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ФІДБЕК СТУДЕНТІВ ТЕХНІЧНОГО УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ: ВАЖЛИВИЙ ФАКТОР У ВИКЛАДАННІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ПІД ЧАС ВІЙНИ

Анотація. Якість освіти в періоди відновлення чи нестабільності залежить від фідбеку, який відіграє важливу роль у побудові відносин між викладачами та студентами. Питанням забезпечення ефективного фідбеку займалися багато дослідників, однак тільки поодинокі дослідження присвячені відгукам студентів технічних університетів щодо курсу англійської мови під час війни. У статті досліджено значення терміну «фідбек», окреслено його особливості та обговорено результати опитування студентів технічного університету щодо курсу англійської мови. Це дослідження проводилося в Національному технічному університеті України «Київський політехнічний інститут імені Ігоря Сікорського» з використанням змішаного методу.

Результати цього дослідження підтверджують необхідність надання конструктивного фідбеку, оскільки це спонукає студентів замислитися над своєю успішністю, інформує викладачів про ставлення студентів до свого досвіду проходження курсу англійської мови та дає можливість покращити його наступного навчального року. Згідно з результатами дослідження, студенти бакалаври технічного університету були добре поінформовані на початку курсу англійської мови, вони знали, що повинні зробити щоб успішно його завершити. Завдання та критерії курсу англійської мови були слухними, студенти могли спілкуватися зі своїми викладачами коли це було необхідно, а рівень інтерактивності через відео, дискусій тощо був дуже високим. Можливо, тому більшість студентів відчували менший стрес на заняттях з англійської мови і були задоволені своїми академічними результатами в кінці курсу. Усі респонденти, якщо пропускали заняття, виконувати завдання асинхронно. Однак деякі студенти не були впевнені, що у них була можливість розмовляти англійською в реальному житті, і навіть більше, біля третини респондентів, сумнівалися у своїй здатності вирішувати технічні проблеми. Ігри, командна робота, дискусії та відео були улюбленими видами діяльності студентів технічного університету. У той же час студенти технічних університетів хотіли б займатися офлайн наступного навчального року. Результати цього дослідження можуть викликати інтерес у майбутніх дослідників, викладачів практиків та студентів.

Ключові слова: студенти технічного університету, фідбек, викладання англійської мови, воєнний час.

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TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS’ FEEDBACK: A CRITICAL FACTOR IN TEACHING ENGLISH DURING WARTIME

Abstract. The quality of education during periods of recovery or instability depends on feedback, which plays an important role in building rapport between teachers and students. The issue of providing effective feedback was investigated by many researchers. However, there are few studies devoted to technical university students’ feedback on English language course during wartime. The article explored the meaning of the term “feedback”, outlined its features and discussed the results of technical university students’ survey on their English language course. This study was conducted at National Technical University of Ukraine “Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute”, a mixed method research design was used.

The results of this research confirm the need of providing constructive feedback as it makes students reflect on their performance, informs teachers of students’ attitude to their experience of doing the English language course and provides an opportunity to improve it next academic year. According to the findings of the study, technical university bachelor students were well-informed at the beginning of the English language course, they knew what they had to do in order to complete it. English course assignments and deadlines were reasonable, students could communicate with their teachers when necessary, and the level of engagement through videos, discussion boards, etc. was very high. Maybe, that is why majority of students felt less stressed at the English lessons and they were satisfied with their academic results at the end of the course. All the respondents completed lessons asynchronously if they missed ones. However, some students were not sure that they had opportunities to speak English in real life, and even more, about a third of the respondents, had doubts about their ability to solve technical problems. Games, teamwork, discussions and videos were favourite activities of technical university students. At the same time technical university students would like to have offline English lessons next academic year. The results of this study could be of some interest to future researchers, practitioners and students.

Keywords: technical university students, feedback, teaching English, wartime.

Actuality of research. The second year of war in Ukraine made a huge impact on the quality of education considering not only disruptions of educational process by air raids and power cuts, but also emotional state of teachers and students some of whom had to relocate in search of safer places to live, work and study. Taking into account importance of feedback in general, it is crucial to outline the main features of feedback and analyse technical university students’ experience who learn English during wartime.

