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PSYCHOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF CREATING A "PRESENCE EFFECT" IN DISTANCE LEARNING AT A UNIVERSITY

ASPECTOS PSICOLÓGICOS Y METODOLÓGICOS DE LA CREACIÓN DEL "EFECTO PRESENCIA" EN LA EDUCACIÓN A DISTANCIA EN LA UNIVERSIDAD

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ABSTRACT

Distance learning has become a ubiquitous norm. However, not all teachers and students were ready for such a drastic change in the training format. Attempts to bring the distance learning format closerto full-time in terms of psychological perception by all participants of the educational process, involvement, and effectiveness without the use of virtual reality technologies have raised the following research question, not previously covered by researchers: what psychological and methodological means can provide a presence effect and create a working atmosphere comfortable for distance learning, based on video calling platforms such as MS Teams, Skype, ZOOM. To answer this question, the authors conducted the research. It included experiment, observation, analysis, deduction, questionnaire, in which 202 students of universities of the Russian Federation and Bulgaria of all courses and stages of study took part. The results showed that the most important thing in the context of the issue under consideration is the use of interactive games during seminars, the great dynamism of the seminar, and the included camera of the teacher. In fourth and fifth place in importance for creating a presence effect was the holding of discussions both in a general videoconference and in separate ones, and a less formal tone of communication than in the context of face-to-face training. The results of this research can be used by teachers in their practical activities.

Keywords:

Distance learning, teaching methods, creating a working atmosphere, effective training.

RESUMEN

El aprendizaje a distancia se ha convertido en una norma omnipresente. Sin embargo, no todos los profesores y alumnos estaban preparados para un cambio tan drástico en el formato de formación. Los intentos de acercar el formato de aprendizaje a distancia al presencial en términos de percepción psicológica por parte de todos los participantes del proceso educativo, participación y efectividad sin el uso de tecnologías de realidad virtual han planteado la siguiente pregunta de investigación, no cubierta previamente por los investigadores: qué medios psicológicos y metodológicos pueden proporcionar un efecto de presencia y crear un ambiente de trabajo cómodo para el aprendizaje a distancia, basado en plataformas de videollamadas como MS Teams, Skype, ZOOM. Para responder a esta pregunta, los autores realizaron la investigación. Incluyó experimento, observación, análisis, deducción, cuestionario, en el que participaron 202 estudiantes de universidades de la Federación de Rusia y Bulgaria de todos los cursos y etapas de estudio. Los resultados mostraron que lo más importante en el contexto del tema en consideración es el uso de juegos interactivos durante los seminarios, el gran dinamismo del seminario y la cámara encendida del profesor. En el cuarto y quinto lugar en importancia para crear un efecto de presencia se ubicó la realización de discusiones tanto en videoconferencia común como en sesiones separadas, y un tono de comunicación menos formal que en el contexto presencial. Los resultados de esta investigación pueden ser utilizados por los docentes en sus actividades prácticas.

Palabras clave:

Aprendizaje a distancia, métodos de enseñanza, creación de un ambiente de trabajo, enseñanza efectiva.

INTRODUCTION

Distance learning has become part of the modern educational context and has gone from the category of optional to the only possible in a number of situations. Universities and schools around the world are faced with the need for a sharp transition to a distance learning format due to the danger of the spread of COVID-19 (Fardoun et al., 2020). They strive to preserve as much as possible the synchronous type of interaction in the classroom, their effectiveness, immersiveness, and collaborative nature. The period of distance learning varied in duration in different countries and educational institutions, however, starting in 2020, when the transition to online learning was forced, it became a common and popular form of academic interaction and remains in 2024 as an optional training option applicable to some educational courses, forms of work or in in certain situations.

Of course, it is necessary to develop alternative forms of educational activity in which it would be possible not only to transfer and receive educational material but also communication, interchange, characteristics of full-time education (Failache et al., 2020). However, it is impossible to transfer the methods and techniques used in the face-to-face format without changes to the remote one. Everything should be subject to change - from the types of tasks and forms of their implementation to testing, which should also be adjusted in accordance with the material discussed (Bírová et al., 2016). At the same time, distance learning as a full-fledged substitute for full-time education causes a lot of discussions in the scientific community, mainly because of the volume and content of the tasks that are set for teachers and students in order to get as close as possible to full-time learning in terms of saturation and cooperation.

