

## CREATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING DURING RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR PERIOD: PHILOLOGICAL ASPECTS

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**Abstract.** *During the russian-Ukrainian war period education in Ukraine passed into online or distance synchronous and asynchronous styles of learning.*

*With the beginning of the full-scale invasion on February 24th University and the educational process in philology faced the new conditions of teaching and assessment, a new reality, but the same goals - to give the best professionally oriented and high-quality education to our students had to reach. The war rapidly changed the ways and methods of teaching and learning into more creative and collaborative for keeping philological aspects of studying highly professional and attractive, giving more professional and personal growth to our students. The article deals with the philological aspects of creative and collaborative learning of the English language, used during russian-Ukrainian war period.*

*The relevance of this research is determined by focusing on the ways teachers adopt to the study process via new conditions and styles in the field of Philology, linking them with traditional and creative, and collaborative objectives and methods of teaching English philology, and giving examples of such work in studying Professional English courses at the University during the war period. The scientific novelty of the study consists in discovering and outlining new methods and ways of creative and collaborative online learning of Philology (English language) in the war period; to outline the experience of Ukrainian educators, the development of their methods, and ideas of creative teaching, learning, and assessment in a philological environment during the war period and their further adaptation in Ukrainian education by other educational institutions as well; to determine how the creative online teaching and learning environment and creative assessment methods expanded during the challenging war period and became an essential learning environment while adapting to the extreme circumstances during the lasting russian-Ukrainian War period.*

*This article aims to explore the structure of creative teaching methods and assessment strategies employed in online Professional English courses. It will discuss various online assessment methods and outline creative teaching strategies along with the corresponding technologies. Additionally, it will examine the utilization of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle as a creative and collaborative method of learning. Furthermore, it will address the organization of classes and highlight significant signs in the educational process during the initial days and throughout the period of full-scale invasion. Lastly, it will address the challenges faced in the teaching process and elaborate on how these difficulties were overcome. The article will conclude by providing rules and instructions to navigate the studying process and assessment during the full-scale invasion period.*

*The methodology is based on using a descriptive method that made it possible to characterise creative and collaborative methods of work; analysis and component analysis which help to outline the specific of the teaching process; principles of systematisation and classification are also used.*

**Keywords:** *creativity; learning styles; teaching methods; creative learning; collaborative learning; teaching and assessment; philology; innovations.*

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## **Introduction**

In the realm of education, creative and collaborative learning have always held great significance. This approach not only encompasses the learning process itself but also extends to the broader field of education. It emphasizes the shared objectives and fosters collaboration, communication, interaction, and creativity among all participants involved in the learning process. By focusing on the positive aspects, fostering improvements, facilitating personalized learning, encouraging divergent thinking, and achieving the desired learning outcomes, this type of learning creates a cohesive and effective learning environment. Its primary objective is to establish a conducive setting that inspires students to surpass the expected learning outcomes. Moreover, it aims to equip students with the necessary skills for collaboration and successful performance through consistent practice and interaction. In the context of Philology, creative and collaborative learning has become indispensable due to the increased prominence of online teaching and learning environments, particularly in the Ukrainian system, which has been adapting during the Russian-Ukrainian War.

The online teaching and learning environment has garnered increased interest from Ukrainian students as well as students from various geographic locations worldwide. In response to this diversity, creative assessment methods have emerged to cater to students with varying levels of preparation, educational backgrounds, value orientations, and experiences. The words of Edward De Bono capture the essence of creativity and creative assessment: "There is no doubt that creativity is the most valuable resource of all. Without creativity, progress would be stagnant, and we would be confined to repeating the same patterns indefinitely»

**The purpose of this article is to** provide an overview of innovative teaching approaches in online Professional English courses. It aims to discuss the structure of creative teaching methods employed in these courses, explore various online assessment strategies and corresponding technologies, and highlight the utilization of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle as a collaborative and creative learning method, along with effective class organization techniques. Additionally, the article delves into the significant indicators observed during the initial days and throughout the entire period of extensive online education. It also addresses the challenges faced in the teaching process and how these difficulties were overcome. Lastly, the article provides rules and instructions for managing the learning and assessment processes during this period of comprehensive online education.

## **Methodology**

The nature of experience is not always conscious. In order to advance the learning cycle, I have delved into the theoretical perspectives of early psychoanalytic practitioners in organizational development, such as Elliot Jaques and Isobel Menzies. Their work, as discussed by Trist & Murray (1990), focused on the development of social systems as both a response to and a defense against anxiety. Additionally, other scholars, including Hirschhorn (1988), Kets de Vries (1991), and Miller & Rice (1967), further explored this field and emphasized the role of unconscious defense mechanisms in hindering an organization's ability to effectively manage learning and change.

