

The Formation of Professional Competences of Future Philologists in Distance Education

Pirozhkova A.O.* Ponomareva Ye.V. Solopina G.A.

V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University, Simferopol, 295007, Russian Federation

*Corresponding author. Email: alyona.pirozhkov@mail.ru

ABSTRACT

The article deals with the problem of the formation of professional competences of future philologists in distance education. The main advantages and disadvantages of it are described. Modern digital tools and Internet resources are analyzed in the context of teaching English. The ways to form professional competences of future philologists and develop speaking, writing, reading and listening skills are suggested.

Some essential teaching techniques and methods are offered. The article states the inevitability of transformation of the educational process in Russia in the nearest future. It predicts the fast shift to the e-learning in higher educational establishments just after the coronavirus pandemic.

Keywords: *distance education, professional skills, digital tools, teaching methods, foreign language*

1. INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus pandemic and related regulations and decrees in the Russian Federation have taken distance education at all stages of education to a whole new level. Order of the Ministry of science and higher education of the Russian Federation of 14.03.2020 No. 397 "On the organization of educational activities in organizations that implement educational programs of higher education and related additional professional programs, in order to prevent the spread of a new coronavirus infection on the territory of the Russian Federation" [9] led to the fact that absolutely all universities in the country reconsidered their attitude to distance education.

Learning foreign languages remotely is a fairly common form of education in the modern world. The growing popularity of distance education is associated with a high level of employment of adults and the spread of computer technologies, combined with the need to speak a foreign language to organize a successful business, establish contacts with foreign partners and increase the level of competitiveness. This form of education is especially relevant for students with disabilities and those who study by correspondence. At the same time, surveys of various audiences confirmed that the absolute majority of respondents in the period of forced isolation will study a foreign language remotely, and only then pay for online sports training courses, access to libraries and film libraries, museums and other paid resources available in paid content. The purpose of this article is to analyze the features of teaching English in the framework of global distance education, which covers 100% of students.

Problems of methods of teaching foreign languages in higher education with coverage of 100% of students in the academic group – an insufficiently studied area of

pedagogical knowledge. The evolution of teaching methods in higher education was considered by C. Marcelo and C. Yot-Domínguez [7], S. Chan [1]. E. Grigorenko [5], R. Duus, M. Cooray [3] considered the issues of implementing innovative teaching methods. Questions of distance education are presented in the works of S. V. Agaponov [2], A. Kostikov [6], M. Lebedeva [2] and others. However, these issues were not considered in a complex, but only within the framework of specific aspects.

The relevance of this work is in presentation of teaching a number of disciplines that are taught in the process of training future philologists using distance education technologies.

2. THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

The study uses descriptive qualitative method. Computerization of modern society naturally leads to the fact that in the field of higher education, in parallel with training in the traditional format, training using the Internet is increasingly spreading. And if in the early 2000s the computer was used mainly for typing, in the second decade of the XXI century, students actively use the Internet to extract educational information, search for literary sources and get education in its classical sense (mastering a number of disciplines with further obtaining a document of education – certificate, certificate, diploma). Widespread computerization and increased access to the Internet, high employment of students, including in activities related to their future profession, as well as the principles of humane treatment of persons with disabilities encourage the

management of higher education institutions to search for new forms of teaching.

Several points of the Law 273 "On Education in the Russian Federation" are devoted to e- and distance education. According to article 17, education in the Russian Federation can be obtained both in organizations engaged in educational activities and outside organizations engaged in educational activities (in the form of family education and self-education). Paragraph 4 States that "a combination of various forms of education and forms of training is allowed" [4]. Thus, e- and distance education in the XXI century has a legal basis and is based on a number of approved categories prescribed in the above-mentioned Federal law, as well as in the basic textbooks on this form of education. Distance education technologies are educational technologies implemented mainly with the use of information and telecommunications, with indirect or not fully mediated interaction between the student and the teacher. A number of practicing teachers (A. Vagzova, M. Gilyarova, N. Yusufbekova, etc.) refer to remote technologies as portals and sites for education, local networks and devices, network disks, the Internet, an electronic catalog, a wireless Wi-Fi network and electronic document management. Audio and video conferences, E-Learning, online Learning, Internet conferences, and webcasts are the most common forms of distance learning. Distance education is a range of educational programs and courses: from advanced training courses that do not have accreditation, and ending with accredited higher education programs [2].

It is interesting that some authors consider distance education not as a way of learning, but as a system in which the process of distance learning is implemented in order to achieve and confirm a certain educational qualification, which becomes the basis for their further creative and (or) work [6].