Literature overview. Importance of education during crisis times is supported by

the results of prominent researchers from all over the world. Education provides safety by creating a friendly environment, which facilitates academic, professional and practical skills of students, making it easier for them to become valuable community members. The continuation of education in spite of disruptive events is important to address students' needs not only in the short, but in the long term [23]. Feedback plays an important role in ensuring the quality of education be there a period of recovery or instability building rapport between teachers and students, especially in the times of crisis learning online or mostly online [5, P. 48; 22]. The issue of providing effective feedback was investigated by P. Binu [3], J. Hattie [10; 12], J. Harmer [9], M. Henderson [13], R. J. Marzano [15], M. Ovando [18], S. Quinton and T. Smallbone [20]. The researchers studied peculiarities of feedback usage for e-learning [7], investigated psychological impact of team feedback on performance improvement [14], explored students' feedback literacy [4; 16], compared students' and teachers' perspectives on effective feedback [6]. However, there are few studies devoted to technical university students' feedback on English language course during wartime.

The article aims to explore the meaning of the term "feedback", outline its features and discuss the results of technical university students' survey on their English language course. To achieve this aim we had to analyse different approaches to defining the term "feedback", highlight its features related to teaching English, administer the students' survey and report the results.

Materials and methods. This study was conducted at National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute. A mixed method research design was used in the study. Quantitative data was obtained through a Google Form survey based on a Likert scale, consisted of a prompt and a set of five responses: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD), which covered technical, psychological, methodological aspects related to learning English online during wartime in Ukraine. Qualitative data was received through individual feedback and group discussions via Zoom sessions. Technical university students (N=52) completed the survey at the end of 2022-2023 academic year, their participation was voluntary and anonymous.

Results and Discussion. The term "feedback" is defined in many ways, but it is widely accepted that it has a powerful impact on learning and learners. In educational context it means "the transmission of evaluative or corrective information about an action, event, or process to the original or controlling source" [17]. Feedback is seen as a tool which can be used to improve the quality of education, as well as to develop self-regulation skills of students [10]. Feedback is also defined as information provided by learners considering their own activities or their understanding [10, P. 81]. However, the information about learners may be provided by other people as well [8]. Feedback may be defined as "what teachers tell students about how well they have done in terms of the language they used or a task they have performed" [9, P.274]. Besides teachers, parents, peers, learners themselves, books also can be informative enough to clarify ideas [1]. Therefore, feedback is seen as next stage after performance [11, P. 81].

Receiving feedback does not guarantee improvement of performance automatically. It is important for learners to know how to consolidate the obtained information, enhance their results, develop learning strategies and boost motivation [4,

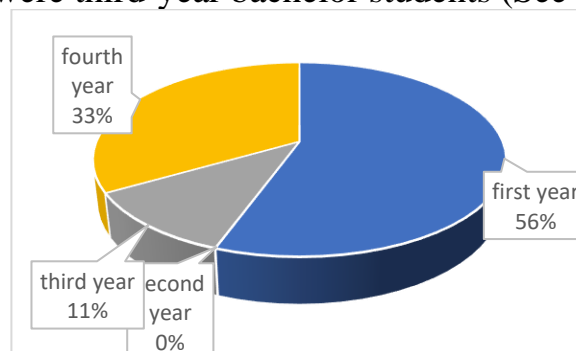
P.1316]. There is a growing concern regarding university students' awareness of their learning related to their inability to set goals, monitor progress, evaluate classroom activities [2, P.120]. Students were more likely to respond to teacher's feedback underestimating the iterative notion of feedback in their English course [24].

Feedback is crucial for teachers who strive for perfection. Planning future lessons is not possible without evaluating previous classes, which happens when teachers ask not only themselves, but students as well, if the activity was enjoyable and useful, what they learnt from that activity, how it could be changed next time. Without these questions teachers may plan the activities which are not effective or even harmful. However, asking direct questions may not work for some shy students, who do not like discussing such issues openly. By asking students to provide written answers may serve as valuable data to modify activities next time [9, P.164].

There are some factors, which may diminish positive effect of feedback. They may be related to the environment, the characteristics of feedback, personalities of those who provide and receive feedback. The wrong time or place, feedback which is too general or does not contain suggestions on improvement, even relationships may harm the recipient and destroy friendly atmosphere in the English language classroom. Whatever happens in English language classroom requires flexibility of teachers as it ensures that they will be able to cope with unpredictable events and adapt to new reality. Besides, flexibility assumes that lesson plans are possible to change. Flexibility is not only about managing unexpected actions, but using them as magic moments to teach beyond the plan [9, P.157]. At the same time creative responses to whatever happens during the lessons should not prevent teachers of English from reaching the goal of the lesson [9, P.156].

