

ASYNCHRONOUS MODE: PRACTICES TO SUCCEED IN A WARTIME

АСИНХРОННИЙ РЕЖИМ: ПРАКТИКИ УСПІШНОЇ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЇ ПІД ЧАС ВІЙНИ

The COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine have presented unprecedented challenges to the education sector. The sudden shift to online learning during the pandemic exposed the digital readiness of educators and learners, while the war conditions introduced new complications to synchronous online classes. Asynchronous instruction mode became a pivotal point in addressing the need to overcome newly emerged obstacles and avoid a gap in the education process. This paper aims to present findings on effective organizational aspects and academic integrity issues to support productive asynchronous instruction in the context of maintaining the educational process in Ukraine during the ongoing war. Research indicates that online learning can be effective but is dependent on various factors. Asynchronous learning provides flexibility and allows students to access educational resources even if the situation deteriorates, making it crucial to sustain the continuity of education and mitigate the adverse impact of war on students' academic progress and future opportunities. Effective organization of asynchronous teaching is critical and supposes setting clear goals, ensuring flexibility, and establishing communication. Effective assessment strategies are also vital to ensure academic integrity, including the use of plagiarism detection software and authentic assessments. In conclusion, the findings suggest that asynchronous instruction mode can help mitigate the adverse impact of war on education in Ukraine. Effective organization, clear communication, and academic integrity are key to productive asynchronous learning. While there is no universal formula for the ideal asynchronous course, these findings can serve as prerequisites to ensure the proper flow and quality of education in current challenging circumstances.

Key words: war conditions, online instruction, asynchronous mode, organizational aspects, academic integrity.

Пандемія COVID-19 і триваюча війна в Україні поставили перед сектором освіти безпрецедентні виклики. Швидка адаптація

до онлайн-навчання під час пандемії продемонструвала рівень цифрової підготовки викладачів і учнів, тоді як воєнні умови внесли нові ускладнення в синхронне онлайн-навчання. Асинхронний режим став ключовим у вирішенні потреби подолати нові спричинені війною перешкоди та уникнути паузи в освітньому процесі. Стаття має на меті представити висновки щодо ефективних практик та питань забезпечення академічної доброчесності в організації якісного асинхронного навчання в контексті підтримки освітнього процесу в Україні під час війни, що триває. Дослідження показують, що онлайн-навчання може бути ефективним, але залежить від низки факторів. Асинхронне навчання забезпечує гнучкість і дозволяє учням отримувати доступ до освітніх ресурсів, навіть якщо ситуація погіршується, що робить вкрай важливим підтримувати безперервність освіти та пом'якшити негативний вплив війни на академічний прогрес учнів і майбутні можливості. Ефективна організація асинхронного навчання є критично важливою і передбачає постановку чітких цілей, забезпечення гнучкості та налагодження комунікації. Ефективні стратегії оцінювання також важливі для забезпечення академічної доброчесності, включаючи використання програмного забезпечення для виявлення плагіату та автентичні оцінювання. Отримані в процесі аналізу існуючого досвіду результати свідчать про те, що асинхронний режим навчання може допомогти забезпечити освітній процес належної якості. Ефективна організація, чітке спілкування та академічна чесність є ключовими для продуктивного асинхронного навчання. Хоча універсальної формули для ідеального асинхронного курсу не існує, ці висновки можуть служити передумовами для забезпечення належного потоку та якості освіти в нинішніх складних обставинах.

Ключові слова: воєнні умови, онлайн-навчання, асинхронний режим, організаційні аспекти, академічна доброчесність.

УДК 378.147:004

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2663-6085/2023/57.1.52>

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Problem statement. The COVID-19 pandemic presented a multitude of unprecedented challenges to the educational community. During the initial stages of the outbreak, educational institutions worldwide were compelled to shift to online learning without adequate preparation or planning, requiring educators to swiftly adapt to new teaching contexts. Although the digital online environment had been a prevalent technological advancement that was increasingly reshaping education globally, the sudden need to switch to online mode exposed the digital readiness of educators and learners, not only in Ukraine but also worldwide. The rapid transition was marked by improvisation and ad hoc strategies, rather than well-designed and pre-planned online learning scenarios, posing diverse predicaments for educators and

learners alike [1; 21; 26]. As the emergency state subsided, the educational community transitioned into the post-pandemic or post-COVID classroom [6; 22], where educators could selectively choose effective and usable solutions to incorporate into thoroughly designed online scenarios while refining or discarding ineffective practices.