This requires, among other things, that distance learning be based on the analysis and solution of problems and case studies (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2018), that it be active and collaborative (Guitert, Pérez-Mateo, 2013; Anso et al., 2016), empathic and gamified (Melo-Solarte, Díaz, 2018), as well as practice-oriented and interdisciplinary as much as possible assumes a curriculum and programs of disciplines (Dronova et al., 2023). Also, it should not be forgotten about the specifics of teaching certain disciplines. For example, teaching foreign languages is unthinkable without the development of communicative competence (Klimova et al., 2018). It should be reflected in distance learning but is a special challenge for teachers.

Teachers themselves face a difficult situation in which not only the skills of organizing students' activities are required, but also the possession of methods and techniques of teaching in virtual space. Teachers cannot limit themselves to the transfer of knowledge. They must cooperate with students in a new social context, where the ability to self-education becomes a key competence. Moreover, the talk is about not only of independence in the education of students, but also of teachers themselves. Since new knowledge, skills, and competencies are needed for effective work in new conditions. Borges (2005), notes that the teacher should be aware of what actions (or their absence) can cause demotivation and frustration in students. Thus, he recommends that during distance learning, among other things, promptly answer students' questions, explain the material and instructions very clearly and concretely, not be too strict, emphasize emotional and situational closeness with students, promote interaction and cooperation in a team.

According to several studies (Alvarado Pazmiño et al., 2019; Bocos, Sánchez, 2019), students feel most comfortable using social networks for educational purposes for remote cooperation and interaction. Especially since they offer communication not limited only to text messages that may be incorrectly or not fully understood, but enriches it with stickers, emoticons, and other clarifying audio-visual and emotionally rich content, bringing the content closer to live communication (Ganina et al., 2019). However, using social networks as a tool for distance education, it is necessary to set clear objectives and time frames so that students are not distracted by a familiar platform.

Speaking about the psychological and emotional aspect of distance learning, researchers note the important role of combining emotional contact and personal learning environment (PLE) (Carrasco-Sáez et al., 2019; Abdellaoui et al., 2024). Since classes are held on the Internet, students are in different places, full visual contact is impossible. The teacher's messages, regardless of whether they are written or spoken online as part of a remote seminar, should carry confidence, positive attitude, enthusiasm, closeness to students, recognition of common values. It can be expressed not directly but through indirect linguistic techniques and references to culturally significant concepts (Satina & Aleshina, 2020).

The need to create a presence effect in distance learning has become apparent during the transition of universities to this format of education and the mass dissemination of online classes both in higher education institutions and in schools, and in additional education. The presence effect in this article refers to the level of involvement and activity of the teacher and students during distance learning comparable to full-time education. In 2020, it became obvious that neither students nor teachers were ready to work in an online format. Even though over time, each teacher has found their own approaches to teaching in this format, there remains an acute problem of students' motivation, their actual absence from the classroom after connecting to the webinar, frequent distractions during seminars and

lectures, parallel performance of other tasks or communication outside the seminar. Of course, all this affects both the effectiveness of the educational process, as well as the academic performance of students and the motivation of the teachers themselves. The hypothesis of this study is that an effective learning process in a distance format requires the use of methods other than face-to-face format and psychological tools are no less important than methodological ones.

As the analysis of the works of Russian and foreign authors has shown, despite the extensive coverage of the topic of distance education, the issue of the ***presence effect*** in remote classes, the approximation of seminars of this type to full-time training in terms of the degree of student involvement, atmosphere, feedback and, accordingly, effectiveness, is studied most often only within the framework of the use of virtual reality technologies. They are used in the context of higher education in Russia rather as an exception than as a rule, taking into account the technical support of universities, teachers, and students. In this regard, the question arises, what psychological and methodological means can provide a ***presence effect*** and create a working atmosphere comfortable for distance learning, based on video calling platforms such as MS Teams, Skype, ZOOM, etc. To answer the research question, the authors conducted a survey of students from various universities of the Russian Federation and Bulgaria who were forced to switch to distance learning for different periods due to the unfavorable epidemiological situation and the relevant decisions of the authorities and the administration of universities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research consisted of three parts. During the first part, the authors used methods of observation, experiment, analysis, and deduction. The purpose of the first part of the research was to identify a range of factors influencing the creation of the ***presence effect*** of all participants in the educational process at distance seminars, as well as the effectiveness of various techniques. Various psychological and methodological elements were introduced during the experiments into the remote seminar. As it was supposed, they should positively affect the creation of the ***presence effect*** and the involvement of students in work at the seminar. The authors introduced various elements in several groups at seminars in the same discipline and with the same program to demonstrate the results. Moreover, in some groups, the seminars were held the same way as in full-time training. This was followed by observation and analysis of the results. As a result, the authors formed the list of practices that showed themselves on the positive side as tools to bring distance learning closer to the situation of full-time education. This list was used in the second part of the research, conducted in the form of an anonymous remote survey of students.

