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 language 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, to create assessment tasks the majority of Ukrainian teachers use the following platforms: 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 without distracting elements. When 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: student-centered teaching, interactive worksheets, online test, online platforms, distance learning technologies

1. Introduction

In the spring of 2020 teachers all over the world were faced with many problems related to the need of 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; Zhamardiy, 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 (Griban et al., 2020; Okhrimenko, et al., 2022b).

The constant switches from offline to online learning and vice versa during short periods of time that year were perceived differently by every participant in the learning process. Not all teachers and students could successfully use distance learning technologies at the moment of the online studies implementation in the spring of 2020. Most students in Ukraine did not 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 do its best to prepare teachers to implement these methods. 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 (Order, 2020).

From a psychological point of view, the autumn semester of 2020 was easier than the spring one mostly because both students and teachers came back rested from the summer holidays, and the educational institutions had time to prepare substantially for future online classes. Yet the educators felt some pressure from the administration that was constantly looking for ways to increase their teachers' IT competency level and to change the format of courses by making them more flexible and appropriate for possible changes.

At the same time, living through changes in a learning process signifies getting out of the psychological comfort zone which is always considered stressful (Griban et al., 2022; Okhrimenko et al., 2022a). Even if there are opportunities for professional growth, it still affects both teachers' work and students' motivation and causes anxiety and stress (Bloshchynskyi et al., 2021b; Bondarenko et al., 2022; Okhrimenko et al., 2021). After all, online learning in the 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 study formats. According to Article 9 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" of September 5, 2017, a person has the right to receive education within a 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 had already had some experience with 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 a part-time education, which is defined in the Ukrainian legislation as a way of organizing the students' education 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 online which is an individualized process of education that 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 (Order, 2020). Nevertheless, most teachers found it rather challenging to adapt traditional ways of teaching to online classes.

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 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 technological 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 (Sevilla, 2011; Sheremet et al., 2020). Students' motivation for FLSP (Foreign language for specific purposes) courses is often instrumental and should meet the specific needs of the program stakeholders, designing it for adult learners of intermediate or advanced levels, etc. (Kyrda-Omelian et al., 2022; Hromova et al., 2022). Some researchers emphasized the necessity of providing foreign language training for the students based on integrating modeling the high-risk environment (Lysenko et al., 2020; Bloshchynskyi, 2021a).

In general, technology has been transforming human life very rapidly and now a person has access to anything in a matter of seconds from buying something online to finding the answer to almost any question in the field of general knowledge and getting instant access to an infinite number of books, images, movies, magazines, music, and information sources. Nevertheless, the reduction of real human communication and the inability to disconnect from the constant flow of information has become a new norm of life, and it can cause anxiety and stress for many people (Sloman & Fernbach, 2017).

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 behavior during foreign language classes (Stenbom, 2018). Meanwhile, students' psychological state can prevent them from studying effectively as it can easily affect their reception of new information and influence their behavior 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 (Heikkila, 2018).

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 toward 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, a 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' task performance online as 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.

2. 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 scientific approaches to the analysis of motivation during online learning was summarized.

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.

The survey concluded with 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 the 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.

As part of the general information and initial briefing, the participants were informed about the main goals and the prospects of the research, in particular, that their positions can form the basis for the formation of comprehensive approaches and recommendations for the organization of distance learning and online assessment. Along with this, the non-obligatory approach was used thanks to which the interviewees were given the opportunity to refuse to participate in the study. The subjects of the survey were exclusively representatives of closed groups - teachers of foreign languages, which reduced the risks of extraneous influences in their opinion.

In addition, the questionnaire did not include any questions for the purpose of identification of the person interviewed and the need to indicate their personal data. Among the settings of the Google Forms questionnaire, the "Collect email addresses" function was disabled, which also ensured the confidentiality of the respondent's identity. The interviewees were informed about this before filling out the questionnaire.

162 Ukrainian respondents took part in the survey, 61% of whom work in primary and secondary schools, 34% – in educational institutions that provide basic higher education, and 5% of the respondents conduct one-to-one classes (Figure 1).
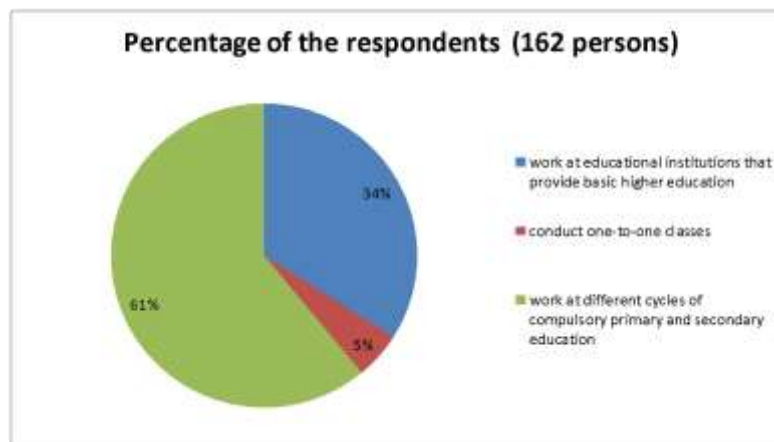

Figure 1. Educational institutions that the Ukrainian respondents work for

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.