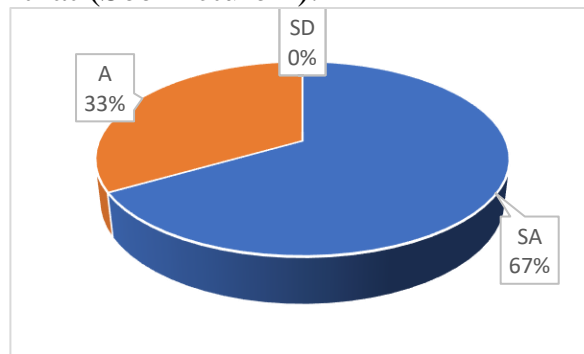
Feedback of students covers the whole range of responses from a reaction or quick comment to a formal report. Besides teachers, such feedback may be used by other students as well. Any speaking tasks in a language classroom provide feedback for both, teachers and students, demonstrating students' successes and failures while performing the task [9, P.110, 123]. Technological advances allow collect data from many respondents for a short period of time. Using Google Form surveys it is possible to collect formative assessment data, boost student self-analysis, check the effectiveness of instructional strategies, suggest one more way to communicate with to the teacher [15, P. 80-81].

According to the results of our research, more than half of the respondents (56%) were first-year technical university students, fourth-year students provided a third of responses, and the rest were third-year bachelor students (See Picture 1).



Picture 1. Participation of university students, different years of study in 2022-2023

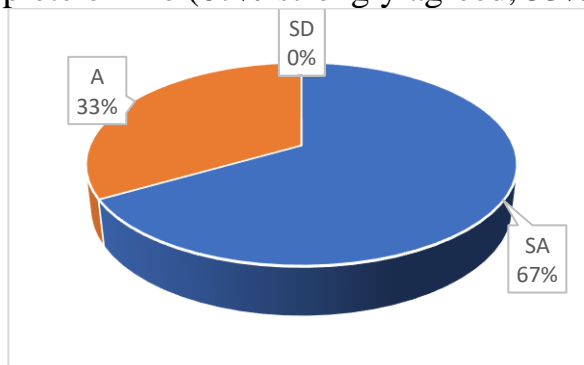
Reflecting on their experience during 2022-2023 academic year, two-thirds of the respondents strongly agreed with the prompt that they were well informed what they needed to do to complete the course of English successfully, while the third of the respondents agreed with that (See Picture 2).



Picture 2. How well informed university students were about the requirements of the course of English

Such result was expected as teachers started each semester with an overview of the syllabus the English course, when students not only read it but completed quizzes to check comprehension. Still, some students had questions about grading, extra points in particular, at the end of the academic year. Those students who missed the classes and did not complete the assignments asynchronously, wanted to know other alternative ways of getting the points. However, it was described in the syllabus of the course, as well as the rating system. Those students who had at least thirty points for two semesters, could complete a credit test, for the fourth-year students this number of points was necessary to have to be admitted to the exam.

All the respondents thought that the English course assignments and deadlines were reasonable to complete online (67% strongly agreed, 33% agreed) (See Picture 3).

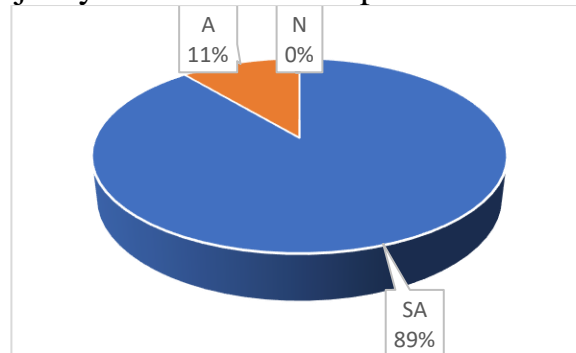


Picture 3. Suitability of the English course assignments and deadlines

It is important to know that there were practically no deadlines in the first semester because of power cuts and other technical problems, so students could complete the assignments later when it was possible. There was the official deadline which marked the beginning of the exam period. However, students had fewer technical problems in the second semester and had to meet deadlines. Although such flexible approach was favorable for students, teachers had to check students' assignments

submitted at the last moment before deadlines, which led to overloading teachers with extra work.