The purpose of the second part of the research was to evaluate the factors identified at the first stage in terms of their relevance for creating a ***presence effect*** and to identify the defining activities and techniques that allow achieving the desired effect. The respondents were 202 students from different universities of the Russian Federation and Bulgaria: Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation; Moscow State Institute of International Relations; Moscow State University; Moscow State Linguistic University; Peoples' Friendship University of Russia; National Russian Academy of Foreign Trade; Moscow Polytechnic University; Kuban State Agrarian University; Voronezh State University; Moscow State University of Civil Engineering; Southern Federal University; State University of Management; Moscow State Regional University; Moscow Aviation Institute; Donbass National Academy of Construction and Architecture; Donetsk National University; Paisii Hilendarski University (Bulgaria).

The students aged 17 to 34 years old (84.6% aged 18–21), studying at all levels of higher education: (1) 1–4 bachelor's courses; (2) 2–5 specialist courses; (3) 1–2 master's courses; (4) postgraduates. All respondents in 2020–2021 studied at the university remotely, while 18.3% studied remotely for less than three months, 47% – from three to six months, 25.7% – from seven to ten months, and 8.9% – for more than ten months. The majority of respondents (73.3%) are girls, 26.7% are guys. This percentage was accidental and was not regulated in any way since the survey was conducted anonymously and voluntarily.

The survey was posted on Google Forms and distributed via social media and email. The survey consisted of nine questions.

In the first question, a list of techniques identified at the first stage of the research was given. It was necessary to select several (from 1 to 15) that, according to the respondent, allow creating a ***presence effect*** at remote seminars. The respondents also had the opportunity to offer their own answers.

On the second question, the respondents had to identify three leading techniques from the previous list that most influence the creation of the ***presence effect*** in the distance learning form.

The third question allowed respondents to assess their overall satisfaction with distance learning at their university on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is very bad, and 10 is ideal.

In the fourth question, it was necessary to choose from four options, how many months in total the respondent studied at the university remotely: (1) less than 3 months; (2) 3–6 months; (3) 7–10 months; (4) more than 10 months. These response options were proposed taking into account the existing practice of distance learning in universities in the region in this epidemiological situation.

The following questions are related to the personal characteristics of the respondents (university, course and degree of study, age, and gender).

The third stage of the research consisted of the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the results of the first stage of the study, it should be noted that the experience of conducting seminars remotely using the same methods and tools that are used in face-to-face training has shown the ineffectiveness of this approach. On the one hand, without adjusting and "digitalizing" the training tools, many methods cannot be implemented remotely, for example, group work and work in pairs, the use of a board, game forms of work. On the other hand, there is an obvious lower involvement of students in the educational process, a decrease in their activity and frequent distraction to extraneous factors. All this leads to a decrease in the effectiveness of the educational process, a slowdown in the assimilation of material, and a decrease in student academic performance. Also, despite the fact that the use of methods and techniques of digitalization of learning involves longer and more thorough preparation for classes, trying to conduct seminars online without using special tools and without taking into account all the factors analyzed in this article is more difficult and exhausting for a teacher.

During the first stage of the research, the authors identified 15 basic psychological and methodological techniques that contribute to ensuring the creation of a ***presence effect*** at remote seminars. At the second stage, respondents were asked to mark all those that they considered important for creating the effect in question. In the first place was the psychological aspect: "humor regarding the attributes of distance learning: avatars, technical overlays, events falling into the frame with the camera turned on, etc." 67.8% of respondents voted for it. This allows students to feel more comfortable in new conditions, to feel the presence of a teacher nearby, because the "presence effect" should work in both directions, as students should not lose the thread of the lesson and be present at it, and the teacher should not just formally follow the lesson plan, but also be close, as far as possible in a remote the training format. In addition, humor helps to reduce tension among those students who are not used to this learning format. Additionally, one respondent also indicated a psychological aspect: "feeling that the teacher cares." 62.9% highlighted the importance of interactive games in real time (kahoot, quizlet, menti, etc.). The same point can be attributed to the additional joint execution of small knowledge tests proposed by one respondent. It should be noted that tests in the distance learning format play a more self-monitoring role and should be conducted in a calm or playful environment, without pressure from the teacher. If students know that their academic performance depends on this test, they will try to write off what is quite easy in this format, and neither students nor the teacher will get an objective picture of the assimilation of the material.

