian teachers use to create quizzes

On the Kahoot, Quizizz and Bloooet platforms teachers can control the speed of switching questions and can comment on students’ answers after each question while running live quiz, and it is also possible to demonstrate a leader board with each student’s rankings that decrease students’ stress level and makes them eager to do a test competition with their peers without thinking that their results can be assessed. According to the survey, Ukrainian teachers use online platforms for summative control always (14%), often (44%), sometimes (28%), and a rather small percentage uses them for formative control (Figure 5). Thus, such a powerful means of assessment is perceived mainly as a tool for getting final grades, and the possibilities of such platforms to be used for formative assessment are significantly underestimated. Moreover, it makes this platforms seem stressful for students because they will get marks for accomplishing the task, and they don’t have the opportunity to enjoy the gamified component of such platforms (Göksu & Atici, 2013; Markova et al., 2017).
According to education researchers Tony Wagner and Ted Dintersmith, assessment in schools is the enemy of learning, as it distorts the purpose of the school and kills interest and motivation (Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015). In addition, according to psychologists, any form of control, which is often limited in time, leads to feelings of discomfort and stress, and tests that teachers conduct on online platforms are no exception. A pandemic is an important stressor for many students, and the question arises as to whether teachers increase this level of stress by using online platforms and grading the performance of such tasks. Moderate stress is sometimes helpful as it can improve performance. However, with prolonged exposure, it can turn into harm.

Stress can manifest itself in the following signs: anxiety and restlessness, sleep and appetite disorders, chronic fatigue, conflicts, loss of interest in professional activities and hobbies, feeling of loss of self-control, disorganization of productivity, disorders in the emotional sphere (such as irritability, bad mood, unreasonable criticism), impaired productivity of cognitive functions (such as decreased attention, memory, mental processes), the presence of physical discomfort and unpleasant sensations from the somatic system of the body (Sarikabak, 2020; Yevdokimova & Okhrimenko, 2020). Overcoming stress takes a lot of energy, so it is advisable to prevent it. At the same time, teachers, who use online platforms mainly to create tests, that are further evaluated should reduce the number of such tests and increase the use of those resources that have strong elements of gamification and increase student motivation.

**Discussion**

After the start of online learning, its advantages and disadvantages became clear compared to traditional education within the premises of educational institutions. Thus, the advantages of traditional learning in the classrooms of educational institutions for students can be considered a formal environment that promotes greater student discipline, face-to-face communication with teachers, the development of interpersonal skills, a competitive atmosphere within the study
group, the opportunity to actively participate in student life, individual monitoring of students’ knowledge and progress and direct feedback.

At the same time, the indisputable advantages of online learning are that many students and teachers find it more convenient and cheaper than traditional forms of learning due to the insignificance of the location of teachers and students, the ability to implement a flexible schedule (learning at a convenient time and anywhere) saving time on travelling to the place of study or work, easy access to a huge amount of information, the ability to watch recorded classes and the independent pace of learning (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015). However, both traditional classroom learning and online learning have their disadvantages. When it comes to traditional education, such disadvantages are a fixed place of study and a fixed schedule, the cost of physical education materials and transport, lack of opportunity to get a full-time job (for university students) and the high level of dependence on teachers.

Online learning also has its drawbacks, including fewer teacher explanations, feelings of loneliness, lack of competition, gaps in the development of interpersonal communication and socialization skills, the need for self-discipline, lack of interaction or communication with other students, and a greater need for management skills, time and motivation (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015). Some of the disadvantages of online learning can be offset by the use of online platforms. To meet students’ needs of communicating with each other and to promote socialization, the teacher can use the work in pairs and small groups, which is moderated by the educator during online classes. Unfortunately, not all platforms used in Ukraine offer such an option, and not all teachers use this option on a regular basis.

Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that not all students have the opportunity to work with the camera due to interruptions in Internet coverage or due to external circumstances. For example, students may stay at home with younger siblings, pets may run around, older people may stand in front of a computer monitor, neighbours may do the repairs, and parents may work simultaneously in the same room. Students may be ashamed of everything that happens at home, and if the teacher forces students to have the camera on throughout the class, the motivation to participate in such classes and to study the discipline, in general, can be significantly reduced. At the same time, if something unusual happens to one of the students and the other students see it, their attention is distracted, and the teacher will have to spend a lot of time on the students to focus on the topic of the lesson and not on external stimuli.