However, in 2022, Ukrainian education encountered a new challenge: war. Although online mode was not new to higher education after the pandemic, the conditions of war introduced new complications. Airstrikes, power cuts, and rolling blackouts disrupted synchronous online classes, impeding students' access to education on a national scale. The teaching community again had to confront the need to overcome newly emerged obstacles,

attempting to avoid a gap in the education process. Consequently, synchronous online class strategies, approaches, and methods needed to be reconsidered and adapted to the new circumstances. The adoption and integration of asynchronous instruction mode became a pivotal point.

Recent research and publications. The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered the landscape of education delivery across the globe. As a consequence, an increasing number of studies have been undertaken to investigate the various aspects of online learning and its impact on education.

Hodges et al. [14] conducted a comprehensive review of 317 studies to assess the efficacy of online learning during the pandemic. Their analysis indicates that online learning is generally effective, with some studies even suggesting superior learning outcomes compared to traditional face-to-face instruction. However, the effectiveness of online learning is dependent on various factors, including course design, student engagement, and institutional support. Kahu et al. [16], Govella [11], and Buntaru et al. [3] focused on student engagement as a critical determinant of online learning effectiveness. Their findings demonstrate that online learning can be equally engaging as traditional face-to-face instruction but it requires specific pedagogical approaches. Rajabalee [27] examined the organizational aspects of online learning during the pandemic, focusing on how educational institutions adapted to the abrupt shift and the challenges they faced. Several studies have examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic integrity in online learning environments. For instance, Eaton [8] outlined that academic integrity became a key concern for faculty members when transitioning to online teaching; Liu X. et al. [19] conducted an investigation that revealed an increase in academic misconduct during the transition to online learning; Chiang et al. [4] and Bretag [5] conducted studies that identified the factors contributing to academic dishonesty in online learning environments and recommended strategies to prevent and address such behavior. The findings of these studies highlight the importance of promoting academic honesty in online education, particularly in the crisis context.

Despite the limited research on teaching under war conditions, there are still some lessons that can be drawn from the experiences of educators. Educators in war zones have to be resourceful and creative in finding ways to continue teaching amidst violence and instability [2; 5; 7]. From our perspective, to ensure the proper flow and quality, the Ukrainian education community has to utilize all available experiences and practices. Thereby, having scrutinized recent research findings and publicly shared experiences, we outlined two principal trajectories for deeper investigation and analysis: organizational aspects

and academic integrity issues. Thus, the **aim** of this paper is to present our findings, which can serve as prerequisites for productive asynchronous instruction in the context of maintaining the educational process in Ukraine during the ongoing war. While there is no universal formula for the ideal asynchronous course, it is crucial to consider certain key issues to fully leverage the potential of this teaching modality.

Findings and results.

Organization. Effective organization of asynchronous teaching is crucial as it enables students to pursue their education amidst challenging circumstances by providing flexibility, which is especially significant during times of war when students may face various disruptions. It also enables educators to develop and disseminate instructional materials beforehand, ensuring that students have access to educational resources even if the situation deteriorates. Consequently, proper organization of asynchronous mode plays a critical role in sustaining the continuity of education and mitigating the adverse impact of war on students' academic progress and future opportunities, and supposes the following tasks:

Setting clear goals and objectives. To ensure that students have a clear understanding of the course expectations, it is vital to establish specific goals and objectives for each course unit. These goals should align with the overall course objectives and be communicated to students at the beginning of the course [3;10;14].

Ensuring flexibility. Asynchronous learning differs in its flexibility, and instructors have to design the course to accommodate various learning styles and schedules. This aspect is especially relevant to the current situation in Ukraine. Thus, instructors should allow students to access course materials at their convenience and provide extensions or make-up assignments when necessary [10; 12; 24; 25].

Establishing communication. Clear and regular communication with students is essential in asynchronous learning. Instructors should communicate course expectations, deadlines, and updates frequently and clearly. It is also crucial to provide students with various communication channels such as email, messengers, or chat groups [1; 9; 12; 20].

Providing feedback. Feedback is critical in asynchronous learning, and instructors should provide students with regular feedback on their progress. This feedback should be timely, specific, and actionable to help students improve their performance by identifying misconceptions and learning gaps [12; 18; 22; 26].

Organizing course materials. It is imperative for asynchronous learning, and students should have convenient access to well-structured resources such as course and workbooks, lesson notes, flashcards, charts, screencasts, podcasts, audio and video materials, and other supplementary resources [10; 13; 26].