55.9% noted the need to maintain a less formal tone of communication between the teacher and students (compared to face-to-face communication in the classroom). The frequent change of activities and the dynamism of classes were noted by 53% of respondents as a condition for approaching the distance format to full-time. At the same time, this aspect is important in full-time education, but in the distance form, the monotony of the educational process is more noticeable and has a more negative effect on the learning process. Slightly more than half of the respondents (52.5%) consider the teacher's camera to be a necessary condition for creating a ***presence effect*** in the virtual space, while the included cameras of classmates do not play such a significant role (35.1% voted for this aspect). 51% of the students who took part in the survey highlighted the important role of the discussion nature of seminars both in the general videoconference and in individual working groups. It also promotes more lively work, mobilizes students and is a dynamic form of activity. Moreover, several respondents noted such comments separately in the ***other*** paragraph, indicating that the question-answer format is important, not just the teacher's narrative and that assignments for small working groups are welcome, but not for the whole group at once.

In addition to turning on his camera, the teacher can enhance the ***presence effect*** at remote seminars by his activity in the virtual space. Slightly less than half of the respondents (47%) noted the "active presence of the teacher in the social networks and communication with him outside the framework of the seminar." Of course, this requires greater involvement of the teacher, including in his spare time, however, it must be understood that today social networks play a huge role not only as a communication tool, but also as a way to gain knowledge, exchange experience, and establish professional relationships. In the context of distance learning, the active presence of a teacher on social networks can be significant not only from the point of view of organizing students' work, but also from a psychological point of view, as an opportunity to

be closer to students while being in the same space with them. Educational institutions strive to actively develop their own platforms for communication between teachers and students. For example, a Financial University platform based on Moodle provides an opportunity for a teacher to create a page of his academic discipline, where additional materials can be added to each lexical or grammatical topic in any form: text, which can contain both theoretical material and additional material and cases, visual tables, pictures and infographics, training materials games, videos, links to third-party resources, tests, and so on. Each student has access to the system through their password. The teacher can divide students into subgroups, restrict access to certain materials, make successful completion of the test a condition for access to subsequent materials, track the activity of each student in the system and the results of passing tests, check and evaluate creative tasks done in the system. However, motivation is necessary for students to work in this system, and this type of work can be considered as additional training or as homework. Despite the presence of chat in the educational system, this type of remote work, although effective for a number of students, does not contribute to ensuring the effect of presence. In addition, it should be noted that the educational platform of the educational institution is an unusual place for students to communicate, and they perceive it as a continuation of the remote seminar. On the contrary, social networks are a familiar environment for students, where they feel comfortable, are used to communicating with friends and acquaintances, and feel the real presence of people. The integration of the educational process into social networks has a number of advantages for creating a presence effect. First, it's speed: neither students nor teachers need to access a third-party resource, you can quickly provide information or ask a question. Secondly, it is a psychologically comfortable place to communicate. When a student opens the educational platform of the university, he gets into the educational context, adjusts to learning as a separate side of life. When communicating with a teacher on a social network, learning enters into his comfortable environment, into his ordinary life, and the perception of the material becomes more positive.

The teacher can choose which social network is more comfortable for him to communicate with students, in what form, at what time. These can be private messages, a group chat, a personal group, or a teacher's channel where they share learning materials. The advantages of creating a group chat are the socialization of students, support, creation of a place where they can freely discuss issues related to the subject, receive feedback from the teacher. A good sign indicating that students feel comfortable studying this discipline is the appearance of live chat on the initiative of the students themselves. These can be holiday greetings, various videos, materials, links, jokes, memes related to the discipline and the topic covered. This is especially noticeable when studying humanities, such as a foreign language. A teacher's personal group or channel can also be useful as a tool for organizing students' work, for additional materials and homework, however, the channel itself is unidirectional communication and, although it contributes to the appearance of the effect of presence among students, but not to the extent that communication, and does not give the effect of the presence of students to the teacher himself which is no less important in the educational process. At the same time, students should always have the opportunity to contact the teacher personally through personal messages. This is an analogue of the full-time learning situation, when a student can approach the teacher after the lesson and ask his question.