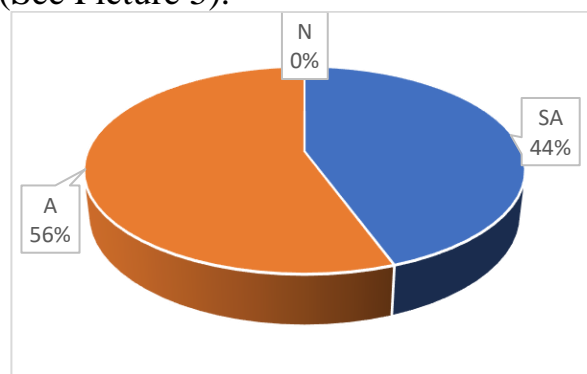
Considering opportunities of communicating with the teacher of English via Zoom and Telegram, majority of students were positive about that (See Picture 4).



Picture 4. Possibility to communicate with a teacher of English when needed

They had regular lessons of English in Zoom unless there were air alerts, and Telegram was used for sharing invitations to Zoom sessions, announcements, links, handouts and other materials.

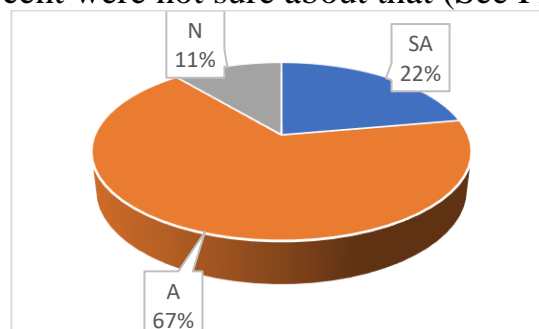
More than half of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that they were engaged through a variety of learning materials like videos, online reading, discussion boards, etc. (See Picture 5).



Picture 5. A variety of learning materials for engaging students.

Teachers used such tools as Speak Out Active Teach and My Grammar Lab, which are online interactive textbooks, Quizlet and Kahoot for vocabulary, Classtime and Google Forms for assessment.

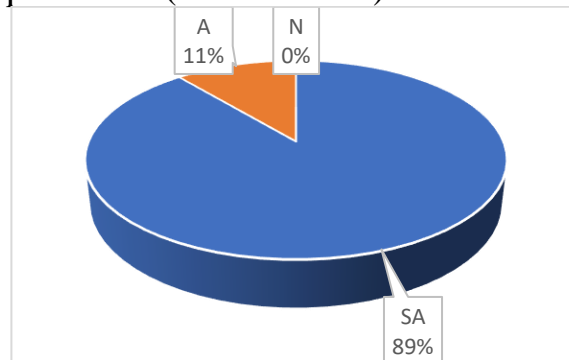
Considering using English not only in class but in real-life situations, twenty-two percent of the respondents strongly agreed, sixty-seven percent agreed with that prompt, while eleven percent were not sure about that (See Picture 6).



Picture 6. Students using English not only in class, but in real-life situations

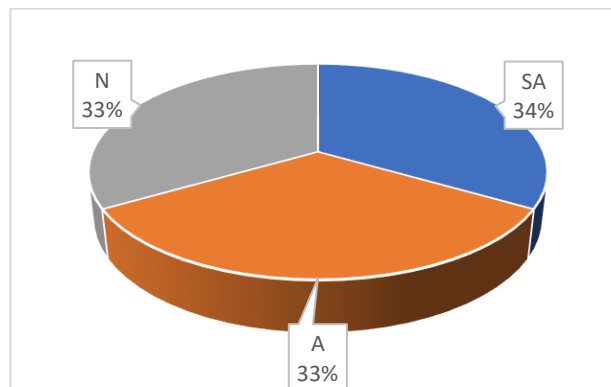
In fact, according to the results of the previous surveys, some students were abroad during 2022-2023 academic year and had to use the English language to communicate on a daily basis. Some third- and fourth-year students had part-time jobs at international companies and used English at work.

All students (89% strongly agreed, 11% agreed) completed asynchronous lessons in case they missed their English class in Zoom because of different reasons related to their circumstances or because it was cancelled which usually happened when there was an air alert or power cut (See Picture 7).



