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### ENGLISH TEACHERS' EFFECTIVE ONLINE VOCABULARY TEACHING TECHNIQUES

**Abstract.** This study investigates English vocabulary teaching methods in Transcarpathia, Ukraine, within the context of the forced transition to online education following the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war. This sudden and unprepared-for shift presented significant challenges for both teachers and students. The research aims to understand how teachers in this specific region perceive and utilize traditional and digital methods for vocabulary acquisition, with the ultimate goal of developing a practical guide for effective instruction in a post-pandemic learning environment as a future perspective.

A total of 30 English teachers participated in the study by completing a comprehensive 34-question online survey. The questionnaire was designed to collect a mix of demographic data, general teaching practices, and detailed perceptions of specific methods and tools. The participants were predominantly Hungarian-speaking, female teachers with diverse professional backgrounds. The findings revealed a strong preference for in-person, or offline, teaching, which was consistently viewed as superior for maintaining student attention, promoting natural interaction, and fostering deeper, more lasting vocabulary retention. Teachers frequently use guided questions, role-playing, and group work, and overwhelmingly favour contextual learning as a core pedagogical approach.

However, the research also highlights the increasingly vital role of technology. While online teaching is generally perceived as less effective for deep learning,



teachers highly value digital tools like Quizlet, Kahoot!, and WordWall. They recognize these platforms' ability to boost student motivation, increase interactivity, and provide immediate feedback. The study concludes that the most effective approach to vocabulary instruction is a strategic blend of time-tested traditional methods and thoughtfully integrated digital resources. These findings also underscore a critical need for enhanced professional development to help teachers confidently navigate various online teaching modalities and overcome existing misconceptions about digital pedagogy.

**Keywords:** online vocabulary teaching, effective methods, English teachers, Transcarpathia.

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## **ЕФЕКТИВНІ МЕТОДИ ОНЛАЙН-ВИКЛАДАННЯ СЛОВНИКОВОГО ЗАПАСУ ВИКЛАДАЧІВ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ**

**Анотація.** Це дослідження вивчає методи викладання англійської лексики на Закарпатті, Україна, в умовах вимушеного переходу на онлайн-освіту після пандемії COVID-19 та в умовах війни, що триває. Цей раптовий і непередбачуваний перехід створив значні труднощі як для викладачів, так і для студентів. Дослідження має на меті з'ясувати, як викладачі в цьому регіоні сприймають і використовують традиційні та цифрові методи засвоєння лексики, з кінцевою метою розробки практичного посібника для ефективного викладання в навчальному середовищі в післяпандемічний період як майбутня перспектива.

Загалом 30 вчителів англійської мови взяли участь у дослідженні, заповнивши всеосяжну онлайн-анкету з 34 запитань. Анкета була розроблена для збору демографічних даних, інформації про загальні практики викладання, а також детальних думок про конкретні методи та інструменти. Учасниками були переважно жінки-викладачі, які розмовляють угорською мовою, з різним професійним досвідом. Результати виявили перевагу очного, або офлайн-викладання, яке постійно вважалося кращим для утримання уваги студентів, сприяння природній взаємодії та глибшого, більш тривалого засвоєння лексики. Викладачі часто використовують керовані запитання та відповіді, рольові ігри та роботу в групах, а контекстуальне навчання є домінуючим педагогічним підходом.



Однак дослідження також підкреслює все більш важливу роль технологій. Хоча онлайн-викладання загалом сприймається як менш ефективне для глибокого навчання, викладачі високо цінують цифрові інструменти, як-от Quizlet, Kahoot! та WordWall. Вони визнають здатність цих платформ підвищувати мотивацію студентів, посилювати інтерактивність та надавати миттєвий зворотний зв'язок. Доказано, що найефективнішим підходом до викладання лексики є стратегічне поєднання перевірених часом традиційних методів і продумано інтегрованих цифрових ресурсів. Ці висновки також підкреслюють нагальну потребу в підвищенні кваліфікації вчителів, щоб допомогти їм впевнено орієнтуватися в різних формах онлайн-викладання та долати існуючі хибні уявлення про цифрову педагогіку.