Proposition of the learning model brings forth the polarities of observer and involvement, which are then connected to key human processes of self-shaping, contextual understanding, and knowledge creation. The central idea behind this approach is that individuals can take control of their own learning by reflecting on their experiences and actively participating in their self-development.

Over the past 20 years, the learning cycle has greatly influenced research in management education and development (Gill & Johnson, 1991; Mifsud, 1990). One of the reasons for its widespread appeal is that it accommodates both deductive (moving from abstract concepts to testing implications) and inductive (reflective practice based on concrete experiences) approaches to theory in management education. As a result, it acts as a bridge between objectivity and subjectivity, positivism and phenomenology.

While the learning cycle effectively captures the significance of experiential knowledge and the connection between theory and practice, there are other aspects of experiential learning that remain unexpressed in the current model. This realization leaves me somewhat uneasy whenever I encounter the learning cycle, as it seems that there are additional dimensions that need to be addressed.

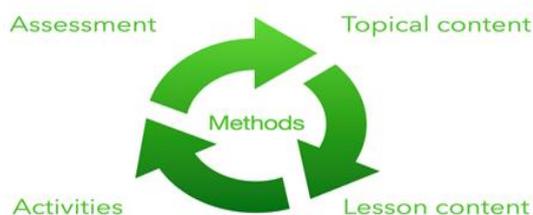
Within organizations and management courses, the learning cycle has been utilized to help managers understand the concept of learning from experience. Exploring the cycle has allowed managers to recognize that learning can occur through rationality or emotional engagement. It consists of four stages: direct experience where thoughts and feelings are generated, reflection on those thoughts and feelings, drawing rational conclusions or emotional insights from the experience, and implementing, testing, and initiating action based on the experience. It encourages managers and learners to perceive learning as a holistic process and identify specific areas where they may be dependent or stuck in their experiential awareness.

In management development contexts, the popularity of the learning cycle stems from its accessibility to managers. It helps them comprehend individual and organizational learning and development processes and identify aspects that may be overlooked. The learning cycle is widely used to describe the learning process for managers within organizations and is a foundational element for the concept of the learning organization (Casey, 1993; Senge, 1990).

According to the National Research Council (2002), research in technology-enhanced learning and creative online learning is often conducted in isolation from practical application. However, a new research methodology called «design-based research» has emerged in the field of learning and teaching to bridge this gap between theory and practice. This method draws inspiration from product design, architecture, and design engineering, where researchers systematically test different design variations to determine their effectiveness. The aim of it is to connect theoretical frameworks that model the learning environment with empirical investigations of practical learning and teaching issues. Epistemologically, it strikes a balance between realist and interpretivist paradigms and advocates for the use of mixed methods in research.

### Results and Discussion

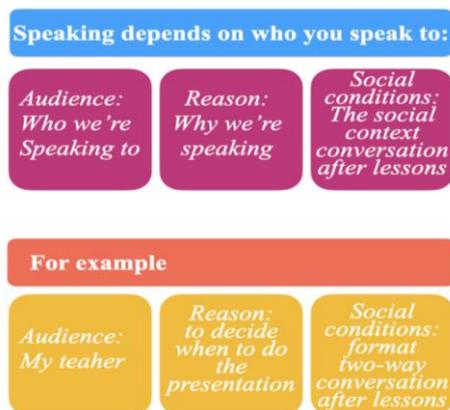
In the study process with students in philological specializations, it is essential to focus on the material covered in our lessons, engage in task-oriented work, assess learning outcomes, and plan future steps and assessments. To gauge our students' proficiency levels, we must actively listen to their speaking skills and evaluate their written work. Therefore, it is crucial to find effective methods to motivate them to write and speak, while also showcasing the results of their studies through the creation of creative tasks and prompts. Consequently, teachers should provide them with task samples and speaking exercises that enable learners to demonstrate their subject proficiency effectively. The diagram in *Figure (1)* describes the cyclical structure of creative teaching methods in the online Professional English courses:



The Topical Content serves as the foundational framework for the lesson plan, outlining the desired goals and learning outcomes. It provides a comprehensive roadmap that guides students in designing their individualized learning paths throughout the course, fostering their engagement and motivation.

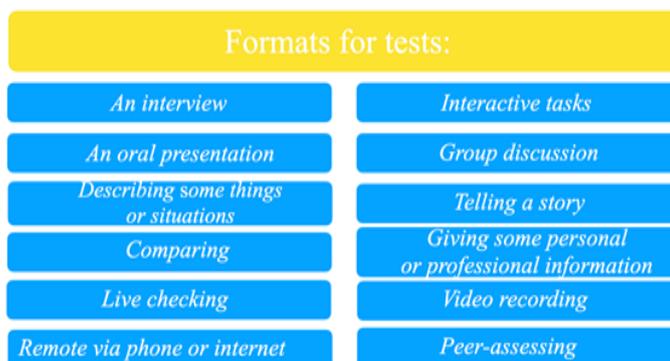
As students delve into each concrete Lesson Content, their attention is directed towards the essential details of specific concepts, enabling a deeper understanding.

