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## **FACILITATION TECHNOLOGY IN THE CONTEXT OF ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

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The effective professionally-pedagogical activity of a foreign language teacher in the context of rapid transition to distance learning because of the spread of the virus covid-19 made teachers of secondary schools and higher educational establishments of Ukraine face numerous challenges. A quarantine regime and the transition to the provision of distance educational services have become a serious stress-test for the majority of pedagogical workers of the country. A teacher, who can modify his professional activity and search for the ways of overcoming professional crisis, is able to respond to the challenges of modernity. The search for ways of reformatting of a teacher-philologist's pedagogical facilitation is one of the vital issue of methodological plan in the field of foreign education. Pedagogical facilitation implies the creation of the necessary conditions for general understanding and making group decisions in the process of studying with an accent to an individual's responsibility of each member of professional communication.

The notion «teacher-facilitator» appeared in the middle of the 20th century in Karl Rodger's and Jerome Freiberg's personality theories, the key points of which are presented in the book «Freedom to Learn» [3]. Later it was thoroughly comprehended in Robert Zaiontsa's [5], Kiell Ruderstam's [4], Serhii Bratchenko's [1] works that were implemented in the educational process. The relevance of the topic of this research is connected with the necessity to find out foreign language teacher's strategies as to professional organization of educational process and effective communicative space.

Information-communicative and communicative-active function of a contemporary foreign language teacher is determined on the basis of professional skills to be a facilitator of communication, a coach as a specialist with set goals, priorities, explicit tasks and help to realize them, that is to be an educational process moderator, but not to be the only source of information about the peculiarities of grammatical, lexical and phonetic structure of the language of

education. Furthermore, not all the rooms have necessary technical equipment in the auditorium fund of schools and universities. In this sense the adoption of technological innovations through the use of educational online platforms (Google Classroom, Moodle), platforms for holding conferences (Zoom, Google Meet), the use of popular charts for rapid communication (Viber, Telegram, WhatsApp) give far more new methodological opportunities to a modern teacher, though they can't completely substitute the effect of auditory collaborative work. At the same time exceptionally auditory work, held with the old techniques without using technical innovations (elementary of which are presentations, introduction of three-five minutes videos on the learning theme), don't correspond to modern demands of academic process in the field of foreign language education.

It leads to the search of efficient educational paradigms in the field of the organization of communicative interaction in the groups in the context of distance learning of foreign languages, combining effective use of technical resources with a teacher's facilitative activity. An important task is a withdrawal from a directive character of education and creation of favourable conditions for mastering knowledge. The peculiarities of the relations «facilitator – pupil» are based on the understanding of equitable positions of the participants of educational process in the atmosphere of bilateral preferences and trust. The requirements to use the method of facilitation are the necessity to use artistic approach to solving new problems within a team work, acceptance of responsibility for the result by all the participants of the process.

What challenges does a teacher face in distance learning? Because of a constant being in digital space the first obvious threat becomes desocialization of the participants of communication. The overcoming of social gap between people can be achieved by a teacher facilitator during out classroom based consultations on online learning, when the necessity of assessing the quality of knowledge and style of communication between the participants of pedagogical interaction are definitely aimed at solving problematic issues. All kinds of extracurricular activity (arts competitions, round tables, greetings with holidays, etc.), that cannot be ignored during distance learning, are included. Facilitation and enhancing of education, studying and upbringing are achieved in this way due to non-official style of communication of a teacher and students.

Methods of gamification of educational process (educational entertainment), that are still relevant in asynchronous learning on condition of active implementation of game elements at online lessons and in home tasks. Methods of gamification contribute to the increase of sociability, motivate the effectiveness of educational process.

In order to overcome social gap between the participants of educational process in distance learning environment the fundamentals of personally-aimed learning and active introduction of developing strategies of psychological influence become more significant. In this aspect the category of mindfulness, as an important technique of pedagogical facilitation in the context of asynchronous learning, should become the principal one. The approach mindfulness, established in 1979 by professor of University of Massachusetts John Cabat-Zinn, was based on the use of meditative practice to relieve stress. The fundamental basis of his program Mindfulness-Based Stress reduction were successfully used and added by the scientist's followers, and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is a need for using them in the pedagogical process in the context of asynchronous education. A teacher-facilitator should pay a special attention to the mental health of the participants of educational process on the grounds of mindfulness approach, based on the techniques of concentrating of attention, stress management, conscious thinking, training of viable features of character for the purpose of freeing from disturbing disorders, depressions, phobia and addictions. Mindfulness approach as an awareness and acceptance of current experience with openness, interest and balance offers the prospects of effective overcoming of emotional overloads, withdrawal from the state of chronic stress, making considered decisions, improving creative abilities, personal effectiveness and sleep quality.

The teacher's right to choose contemporary forms and new trends in teaching foreign languages (team work, case method, developing, virtual, project methodology of teaching) in distance format apposes pedagogical science and learning practice, opens new opportunities for

realization of an individually orientated approach in pedagogy.

Distance learning doesn't presuppose the refusal from real-life communication. Moreover, team work, that provides effective pedagogical facilitation, is a source of career development in any production industry, as the ability to complete the tasks jointly is a foundation of advanced development of enterprises. Individual and team effectiveness in the classes for studying foreign language provides the development of future competitive specialist.

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## **CULTIVATING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH DISTANCE LEARNING**

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21<sup>st</sup> century education is characterized by rapid change. We live and work in the age of advanced digital technologies, greater diversity and mobility. It is recognized nowadays that education needs to cover more than traditional subjects. Students need to learn the skills that are critical for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They are called «global skills», and critical thinking is one of them. Developing critical thinking skills in learners is an integral part of the Western education system which is open for «plurality of views, and encouraging originality and analysis, rather than memorization and quotation» [1, p. 771].

But what exactly is critical thinking? A review of the literature shows that there is no agreed-upon definition. There exist a great number of definitions of the notion «critical thinking», which has become a «buzz word» in educational circles [2]. Siegel defines it as «the educational cognate of rationality», Norris and Ennis call it «reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused upon deciding what to believe and do». Paul writes that critical thinking is «learning how to ask and answer questions of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation». The ultimate objective for teaching critical thinking is to help students make correct judgements based on the careful weighing of available evidence [1, p.770]. Leading scholars on critical thinking Richard Paul, Linda Elder and Denise Halpern provide a helpful basis for developing a working definition of critical thinking. Incorporating elements from their work, we can define critical thinking as fair-minded thinking that is self-guided and self-disciplined, is purposeful and goal oriented, and performs at the highest level of quality [3].

When students think critically, they actively engage in these processes: communication, analysis, synthesis, problem-solving, evaluation, reflection. To create environments that engage students in these processes, instructors need to ask questions, encourage the expression of diverse opinions, and involve students in a variety of hands-on activities that force them to be active participants in their learning. Teachers who develop critical thinking skills in their students prepare them for the world outside the classroom.

Below, we present some teaching strategies and practical assignments that we have found to be effective in enhancing critical thinking in teaching foreign languages for university students.

Critical thinking can be used while doing some reading tasks. Reading is a thinking process. Elder and Paul point out that «to learn well, one must read well» [4]. The book «New English File. Upper-Intermediate» presents a great number of texts which can be used for reading and discussion in order to develop critical thinking. Examples of such texts are «Extreme interviews» where students find out about the latest trend from America in which interviewers throw bizarre questions at candidates to see how they react. When students are engaged in