Implementing multimedia. Multimedia elements such as videos, audio recordings, and interactive exercises could be highly beneficial to enhance the learning experience and maintain student engagement and motivation in asynchronous learning. [1; 3; 20; 20; 31].

Fostering collaboration. Asynchronous learning can be a solitary experience, but it doesn't have to be. To facilitate collaboration and interaction, instructors must encourage students to engage with each other through discussion panels, group projects, and other interactive activities [10; 6; 13; 24].

Academic integrity. Academic honesty is critical for maintaining the credibility and trustworthiness of the education provided. By promoting academic integrity, educators can ensure that students receive the education they deserve and are evaluated fairly based on their own merits. Ensuring academic integrity in asynchronous language teaching can present formidable challenges, however, there exist several strategies that instructors can employ to prevent cheating and foster an environment of integrity:

Creating original assignments that demand critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity represents an effective approach to promote academic integrity and discourage cheating in asynchronous teaching. It is advisable to eschew pre-existing assignments or materials that are readily available online to mitigate the likelihood of students resorting to academic dishonesty [1; 5; 29].

Employing plagiarism detection tools, such as Unicheck or Grammarly, represents a viable strategy for promoting academic integrity and discouraging plagiarism in asynchronous language teaching [15; 29]. These tools facilitate the comparison of student work with online sources and other student submissions to detect instances of plagiarism. By using such tools, instructors can identify potential instances of academic dishonesty and take necessary actions to uphold academic integrity.

Designing assessments that demand higher-order thinking skills represents a promising approach to promote academic integrity and thwart cheating in asynchronous language teaching [15; 21; 29]. Rather than simply asking students to recall information, assessments that require the analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information demand a deeper level of engagement, making it more difficult for students to engage in academic dishonesty. By designing such assessments, instructors can foster a culture of academic integrity and discourage cheating.

Randomizing questions and answers on quizzes and exams using Learning Management System (LMS) features can be an effective strategy to promote academic integrity in asynchronous language teaching [3-5; 15; 29]. By randomizing the order of questions and answers, instructors can reduce the incentive for students to share answers with one another, as the likelihood of two students

receiving the same questions in the same order is reduced. This strategy can also enhance the validity of assessments by ensuring that students are being tested on their understanding of the material rather than their ability to memorize a particular sequence of questions or answers. By employing these LMS features, instructors can promote academic integrity and create a fair and unbiased assessment environment.

Establishing clear expectations for academic integrity and outlining the repercussions of academic dishonesty represents a crucial aspect of promoting academic integrity in asynchronous language teaching [4; 26; 29]. Clearly communicating expectations for academic honesty can discourage students from engaging in cheating and foster a culture of integrity. Additionally, informing students of the consequences of cheating, such as receiving a failing grade or being subject to disciplinary action, can further deter academic dishonesty. By establishing these expectations and consequences, instructors can uphold academic integrity and promote ethical behavior.

Encouraging academic honesty through discussions of the importance of academic integrity and provision of resources represents a crucial component of promoting academic integrity in asynchronous teaching [4; 5; 8]. These discussions can emphasize the value of ethical behavior in academic settings and encourage students to take pride in their own work. Additionally, providing resources such as writing and study skill workshops can support students in developing the skills necessary to engage in academic work with integrity. By encouraging academic honesty and providing students with the resources to succeed, instructors can foster a culture of academic integrity.

Promoting collaboration among students in asynchronous language teaching can promote academic integrity by providing an opportunity for peer learning and reducing the incentive for academic dishonesty [4; 26; 28; 29]. Collaboration can facilitate a more interactive and engaging learning experience, which can reduce the motivation for students to cheat. Furthermore, collaborative learning can foster a sense of community and support among students, which can enhance the overall academic environment. By promoting collaboration, instructors can encourage academic integrity and create a more conducive learning environment.

Conclusions. Teaching during the pandemic and war has been posing numerous challenges for educators, but it also has highlighted the resilience and adaptability of the Ukrainian educational community. Amidst these challenges, educators have been displaying ingenuity in devising creative and effective ways to facilitate remote learning, and have been demonstrating unwavering commitment

to ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education, irrespective of the obstacles. Asynchronous learning has proven to be a valuable tool for supporting education in Ukraine albeit proper organization is critical for its maximal efficacy. Given the direct impact of organizational factors on the learning process, it is imperative to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to help students navigate the challenges of studying in a war zone. Nevertheless, a range of potential obstacles and gaps continue to exist that require addressing to ensure an engaging and effective learning experience. Furthermore, practical implementation challenges and academic integrity concerns require further investigation and remediation.

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