Subsequently, each Lesson Content informs the selection of relevant hands-on Activities to be carried out during and between lectures. These activities often involve linking theoretical knowledge to real-life and professional scenarios. The diagram below illustrates examples of such interactive activities that encourage collaborative class participation as in the *Figure (2)*:



Assessment plays a crucial role in the online teaching and learning environment, serving as the final stage within the cyclical structure of online teaching methods. In this section, we will delve into the topic of assessment and its significance.

Assessment can be defined as a systematic process of collecting, reviewing, and utilizing information about programs to evaluate and enhance students' learning. It involves the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and utilizing information to support students' growth and development. In the online teaching and learning context, assessment encompasses both verbal and written forms of two-way communication and feedback. To provide a visual representation of the various online assessment methods, refer to *Figure (3)*, which illustrates a diagram outlining the scheme of tests and other assessment techniques:



In such a way, there are some formats for assessment like an *interview*, which is from one hand is interactive, but from another hand, a person is asked and interviewed by questions to answer them. So, it doesn't look like real-life conversation.

An oral presentation is very useful for reflecting business or academic situations for, but they are not very interactive.

*Interactive tasks* include natural genuine communication between two or more students who are encouraged by each other during their performance and can affect other students too.

*Group discussion* is one of the best ways for assessing students together in some professional situations close to real. However, it's useful for assessing a large number of students, but it demands to be careful with an equal time of speaking and some student's dominating.

*Assessing speaking includes constructing the variety of appropriate tasks, such as:*

*Describe* some things or situations. It allows talking and linking thoughts and words, to reflect emotions altogether without reading or writing.

*Comparing* is more demanding because it makes students contrast and describe two different, very often opposite or similar points of view.

*Telling a story* is quite natural speaking activity because students can tell their own stories or those which are based on tasks. The main point is to link imagination with words they know during telling a story, so, such tasks must be practiced in lessons.

*Giving some personal or professional information* as a task of assessment should be focused on topics students are familiar with and can speak naturally. It includes speaking about personal or professional experience and students' opinions.

Modern technology has made a variety of different settings possible for speaking tests. Firstly, *live checking*, when assessment happens in real-time in synchronous learning and has to be completed during some period.

Secondly, it can be *video recorded*, which keeps time and helps to assess a large number of students at the same time and listen to their answers more than one time. But for teachers, it takes some additional time to check students' performances. As a benefit the psychological moment exists, that encourages students to feel free to speak to a recorder not face-to-face and have time for preparation. In other hand, *face-to-face technology* is mostly used and looks natural and realistic, but it doesn't suit distance and blended learning because participants should have live speaking in one room at the same time.

In such a way, the *remote via phone or internet* is mostly used in online learning as a part of face-to-face technology. Also, it gives a possibility to record the speaking test when it's necessary and makes tasting easier. Despite the availability of various technology-based tools for the assessment, only a weak proportion of teachers make use of them. This might be due to the difficulties and the hardships encountered when assessing the learners' oral skills through technology (Levy & Stockwell, 2006).

One of the methods is small group work during which students design the test and assess each other what calls *peer-assessing*. It demands teachers' help during their work and the appropriate level of student's knowledge but is one of the effective ways of professional English assessment in the classroom because students are involved in communication and interaction as well.

An important part of the assessment of professional English is *rating or evaluation*. So, a set of descriptions is known as a rating scale should be used by an examiner to define levels of students' ability to do different tasks. A set of descriptions is simply designed and understandable for examinations in usage. But it's more complex to work with the help of computer or laptop and videos which rate students' performances and interactivities.

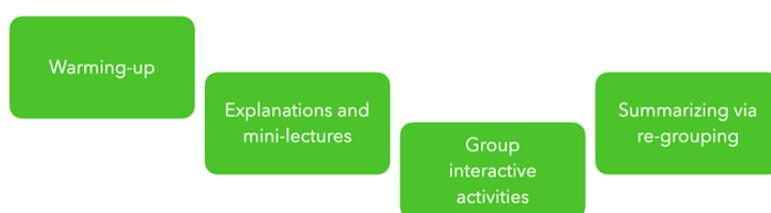
*Giving feedback* is the last part of the lesson. It plays an important role because it reflects what to improve in educational process, professional and life communication. It's important not to concentrate on the mistakes and to encourage learners with their benefits, stressing that instead of the assessment results they are not native speakers and they have

already succeeded in study process. The main goal is to stimulate students' professional and personal growth.