Distance learning is a universal humanistic form of education based on the use of a wide range of traditional, new information and telecommunications technologies, and technical means that create conditions for the student to freely choose educational disciplines that meet the standards, dialogue with the teacher, while the learning process does not depend on the location of the student in space and time [1].

E. Azimov and A. Shchukin define a distance learning course in a foreign language as a training course posted on the Internet, a set of hardware, software, organizational and methodological support (texts, tasks, guidelines, tests) aimed at teaching a foreign language [8].

3. RESULTS

Traditionally four basic skills are differentiated in studying foreign language: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Some scientists add grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation skills to this list. In this article we will try to give a brief review of modern tools and resources that will help students to develop the skills mentioned above and describe the peculiarities of their usage in modern conditions. The experiment was held on the second-year students of the Department of Foreign Philology and Methods of Teaching.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Reading

The key question about developing reading skills is the following: do the learners have to read during the lesson or beforehand? It depends on the text, the task and the level of students. For weaker classes it is better to read in the lesson as they will have some support from the teacher, while advanced learners are likely to read texts for homework. Though if it is a skimming or scanning reading you will probably do it online, setting a time limit, whereas reading for detailed information can be done offline. In this case the next lesson should be focused on reading comprehensive and vocabulary exercises, discussions, etc.

Obviously, the Internet is the best source for authentic language material. The learner can find any information to his liking there: online magazines, newspapers, libraries, blogs, social media posts, advertisements, shopping and sport sites, etc. There is a huge variety of special resources that suggest not only texts for reading but also different exercises. Here are some of them.

Breaking News English is a website with the complete lesson plan. All the materials for the lesson are provided. There are 2 880 free English news lessons in 7 levels. The news is up-to-date, original or adapted. The rich range of exercises is given: warm-ups, vocabulary, before reading, true / false, synonym match, phrase match, gap fill, comprehension questions, etc.

Cambridge Assessment English is a resource for teenagers or adult learners. One should adapt this material for classroom use. The advantage of it is that the activities are usually short and one can use them as a part of a lesson.

The implementation of these tools in the course of "Advanced Course of English Practice" showed positive results. First of all, it helped to realize individual approach in the educational process better as you may give different tasks for students of different levels in one click. Doing the same offline is much more time consuming because for it a teacher need not only find the text on the Internet and work with it and send a link, but also copy and print it. The texts can be of different length and level and describe various topics. Work with them should take each learner the same time. In this way you may organize work with large class dividing them into two or more subgroups (stronger and weaker students). Moreover, it is an opportunity to have a discussion on various themes afterwards. Secondly, realization of individual approach helped weaker students to work more successfully. The experiment revealed that students which were not active during face-to-face classes became more confident and engaged.

3.2. Listening

Listening is the essential skill while studying a foreign language. Listening to each other, listening to a teacher can also be a part of this work. But the Internet resources give us lots of authentic material with different accents, which is very important. The experiment showed that a teacher

should be very careful with the choice of the video and pay attention to its pronunciation, grammar and word usage. Here is the list of some available resources.

TEDxESL provides the high-level authentic material where speakers give their opinions on a range of topics. These clips may help to better follow different points of view. It is free and available for iOS and Android devices. It is usually possible to have subtitles or transcript in more than 20 languages. One can find a ready lesson plan with pre- and post-watching activities or give one's own tasks, e.g. to give the gist/summary of the video, to put questions, to retell, to discuss, to express your own opinion on the topic and so on. Lyricstraining is a platform for practicing listening with the help of English songs, where you need to fill in individual words. A learner can choose the music he likes, the level from the beginner to the advanced learner. It is also available on iOS and Android. We believe it is one of the most convenient, motivating and enjoyable way to develop listening skills. Moreover, in this way a learner can practice his grammar skills as he may guess from the context what part of speech is necessary in this or that case even without listening.

Recently the so-called flipped classrooms have been very popular among teachers. In this case a teacher sets a task for homework to watch a video of his own or from the Internet (e.g. engVID), where the material of the next lesson is given. A student is able to watch it as many times as he needs. It will not only save class time which one can spend practicing more, but it is a listening practice too as a learner needs to be very attentive watching the teacher's explanation.

The experiment proved the increase of motivation of students if these resources are used during the lesson.