**Ключові слова:** онлайн-викладання словникового запасу, ефективні методи, вчителі англійської мови, Закарпаття.

**Problem statement.** Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, and was intensified by the war in Ukraine in 2022, education in the country has largely moved online. This shift presented significant challenges because neither teachers nor students were prepared for it. Due to the ongoing situation, especially in regions with active military conflict, online learning remains a necessity.

Because of this, the authors of this article have chosen to research methods for learning English vocabulary online. They believe that understanding how to effectively use digital tools for vocabulary acquisition, in addition to traditional methods, is more important than ever.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Research on the effectiveness of online versus traditional classroom learning has produced mixed results (Huszt, Barta, 2024). Some studies, such as those by van Schaik, Barker, and Beckstrand (2003) and Waschull (2001), found no significant difference between the two. However, others reported conflicting outcomes: Tucker (2001) found that online students performed better, while Urtel (2008) observed a decrease in performance.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to online education globally, including in Transcarpathia, where teachers were not fully prepared. Students, who were often more familiar with technology, adapted more easily.

A study by Huszt, Fábián, Lechner, and Bárány (2023) highlighted the benefits of online learning. They found that technology, especially digital and video tools, can motivate students. They also noted that online learning can be particularly beneficial for diligent students with good time management skills, as it allows them to learn at their own pace. When strict deadlines are enforced, online teaching can even provide a more structured learning environment.

The shift to online education, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, presented a challenge to the traditional, face-to-face methods of teaching English as a Foreign





Language (EFL). Both new and experienced teachers needed to find effective digital tools to continue teaching grammar and vocabulary.

For teaching vocabulary specifically, a study by Wood (2001) outlined five key guidelines for learning software: it should connect new information to existing knowledge, encourage active engagement, provide multiple exposures to new words, and promote reading. The use of animations, audio, and glossaries can help achieve these goals (Diamond).

A study by Zabolotna et al. (2021) identified various online tools used for language teaching, categorized into content development tools, learning platforms, community tools, and personal tools. Their research in Ukrainian universities found that e-dictionaries, online search engines, and videos were among the most frequently used.

**The purpose of the article** is to investigate the effectiveness of different English vocabulary teaching methods in Transcarpathia in online settings. By gathering data from local teachers, the research will identify common practices and their outcomes. The goal is to create a practical guide for future vocabulary instruction.

**Presentation of the main material.** This study surveyed 30 English teachers in Transcarpathia to explore their methods and perceptions of vocabulary instruction in an online environment. The participants were predominantly female (29 female, 1 male) and Hungarian-speaking (26 Hungarian, 4 Ukrainian). Their professional backgrounds varied, with the largest groups holding Master's (11) or Bachelor's degrees (9), and having significant teaching experience (14 participants had 8 or more years).

Most teachers worked in high schools (40%) or as tutors (36.7%), with a majority teaching students in the 15-17 age range. A significant portion (60%) reported teaching mixed-ability groups without division. Regarding teaching format, 17 teachers taught exclusively offline, 10 taught partly online, and three taught exclusively online.

Data for this study was gathered using a 34-question online survey created with Google Forms. The survey, which was designed based on existing literature on vocabulary teaching, included a mix of single- and multiple-choice questions, Likert-scale statements, and open-ended questions. It was divided into three sections to collect both quantitative and qualitative data: Demographic and general information (9 questions); General vocabulary teaching practices (10 questions); Specific methods and tools used in both online and offline settings (15 questions).

This research, though based on a small sample, offers valuable insights into English vocabulary teaching in Transcarpathia. All of the surveyed teachers unanimously agreed on the vital importance of vocabulary instruction, with some considering it equally as important as other language skills, and others seeing it as the fundamental basis for all communication. One teacher noted that a wide vocabulary is especially critical for success on mandatory state exams like the NMT (National Multisubject Test).



When asked about the biggest challenges in vocabulary instruction, the majority of teachers pointed to students' difficulty with long-term retention. Other common issues included the correct usage, pronunciation, and spelling of words, as well as a lack of student motivation.

An analysis using a Likert scale revealed several key advantages of in-person, or offline, teaching. A large majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that it is easier to maintain student attention and that interaction between students is more natural and lively.

Teachers also widely believed that students are more active and that feedback is more immediate and effective during face-to-face lessons. There was also a general consensus that vocabulary acquisition is deeper and more lasting in a traditional classroom, though a significant number of teachers were neutral or disagreed with this point.