But the presence of a teacher on social networks should be deliberate, not contradict the ethics of the profession, and work for the professional brand of the teacher. It is unacceptable to mix personal and professional content on the social network where communication with students is supposed to take place. This does not mean that a teacher's page or channel on a social network should be dry and academic, but it is necessary to think through and limit the content of personal information, understand for what purpose personal content is published on this page, how it works for global educational goals and image building, and how it can be perceived by students and colleagues. It is no coincidence that the concept of teacher branding on the Internet has become increasingly popular lately. This concept combines professional ethics, positioning oneself as an expert and a professional, arousing confidence in oneself as a teacher, and distributing author's approaches and materials. At the moment, the principle of building a personal brand of a teacher is a necessary skill not only for those who work remotely.

44.1% of respondents identified a classic attribute of all seminars – a blackboard but in its interactive form. As with face-to-face training, the use of a blackboard in the classroom adds dynamics to the lesson and allows you to visualize and systematize the taught material. Interactive whiteboards are integrated into a number of video calling services, and you can also use third-party services such as Miro, Ziteboard, Witeboard, BitPaper, Mural and many others. Online whiteboards can provide the opportunity for multiple users to work on the same board at the same time, which is effective for group work, and also have a large number of visual and graphical tools. You can always save the created board and return to it in the next lesson or send it to students as a teaching material in the form of a picture.

41.1% noted polls and real-time voting. This kind of activity motivates students to be active, to be included in the

educational process. These may not necessarily be surveys in the form of knowledge tests. Quizzes in the form of polls, voting for a particular type of activity, voting as part of the gamification of the educational process are possible. Any type of voting makes students active participants in the class.

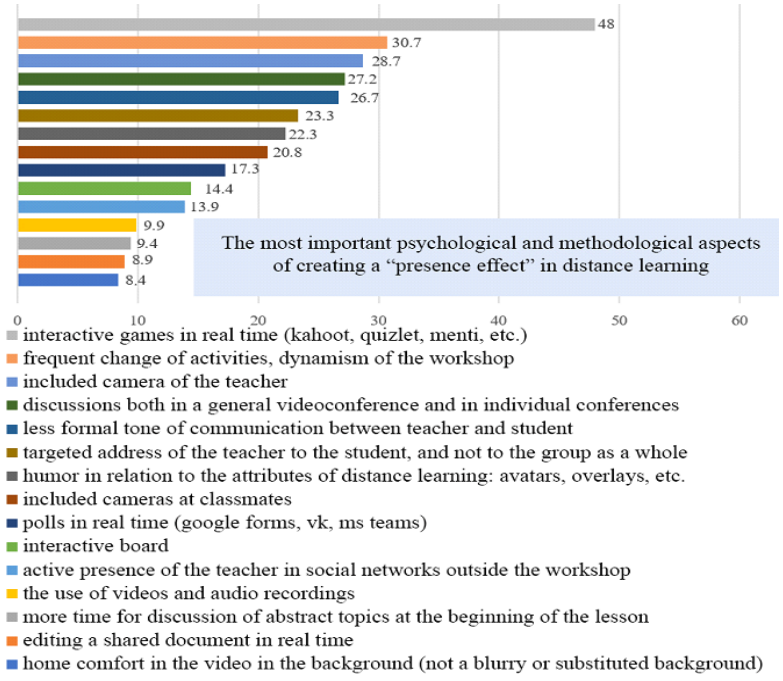
The remaining aspects received less than 40% of the votes: (1) teacher's address to the student, not to the group as a whole, personal comments (39.6%); (2) editing of the general document in real time (31.7%); (3) home comfort in the video on the background: interior, paintings, books, things, pets (and not a blurred background or a neutral background substitution) (26.7%); (4) more time to discuss abstract topics at the beginning of the lesson (25.2%); (5) use of videos and audio recordings (24.3%). However, even if only a quarter of respondents voted, these points cannot be considered insignificant. They are also important aspects of the issue under consideration.

This confirmed the conclusions of the first part of the research. All identified psychological and methodological aspects of creating a ***presence effect*** were relevant for students.