3.3. Writing

The writing task is usually given for homework as it takes a lot of time. Is it the same with online classes? How should a teacher organize his work? Pre-writing and post-writing exercises can be done in class. The teacher may show a model, analyze the structure and specific language, help students to write an outline of their future essay and then give feedback to the learners after they have finished the text during the next lesson. Besides, in online lesson the teacher may develop some concrete writing sub-skills: word order, punctuation, linking words, helping learners to use a wider variety of vocabulary, etc.

One of the main things in writing is giving a feedback. In face-to-face classes students' essays are usually collected to be marked. What are we supposed to do in e-learning? What are the tools? So, feedback on writing can be given in different ways. For example, students can send their work via e-mail, but it is not very convenient and will take a lot of time. It is more advisable to use Google docs or any other shared document, which allows peer editing and feedback. Teachers' comments are available. It is better to highlight the good points, correct word usage as well to encourage the student. Of course, these digital tools have their drawbacks, for instance, students may accept changes made by the

teacher in the document without understanding why. In case if you have one shared document for the task one learner can by accident delete the work of another. Another review tool is an interactive whiteboard (Miro, Padlet) where students can share their essays and the teacher may add some notes or video reviews on the students' work. It is quite time-consuming.

Write & Improve is a platform that may help students and teachers a lot with that. It has a range of different writing tasks for all levels. One is able to create a workbook with his own tasks. The teacher can view the class progress and give his own feedback. The student has an opportunity to check his essay unlimited number of times and keep on practicing until he gets the level he wants. Though the general growth of students' motivation is observed, some of them did not want to rewrite the essay for several times to correct the mistakes. Not every automatic comment was understandable for them.

The best thing about the platform is that it gives the learner an immediate feedback: word-level feedback (incorrect or suspicious, missing word), sentence-level feedback (good quality or could be improved) and score level (A2 Elementary – C2 Mastery or Proficiency). It is well-known that by the end of the full course of the secondary education, that is, by grade 11, school-leavers of a regular school must achieve language level B1 (Intermediate) according to the Common European Framework. School-leavers of schools and classes with in-depth English studies must demonstrate proficiency in English at the Upper-Intermediate B2 or above level. In the experiment we got the following results: out of 28 students 4 showed B2 level, 16 – C1 level, 8 – C2 level. It proves the efficiency of the chosen teaching techniques.

3.4. Speaking

Speaking can be very challenging as one must be sure that each member of the group has an opportunity to develop his speaking skills. It may be achieved with the help of platform features such as breakout rooms (Zoom, Webroom) for dialogues and group discussions. If it is unavailable (Skype) one may try to create a separate meeting where students can work together and the teacher can join one of these conversations. Besides, it is possible to give the rest of the students another task while the teacher is listening to a speaker. It may be a task connected with the speech, e.g. to write down the specific vocabulary they hear, to ask each other questions, to correct errors and so on.

Feedback is an important part of the learning process and students in an online environment need to know whether they are moving in the right direction in their learning. So what is the right way to correct the mistakes in speaking online? It should be mentioned that real-time error correction requires multitasking from the teacher. He has to listen and to write down the mistakes at the same time and it is rather complicated. It can be done in the common chat box then all the students will cooperate, personal messages or Google docs, interactive whiteboard, etc. The teacher should do it very quickly not to keep students waiting long

for the feedback that is why only key phrases should be discussed.

One of the most urgent tasks in the training of future specialists is the formation of their skills in discussion in a foreign language. Not only the rhythm of modern life, but also the educational technologies actively used in universities contribute to the need for students to develop effective speaking and discussion skills.

At present science itself is increasingly undergoing certain "rejuvenation" when students are actively involved in scientific activities of various statuses: from university-level conferences to large-scale forums and symposia of international importance. The future of young professionals of various professional orientations today is largely determined by their ability to present their point of view in a foreign language correctly, reinforcing the verbal presentation of thoughts with a nice presentation, a collage of photographs demonstrating the progress of work on the study, or even the skills of conducting small workshops or master classes on representing their skills. The compulsory involvement of students in project activities, introduced into the practice of universities, also requires the formation of their language competence, which gives the opportunity to conduct a scientific discussion in a foreign language.

Scientific discussion is an integrated ability that includes prepared speaking skills with a high level of speech literacy and the scientific content of the report; spontaneous speaking skills – the ability to answer questions, uphold one's point of view, appeal to facts; skills of presentation-making and interaction with the audience.

The threat of a pandemic spreading in early spring 2020 forced Russian universities to respond impetuously to the conditions for preventing a new coronavirus infection by a general adoption to distance learning which entailed an instant reorientation of the principles and approaches of higher education.