3. 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 (Order, 2020).

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 (Order, 2020).

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 a 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.

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. It can be a significant challenge for a teacher to motivate all students at once during hybrid classes and to assess them properly. At the same time, it can be stressful for students if the teacher does not take into consideration their psychological state and the peculiarities of online and offline classes.

Online platforms that help to build effective work during hybrid classes can be not only those offering the ability to complete tasks online but also those giving the ability to print out the same tasks, for example, students who study online can perform tasks on interactive worksheets, and those who study in class – 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).
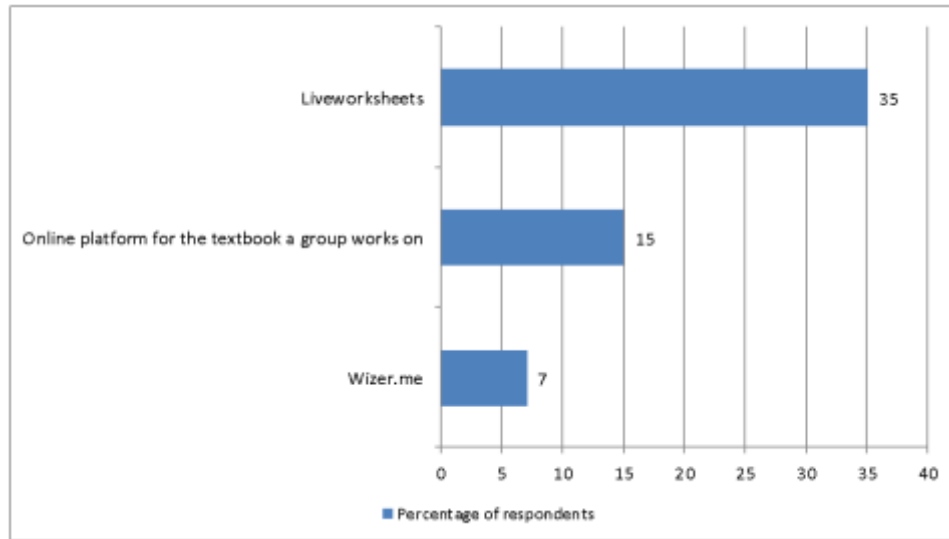

Figure 2. Online platforms the Ukrainian teachers use to create interactive worksheets

At the same time, 74 respondents (46%) do not use interactive worksheets at all, although interactive worksheets due to the 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. This is due to the fact that quite a large number of modern teachers continue to work in the traditional format because they do not have enough experience working with similar technologies in the conditions of distance learning, and therefore use only visual presentation materials. But, 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). The use of such tools makes it possible not only to teach the necessary educational material qualitatively but also to determine the dynamics of the educational process and to identify certain miscalculations in the information acquisition by students.
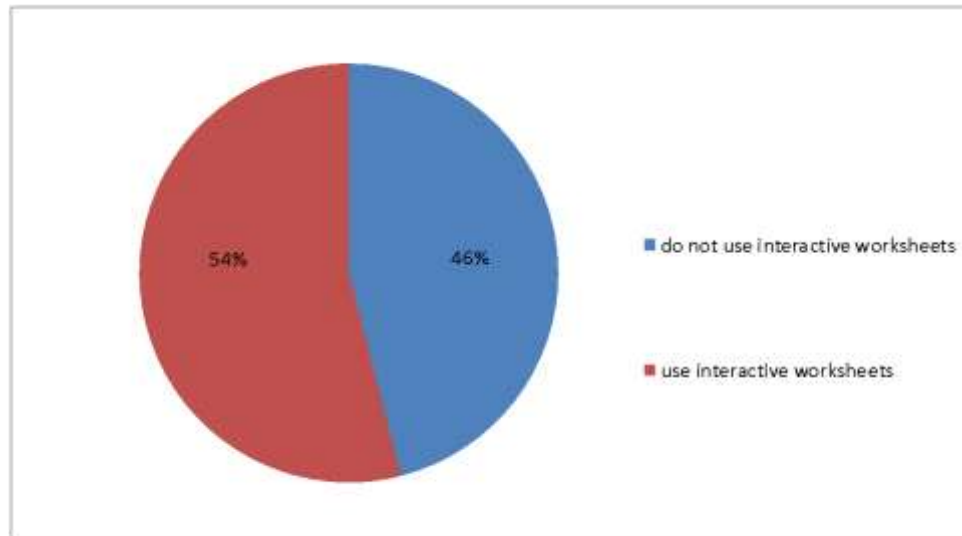
Figure 3. The use of interactive worksheets in Ukraine

A fast and dynamic quiz that can be used during hybrid learning is QuizletLive on the Quizlet platform. It does not show the results of all the students, so it cannot 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 based on 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.

An important feature of Quizlet is that it can simplify 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.