Opinions were more divided on whether there are more opportunities for personalized teaching offline, with about a third of the teachers remaining neutral or disagreeing. Similarly, while most teachers felt students are more motivated in person, this view wasn't universal.

Additionally, the survey highlighted the recognized importance of repetition. Almost all teachers (96.7%) stated that repeating and practicing vocabulary is either "important" or "very important" in offline lessons, with very few saying it is rarely or never implemented.

A multiple-choice question revealed the most frequently used methods in offline English lessons, with the top three choices being selected by over half of the participants. Guided Q&A and frontal discussions were the most popular, chosen by 83.3% of teachers. This highlights a strong reliance on direct interaction between the teacher and the class. Situational exercises and role-playing came in second at 66.7%, indicating that many teachers use these to make learning more practical and communicative. Group and pair work were also very popular, selected by 56.7% of the respondents, showing that collaborative activities are a common part of the classroom experience. Other methods, such as teacher-led lectures, presentations, and independent research, were used less frequently. These results suggest a preference for interactive and communicative teaching styles in the classroom.

When asked to evaluate specific approaches, teachers showed a clear preference for contextual learning (learning words indirectly) with overwhelming support. Other methods, such as teaching vocabulary through literary texts or using a morphemic approach (word roots, prefixes), were met with mixed or neutral opinions. Gamification was also popular, with point systems and team competitions being the most common forms. However, a misconception still exists among some teachers that gamification is only suitable for young learners.



### Online Teaching Methods

The survey also focused on the effectiveness of online teaching. While some teachers had no experience with online classes, most who did used synchronous teaching (live classes via platforms like Zoom or Google Meet) as their primary method.

Teachers largely perceived online learning as less effective for vocabulary development compared to offline teaching. Most teachers found it harder to maintain students' attention, keep them active, and foster natural peer interaction in an online environment. A majority also believed that vocabulary acquisition is less deep and lasting online.

However, the survey revealed some positive aspects of online teaching. Teachers noted that digital tools and platforms are particularly effective for increasing interactivity and student motivation. They praised tools like Quizlet, Kahoot!, and WordWall for their ability to make vocabulary practice more engaging and for providing instant feedback. The study suggests that while online teaching may not be seen as a full replacement for face-to-face instruction, these tools are valuable for supplementing the learning process.

The study proves that, despite some biases toward traditional teaching, online tools are recognized as essential for modern language instruction. Teachers value them for their ability to promote engagement and create interactive learning opportunities. However, there is a need for more training to help teachers effectively use different online modalities, like asynchronous or collaborative learning, and to better understand the range of available tools.

**Conclusions.** The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the state of English vocabulary instruction among teachers in Transcarpathia, particularly in the context of the shift to online education. Despite the small sample size, the research highlights key tendencies and challenges that are highly relevant to the current educational picture in Ukraine.

The study confirms that offline, face-to-face instruction is still considered the gold standard by most teachers. They believe it is superior for maintaining student attention, promoting natural interaction, and ensuring deeper, more lasting vocabulary acquisition. The widespread use of interactive methods like guided discussions, role-playing, and group work further underscores the importance of a dynamic classroom environment.

All surveyed teachers agree that vocabulary is a fundamental building block for all language skills, and its mastery is essential for communication and success on state examinations. However, a significant challenge remains: helping students with long-term retention. This issue is addressed through a clear consensus on the importance of regular repetition and practice.

While online teaching is perceived as less effective than traditional methods for engagement and deep learning, it is not without its merits. Teachers recognize the





power of digital tools like Quizlet, Kahoot!, and WordWall to enhance student motivation and interactivity. These tools are seen as crucial supplements to the learning process, even if they aren't viewed as a complete replacement for the traditional classroom.

The research reveals a need for more professional development in digital literacy. There is confusion about the categories of online tools and a degree of uncertainty regarding less common online teaching modalities, such as asynchronous or hybrid learning. Furthermore, the persistent misconception that gamification is only for young learners indicates a gap between pedagogical research and classroom practice.

In summary, the study's findings suggest a dual approach is needed for future vocabulary instruction. The proven methods of traditional, in-person teaching should be maintained and combined with the strategic, well-informed use of online tools. This blended approach offers the best of both worlds: the interactive environment of the classroom, and the engaging, motivating, and accessible resources of the digital world.

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