Within the distance teaching of scientific discussion skills, a teacher faces the same set of difficulties as in a live communication situation. This is the problem of the absence of thoughts, when students simply do not know what to speak on the proposed topic, and the unequal level of knowledge of a foreign language, and the psychological discomfort associated with the fear of criticism from the teacher's side.

Nonetheless, the remote experience in training of scientific discussion skills has shown that the use of computer tools and Internet technologies in many ways changes the nature of interaction with the audience and relieves students' strains. Students acquire the skills of healthy competition; learn the ability to share their intellectual property of their own free will. Because of the shift in emphasis on cognitive independent activity in the conditions of distance learning the former also gain a high level of autonomy – working with information and communication technologies contributes to the development of creativity and the ability to make choices freely.

Within the framework of the discipline "Theoretical Phonetics of the English Language", two models of work on improving the skills of scientific discussion in the remote format were tested. The first model can be considered the

closest to the situation of live communication since the lesson was conducted by means of using Skype software and consisted of the usage of traditional techniques for developing speaking and scientific discussion skills in a foreign language.

The second-year students of the specialty 45.03.01 "Philology" were previously offered topics of scientific reports with detailed instructions and recommendations of the teacher for writing messages on a given topic. The students compiled the texts of the reports in English, having previously discussed and agreed on their main points with the teacher, prepared presentations on the topics of the report and voiced them by video link with the rest of the group. Each speaker was asked questions on the topic of his report, which had to be answered spontaneously.

The second model used was asynchronous online discussion, created in a group conversation on the platform of the Situation Center of V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University, in the application of which we see some advantages over traditional techniques. For example, it helps significantly to adapt trainees to the material that is under study outside the classroom and allows prolonging the process of students' interaction, regardless of their territorial location and time limits. Moreover, conducting of asynchronous online discussions is a powerful stimulating factor for both students and teachers.

Among the new opportunities offered by online discussions are the development of critical thinking and the improvement of higher-level thought processes. They allow you to analyze opposing points of view, discover fresh ideas, make assumptions and well-grounded statements based on existing text records.

One of the advantages of organizing an online discussion in a group conversation is the impossibility of data loss. All records and messages are created in one place and stored in virtual space. Students participating in the discussion can respond to any of the comments of their opponents at any time convenient for them thus entering into a discussion of the problem with any of the students who have already spoken. Moreover, group conversations on the platform of the Situation Center are arranged in such a way that the answer can be attached to the original message-thought and such "parallel" answers create separate vectors of discussion.

While a regular scientific discussion depends largely on how it will be organized by the teacher (students are usually given clear instructions and recommendations regarding the choice of material and the procedure for presenting the content of the report) and how the teacher will control its progress (psychological factors affecting students become the reason for their weak foreign language activity, as a result of which the teacher himself is forced to ask suggestive and stimulating questions for further thought expression, online discussion helps to intensify intergroup communication of the participants in the conversation, creates a sense of cohesion and community of interests).

Comfortable environment of extracurricular remote student location, the opportunity to think and to express your thoughts in writing correctly, a constant exchange of views, a desire to find out how others reacted to your opinion, the

advantage of an asynchronous delayed response – all this becomes the reason for increasing attendance at the course. So, conducting seminars on “Theoretical Phonetics of the English Language” in the conditions of distance learning showed a total increase in attendance by 8%.

Students with poor language skills, or having difficulty with communicating in a group and students usually not participating in face-to-face discussions have a chance to express their thoughts freely in the electronic environment, to be heard and understood by peers. The participation of the whole group increases the number of opposing opinions, which makes the discussion more interesting and productive.

The weight of the presented advantages, however, does not detract from the disadvantages inherent in this model of conducting classes. As well as in the organization of a full-time scientific discussion, students often do not show interest in the topics discussed and confine themselves to a formal accomplishment of assignments. Their contribution to the discussion can be characterized as incomplete and one-sided if they presented only a statement on a given topic without further participation in the argumentation of opposed theses. There are cases when students do not leave messages at all as a result of being unorganized and psychologically stuck which can be partially solved by setting the deadline. Another danger to the moderator of the discussion is superficial messages that do not carry a new idea, but are a repeated or paraphrased thought of other students.

During online discussions the teacher should pay particular attention to the sometimes low grammatical level of statements and the lexical mistakes made by students. Quite often students can demonstrate knowledge of the basic principles and concepts in the field of theoretical discipline being studied but their understanding by others is complicated by the presence of numerous lexicogrammatical mistakes in their speech. In this case students should be asked clarifying questions and suggested using dictionaries or grammar guides which are also placed on the used online platform for convenience.