Important in the context of the issue under consideration are the results of the next point of the survey, where respondents were required to choose the three most important aspects. The graph (Fig. 1) shows the received data. Almost half of the respondents identified the use of interactive games in the three most important aspects during the seminars. Also, many highlighted the need for frequent changes of activity and the important role of the included camera in the teacher. In fourth and fifth place in importance for creating a "presence effect" was the holding of discussions both in a general videoconference and in separate ones, and a less formal tone of communication than in the context of face-to-face training.

Considering these five ***leaders***, it can be noted that there were three methodological aspects and two psychological aspects in it. Further, in terms of the frequency of choice, it is psychological aspects that are the most important: (1) preference for a more personal and targeted appeal to a particular student then the appeal to the group as a whole, which is logical due to the fact that, with distance learning, each student is alone in front of a computer, the concept of a ***group*** is very conditional and spatially stretched; (2) humor regarding the features of the remote format; (3) included cameras of classmates. The remaining highlighted aspects were prioritized by less than 20% of respondents. However, not a single aspect was ignored in this part of the survey, even such a psychological moment as the existence of a pleasant background on the video, rather than replacing it with a picture or blurring, is important for 8.4% of respondents (Figure 1).

Fig. 1. The most important psychological and methodological aspects of creating a presence effect in distance learning at a university, survey results in %



Source: Compiled by the authors.

Separately, it should be noted the level of satisfaction of respondents with distance learning in their universities. 63.4% rated it 7–10 points out of 10, with the most frequent ratings being 7 and 8, which indicates a generally good level of distance learning and effectiveness in universities but with certain drawbacks. 14.9% rated satisfaction with distance learning by 6 points, 10.9% – by 5 points, 5.9% – by 4 points, and 5% gave from 1 to 3 points. Of them, 1 and 2 points were given only by students of the 1st year of bachelor's degree, and 3 points were given by students of all 4 bachelor's courses of different universities. The maximum rating was given by students of all courses and levels of education at the Financial University, Moscow State Linguistic University, Moscow Polytechnic University, and Voronezh State University. At the same time, there was no pattern in the gender identity of the respondents who scored minimum and maximum points.

Several aspects of the conducted research need to be clarified and developed in the future. For example, the question of the influence of the presence of cameras in classmates on the ***presence effect*** at seminars seems to be quite debatable. So, experience shows that the included cameras provoke a more lively and dynamic communication during seminars, positively influencing all participants in the educational process. Both the teacher and the students see feedback, a lively reaction that provokes further discussions and work. However, the results show that students do not perceive the included cameras of classmates as one of the main elements that create a ***presence effect*** at seminars. This result may be related both to the subjectivity of the opinion expressed earlier, due to the fact that it is easier for the authors, as teachers, to work with students whose reaction they see thanks to cameras and may make an erroneous conclusion that students need to see their classmates, and with the bias of the data obtained. Students who took the survey could be at the mercy of conflicting emotions regarding the inclusion of cameras, recalling, on the one hand, the positive experience of working with classmates who can be seen, and, on the other hand, shyness and fear of turning on their own camera, associated with a number of psychological reasons or technical capabilities. This is confirmed by the research conducted in 2020 on the basis of the Department of Neurobiology and Behavior at Cornell University in the USA (Castelli & Sarvary, 2020). It showed that students most often do not turn on cameras for reasons of concern about their appearance, concern that someone from others may get into the frame, or because of a poor Internet connection. However, further experience has shown that as students get used to the distance learning format and video calls in general, the attitude towards turning on cameras changes among students. It depends not only on the fact that the distance format becomes familiar, but also on the general atmosphere in the classroom, on the teacher's reaction to the students' cameras turned on: from a positive reaction in the form of approval and personal comments, to a negative reaction in the form of criticism of the teacher of what he sees through the student's camera. Of course, such excessive criticism should be avoided, limiting itself only to extreme situations and considering that all students have different conditions in which they can study online. The initiative of classmates to turn on the camera also affects. And, of course, the teacher himself must turn on the camera. Possible methods to facilitate the inclusion of cameras in students may be the following: to introduce a rule that at each seminar five students should have a camera turned on, while the students themselves choose who it will be; as part of the work in the mini-groups, speakers from each mini-group must turn on the camera when reporting the results of the work; turning on the camera within the games, when students are given a task in advance to create their own image and select the background appropriate to their role in the game, and others. All the examples given are based on the fact that the inclusion of cameras in at least several students is part of the assignment and justified, while each time the students themselves choose who exactly will have the camera turned on. Turning on the cameras of several people during the entire lesson or at different moments of it gradually makes it more familiar and psychologically safe for students.