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 are so many different resources for 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 a 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). Even taking into account the fact that teachers can represent different levels of education (primary, secondary, and tertiary education), they independently choose appropriate online resources for creating test tasks that are constantly used for different categories of students and are chosen by them based on their advantages and disadvantages. That is why respondents prefer a certain category of online platforms.
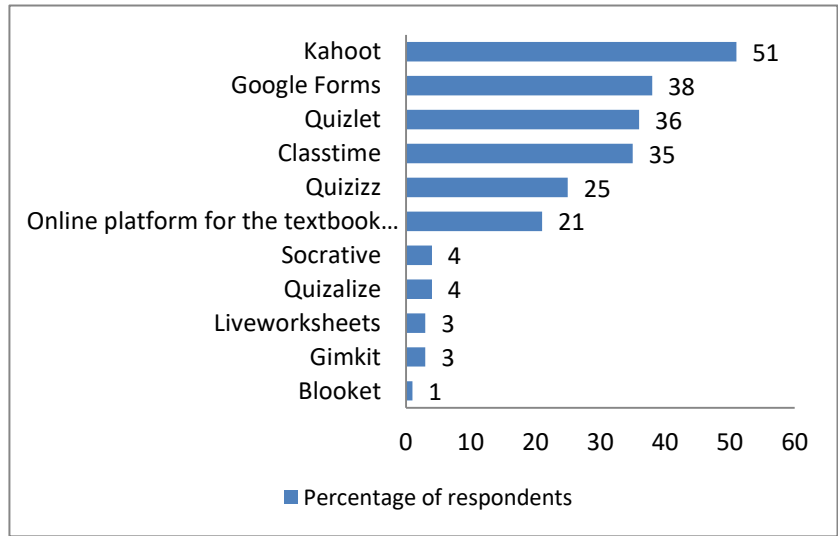
Figure 4. Online platforms the Ukrainian teachers use to create quizzes

On the Kahoot, Quizizz and Blooket platforms teachers can control the speed of switching questions and can comment on students' answers after each question while running a live quiz, and it is also possible to demonstrate a leaderboard 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 being used for formative assessment are significantly underestimated. Moreover, it makes these platforms seem stressful for students because they will get marks for accomplishing the task, and they do not have the opportunity to enjoy the gamified component of such platforms.
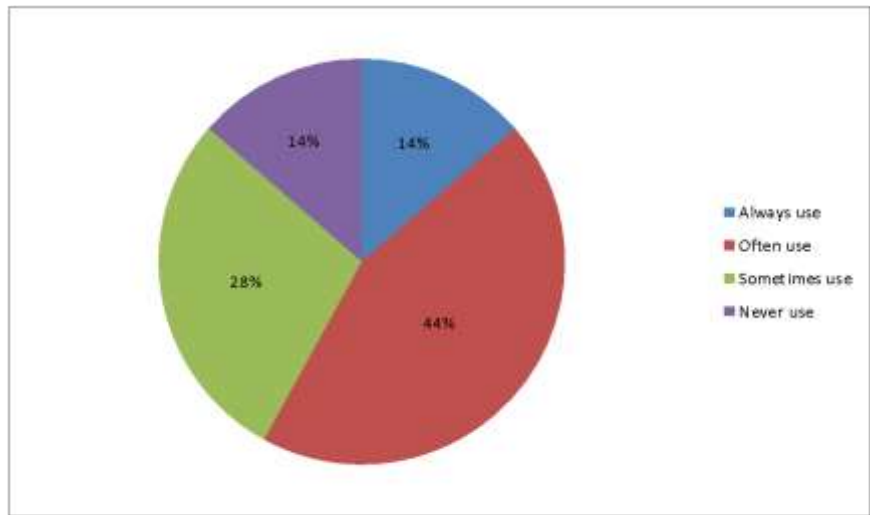

Figure 5. Percentage of Ukrainian teachers that use online platforms for summative control

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.

Within the scope of this study, we did not set the goal of studying the problem of stress among students during the pandemic. However, the team of authors analyzed these issues more thoroughly in their previous studies (Okhrimenko & Lyhun, 2020).

Stress can manifest itself in the following signs: anxiety and restlessness, sleep and appetite disorders, chronic fatigue, loss of interest in professional activities and hobbies, feeling of loss of self-control, poor productivity, emotional disorders (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, hence 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 instead aim to increase student motivation with the use of those resources that have strong elements of gamification.

4. 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 (Jan et al., 2019; Park & Shea, 2020).

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 traveling 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 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, neighbors may do the repairs, and parents may work simultaneously in the same room. That's why students may not be comfortable with having 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 do not have the possibility to switch their cameras on. Adding visuals during a synchronous class increases motivation and attracts students' attention. For example, instead of calling the person on the list, showing on the screen a roulette wheel that will choose the person to answer the questions may be more efficient. Many online platforms such as Wheelofnames, Tools-unite, and Pickerwheel 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.

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, 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 cannot 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 of receiving a low mark. The pandemic itself is a stressor for many students, so teachers should plan summative assessments very carefully to avoid causing additional stress (Okhrimenko & Lyhun, 2020).

5. Conclusions

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 at all educational 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 reduce motivation to learn and cause 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 reduce students' anxiety and stress levels (for example, Quizlet, Kahoot, Gimkit, and Blooket); some resources are the best for summative assessment as they do not 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).

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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