During synchronous online classes teachers should think of stirring activities that keep students active and able to give quick feedback even if they don’t have the possibility to switch their cameras on. Adding visuals during a synchronous class increases motivation and attracts students’ attention. For example, you cannot just call the person on the list, but show on the screen a roulette wheel that will choose the person who will answer the questions. There are many online platforms that offer the creation of such a wheel, and a teacher can easily try different wheels and choose the one that better meets the teacher’s needs. For
example, there are platforms that offer the possibility of creating only such a wheel, for example, Wheelofnames, Tools-unite, Pickerwheel.

At the same time, there are platforms on which a teacher can create many various resources, in addition to such a wheel, for example, Flipity, Wordwall, Classtools. Classdojo does not have a wheel, but it allows you to select a specific student from a pre-entered group list and lets you set the presence or absence of students, divide them into mini-groups and many other features. The variety of such wheels on different platforms will help students not to get tired of the interface, which is constantly repeated. Also, the online activities that permit teachers to clearly see the involvement of the students should be used, and tests for formative and summative assessments are not an exception. Quizlet, Kahoot, Quizizz, Gimkit and Blooket provide a strong element of competition that motivates students, so it is better to use such live quizzes for formative assessment when both a teacher and a student need to understand how well students have mastered the material studied. Formative assessment helps students to identify gaps and improve learning, and it should be done via approaches that support specific students’ needs (Kurt, 2020).

In such platforms as Quizizz, Classtime, Socrative and Quizalize teachers activate the test on an information page where they can follow the correctness and speed of completing certain tasks while the students can’t see this page on their gadgets. Thus, Quizizz (if some settings are turned off), Classtime, Socrative and Quizalize can be ideal for summative assessment because the element of competition is minimal, each student performs the task at their own pace, and the teacher freely regulates the start time and the time of completion of such test (Bratel et al., 2021). Such online tests can make collecting evidence of student knowledge, skill or proficiency at the end of the instructional period rather efficient during online education (Kurt, 2020).

At the same time, it is vitally important for the students to get to know the peculiarities of the platforms used for summative assessment beforehand to lower their level of anxiety during completing the test. That is why all the resources that the teacher plans to use for summative assessment, should be obligatory used several times in previous classes for formative assessment. Any form of assessment including tests that teachers conduct on online platforms with the elements of gamification normally leads to certain discomfort and stress, caused by the possibility to receive a low mark. A pandemic itself is a stressor for many students, so teachers should plan summative assessments very carefully to avoid causing additional stress (Okhrimenko & Lyhun, 2021; Yevdokimova & Okhrimenko, 2020).

**Conclusion**

The importance of online learning has been growing steadily in recent decades, but by the spring of 2020, it had never been so relevant to all countries. Due to quarantine restrictions, most countries faced the issue of organizing the educational process throughout all institutions of all levels in the distance format, as well as raising the general level of digital literacy of the population as it was in Ukraine. Most psychologists have come to the conclusion that online learning is
difficult for both teachers and students, who are forced to spend hours in front of a computer screen being isolated in their rooms, which can lead to reducing of motivation to learn and cause an appropriate reaction of a body in the form of psychological and physical stress.

Teachers in Ukraine have the opportunity to use those online resources that they consider the most appropriate to meet their groups’ needs. So, while preparing test tasks for the students, teachers should remember that some online resources can better suit formative assessment as they provide elements of gamification which reduce students’ anxiety and stress levels (for example, Quizlet, Kahoot, Gimkit, and Blooket); some resources are the best for summative assessment as they don’t have distracting elements (for example, Classtime, Google Forms, Socrative, and Quizalize); some online platforms are good for creating different tasks both for formative and summative assessment depending on settings (Quizizz, LiveWorksheets, and Wizer.me).

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Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

Transparency

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study was reported; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained.

Ethical

This study follows all ethical practices during writing.

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