The choice of gamification of remote seminars by students to create a ***presence effect*** is also confirmed by earlier studies that came to conclusions about the important role of interactive games like Kahoot, Menti, Quizlet in rallying the team of students, adding dynamics to the study of the subject, and elements of competition not only remotely, but also in person (Cameron & Bizo, 2019). Gamification is the application of game mechanics that increase the involvement of participants in the learning process. Due to the interactivity of tasks and the emotional involvement of students, game elements help to memorize information faster. In addition to the previously mentioned interactive games, gamification in distance learning can be implemented in various forms. For example, a student rating system can be introduced, expressed in the form of a personal page in the design of a player's profile in online games. Students can earn points for completing assignments, watching courses, passing simulators and tests. It is also possible to develop a reward system that correlates with student scores. However, when using these methods, it is necessary to maintain a balance in order not to provoke excessive competition and not to shift the focus of students from studying the subject to receiving awards and points. A possible, but more complex and complex gamification element may be the creation of a

single storyline between different topics of the course and the introduction of characters. The storyline will create emotional engagement, students of any age will be interested to know what awaits them next and this will give additional psychological motivation to study. The use of gamification is possible both in full-time and in distance learning, but with distance learning, a greater number of ready-made gamification methods are available.

The idea that many elements of distance learning could be successfully used in full-time education is also found in other studies (Kanbul et al., 2020). The need, noted in the course of the research, for greater dynamism of distance learning for the inclusion of all participants in the educational process is also relevant for both full-time and distance education due to changes in the pace of life and changes in the perception of information by modern students, which is reflected in a UNESCO research (Duggan, 2020).

The less formal tone of communication noted in the research, compared to the face-to-face format, at distance seminars can be explained by the fact that, first of all, students are in a home-school environment, in a calmer and more relaxed atmosphere, and the dry, serious, and formal tone of communication can strongly contrast with the general atmosphere, which can cause a subconscious negative reaction of students. Secondly, one should not forget the reasons why universal distance learning was introduced in 2020 – the coronavirus pandemic, general isolation, which provoked stress, fear for oneself and loved ones, experiences of various kinds. Against this background, students are not ready to experience stress even in remote classes. On the contrary, they seek support from teachers and classmates, safe territory in difficult times (Duggan, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted research allows concluding that, in order to create a ***presence effect*** in distance learning at a university, a combination of a number of both psychological and methodological techniques is necessary. It can also be concluded that many conditions of students' involvement in the work at the seminar are relevant both for distance and full-time study. However, the distance format showed them more contrastingly since it is in this format that they come out on top. For example, the gamification of training, the increasing role of the discussion format of seminars, the increase in the dynamics of classes. The aspects that are more characteristic of distance learning are also revealed, such as the less formal tone of communication between students and teachers at distance seminars, as well as the need to turn on the camera, which should be paid attention to by all teachers seeking to increase the involvement of their students in the educational process.

Of course, in order to teach remotely, it is necessary to master certain skills, master new digital tools, which at first will involve longer and more thorough preparation for classes. But it is necessary to understand that the remote synchronous learning format is based on the same methodological principles as full-time, although with the complete transfer of methods used in full-time learning to distance learning, student engagement and the effectiveness of material assimilation decrease. Moreover, as a result, the motivation of the teachers themselves decreases and the risk of professional burnout increases. In order to prevent this, it is necessary to consider distance learning as an opportunity for professional growth, besides, as it was shown earlier, many effective distance learning methods can be successfully applied in full-time, which will enrich face-to-face seminars, make them more dynamic and active. Many educational institutions and professional development centers have opened courses for teachers who have switched to a remote work format. As a recommendation, I would like to suggest increasing the number of courses, master classes and trainings aimed not only at teaching methods in a distance format, but also in general at developing digital competencies of teachers.

It should be noted the exceptional practical significance of this research since the results obtained can be used by university teachers directly in their activities.

In the future, it is necessary to continue studying this topic in a more differentiated form, considering the influence of psychological and methodological aspects separately, studying the applicability of various techniques in teaching individual disciplines, as well as identifying both universal aspects that affect the creation of the ***presence effect*** and private ones due to cultural-national or gender-age characteristics.

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