Picture 7. Students completed lesson asynchronously

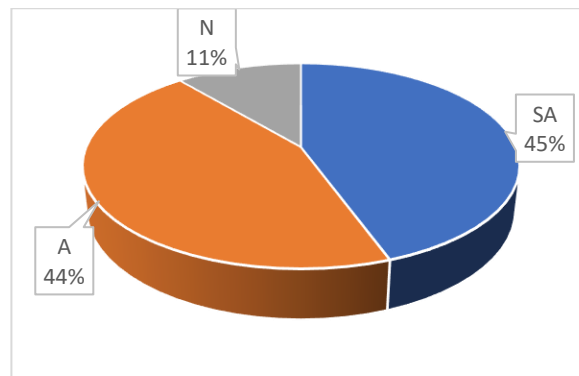
Opinions of students were divided equally between strongly agree, agree and not sure concerning the ability to solve any technical problems during 2022-2023 academic year (See Picture 8).



Picture 8. Students managed to solve technical problems

Students had more opportunities to solve their technical problems in the second semester when they could use power banks, batteries in case of power cuts, or go to invincibility centers in order to participate in the lessons and compete home assignments. It is possible to conclude that two-thirds of the students were able to solve technical problems. These results are consistent with the previous studies which stated that an online mode of learning cannot be sustainable in educational environments where there are technical problems with the internet or power supply [19, P.1006].

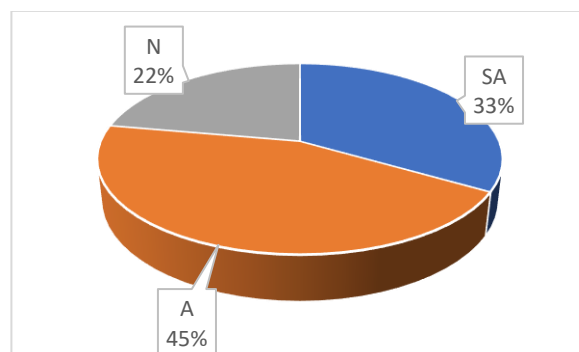
Majority of respondents felt less stressed at the English lessons (44 percent strongly agreed, 44 percent agreed), the rest were not sure (See Picture 9).



Picture 9. Students felt less stressed at the English lessons

Teachers, being stressed themselves, used various ways to distract their students from disturbing information and used quizzes, played games during the lessons, etc.

Responding to the prompt on academic results, two-thirds of respondents were satisfied with their results at the end of the English course. However, twenty-two percent of respondents were not sure about that, it was difficult to plan the results of the academic year during wartime as it was interrupted by constant shelling, air alerts, power cuts (See Picture 10).



Picture 10. Satisfaction of university students with the course of English

Therefore, at the beginning of the academic year students had their expectations, but not all of them were realized by the end of the year.

Responding to the prompt about activities they benefited most, students mentioned speaking, as it was the most difficult to develop, but it was “fun and enjoyable”. Students also mentioned Quizlet, games, teamwork in breakout rooms, discussions, watching videos. Reading was also mentioned as texts contained new words and expressions to learn. Students would like to have an offline mode next academic year. The remarks on drawbacks of learning online accord with earlier research indicating that in general digital technologies expose their users to risks like cyberbullying, identity theft, data breaches, to name just a few. In addition, there are unwelcome side effects of technological innovations which are difficult to predict, caused by human errors or inexperience [21].

Conclusions. The results of the research confirm the need of providing constructive feedback as it makes students reflect on their performance, informs teachers

of students' attitude to their experience of doing the English language course and provides an opportunity to improve it next academic year. According to the findings of the study, technical university bachelor students were well-informed at the beginning of the English language course, they knew what they had to do in order to complete it. English course assignments and deadlines were reasonable, students could communicate with their teachers when necessary, and the level of engagement through videos, discussion boards, etc. was very high. Maybe, that is why majority of students felt less stressed at the English lessons and they were satisfied with their academic results at the end of the course. All the respondents completed lessons asynchronously if they missed ones. However, some students were not sure that they had opportunities to speak English in real life, and even more, about a third of the respondents, had doubts about their ability to solve technical problems. Games, teamwork, discussions and videos were favourite activities of technical university students. At the same time technical university students would like to have offline English lessons next academic year. The results of this study could be of some interest to future researchers, practitioners and students.

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