Thus, we can conclude that conducting asynchronous online discussions on the platform of the Situation Center turned out to be more productive than carrying out of discussions using Skype software. Thus, the ability to choose a time convenient for discussion and having it in sufficient quantity to think about an answer-commentary contributed to an increase in the percentage of attendance at seminars. Lack of interruption from other participants, the ability to express their thoughts to the end and non-linear format of the event, which allows to debate with any member of the group, helped some students to overcome their psychological problems. Having access to electronic dictionaries and reference books during the preparation of a written response contributed to overcoming the language barrier.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

To conclude, the challenge we face up today will change the educational process in the nearest future. Many teaching methods will be adapted for an online context and there will be the shift towards distant learning much quicker than it was suggested earlier.

It has both obvious advantages and disadvantages in the organization and conduct. Thus, the advantages of distance education are: the ability to contact the teacher when necessary; the implementation of a person-oriented and individualized approach; psychological comfort; modularity and systematization of the material; mass; efficiency; accessibility, including for persons with disabilities; the ability to obtain a diploma of education or certificates.

The disadvantages of distance education are these: the absence of a team, which, in turn, affects the formation of students' communicative competence and awareness of them as a member of a particular community. For the teacher, the main disadvantage of implementing distance technologies is the long-term development and careful study, while the authorship of the course is difficult to prove and protect. If training takes place in large territories, it is difficult to organize training in real time (online). In the process of knowledge control, unless the control takes place in real time, it is difficult to determine the degree of independence of the student's responses. Online students often do not complete the course, because there is a number of negative influences of subjective and objective nature (lack of time, they cannot organize themselves or plan their work independently, problems with the Internet, sometimes non-recognition of diplomas and certificates by classical universities and employers).

REFERENCES

- [1] S. Chan A Review of Twenty-First Century Higher Education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. 2018. Vol. 42. # 3. pp. 327-338. <http://DOI: 10.1080/0309877x.2016.1261094>
- [2] Distance Educational Technologies: Design and Implementation of Training Courses / M. B. Lebedeva, S. V. Agaponov, M. A. Goryunova, A. N. Kostikov, N. A. Kostikova, L. N. Nikitina, I. I. Sokolova, E. B. Stepanenko, V. E. Fradkin, O. N. Shilova / ed. by M. B. Lebedeva. - Saint Petersburg: BHV-Petersburg, 2010. 336 p.
- [3] R. Duus , M. Cooray. Together We Innovate: Cross-Cultural Teamwork Through Virtual Platforms. *Journal of Marketing Education*. 2014. Vol. 36. #3. Pp. 244-257. <http://doi: 10.1177/0273475314535783>.

[4] Federal law No. 273 “On Education in The Russian Federation”

http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_140174/.

[5] E.L. Grigorenko Creativity: a Challenge for Contemporary Education. Comparative Education, 2019, vol. 55, # 1, pp. 116-132. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2018.1541665/>.

[6] A. N. Kostikov Theoretical and conceptual provisions of designing a distance course by a high school teacher. Modern problems of science and education. 2011. № 5. <https://www.science-education.ru/ru/article/view?id=4861>.

[7] Marcelo C., Yot-Domínguez C. From chalk to keyboard in higher education classrooms: changes and coherence when integrating technological knowledge into pedagogical content knowledge. Journal of Further and Higher Education. 2019. Vol. 43. # 7. Pp.: 975-988. DOI: 10.1080/0309877x.2018.1429584

[8] New dictionary of methodological terms and concepts (theory and practice of language teaching) / E. G. Azimov, A. N. Shchukin, M., ICARUS Publishing house, 2009. 448 p.

[9] Order of the Ministry of science and higher education of the Russian Federation of 14.03.2020 No. 397 “On the organization of educational activities in organizations that implement educational programs of higher education and related additional professional programs, in order to prevent the spread of a new coronavirus infection on the territory of the Russian Federation” https://www.minobrnauki.gov.ru/ru/documents/card/?id_4=1064.

[10] A. Rodríguez-Prieto, A.M. Camacho, D. Merayo, M.A. Sebastián an Educational Software to Reinforce the Comprehensive Learning of Materials Selection. Computer Applications In Engineering Education. 2018. Vol. 26. # 1. Pp. 125-140. DOI: 10.1002/cae.21866.