Remember, that during online synchronous and asynchronous study process teachers remember about goals of study and generate tasks according to what they are planning to reach, assess, passed material, level of knowledge and social environment. All the tasks reflect real-life and professional situations. Learners are fully involved into a study process, assessed via alternative solutions such as a computer-based or recording format, which demands special preparation, time, and resources. Online study has appropriate goals, rating scale and feedback.

We pay attention, that during Synchronous learning of professional English we need overcome some difficulties of learning a new language distance and to organise a class, so can do it in few steps like in *Figure (4)*.

## Steps to organize the class



We pay attention, that during Synchronous learning of professional English we need overcome some difficulties of learning a new language distance and to organise a class, so can do it in few steps. *First (1)* we do warming-up using online games or quiz, or answering questions linked with the main topic and showing the goals of the lesson. Then *(2)* Explanation and mini-lectures follows as well as Group interactive activities online *(3)* make them work with the new material and be engaged fully into the study process. Summarizing via re-grouping *(4)* is the final step which helps to assess the results they've reached and evaluate themselves and each other via online testing and other activities like different kinds of oral tasks.

*Synchronous learning* can present challenges that may lead to feelings of frustration and a lack of confidence among some students. To address these issues, there are several strategies that can be employed:

**Establish a clear schedule and teach time management skills:** Providing a structured schedule helps students organize their time effectively and promotes accountability.

**Provide support for students new to virtual learning:** some students may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable with online learning platforms. To mitigate this, it is important to offer guidance and support to help them navigate the virtual environment. This can be done through instructional videos, step-by-step guides, and clear instructions on how to perform online tasks such as sending messages in chats, creating projects and presentations, posting on discussion boards, and enabling microphones.

**Set clear expectations:** at the beginning of each online course and live class session, clearly communicate the expectations and requirements so that students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. This helps to alleviate confusion and uncertainty.

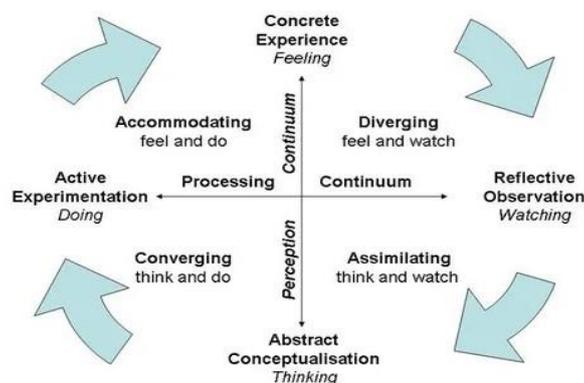
**Maintain regular communication:** keep in touch with individual students through messaging, feedback, discussion platforms, virtual class meetings, or individual conferences. Regular communication helps to build rapport, address concerns, and provide ongoing support.

By implementing these strategies, educators can help students overcome the challenges associated with synchronous professional English learning and the use of modern technologies.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, developed by David A. Kolb in 1984, is a creative and collaborative method of learning. David A. Kolb is an Emeritus Professor of Organizational Behavior in the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. The diagram representing Kolb's Learning Cycle illustrates the role of creativity in the learning and teaching process.

According to Kolb each individual naturally gravitates towards a particular learning style, influenced by various factors such as the social environment, educational experiences, and the individual's cognitive structure (Kolb, David A. 1981).

By understanding and applying Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, educators can foster creative and collaborative learning experiences that cater to the diverse learning styles of individuals. This approach recognizes the transformative power of experience in the acquisition and creation of knowledge.



Noticeable, that in *Figure (5)* Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle the horizontal axis represents the Processing Continuum, indicating how we approach a task, while the vertical axis represents the Perception Continuum, reflecting our emotional response or thoughts and feelings.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle is a four-step process that encompasses concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Progressing through each stage leads to effective learning outcomes. It is important to highlight that an individual can initiate the learning cycle at any point within the constituents depicted in *Figure (5)*, and each constituent exhibits the following characteristics:

*Concrete Experience:* this stage of the cycle emphasizes personal interactions and experiences in everyday situations. Rather than relying on a systematic approach, learners in this stage rely more on feelings, adaptability, open-mindedness, and the ability to adapt to change. Concrete experience enhances the learner's comfort zone and intuition.

*Reflective Observation:* in this phase, learners individually interpret specific circumstances and are encouraged to chart their own learning path based on their thoughts and emotions. Reflective observation involves objectivity, patience, and careful judgment before taking any actions.

*Abstract Conceptualization:* this segment of the cycle guides learners to employ ideas, logical approaches, and developed concepts to accurately assess situations or problems. Interpersonal feelings take a backseat as learners rely on systematic planning and the formulation of ideas and theories to solve practical problems.

*Active Experimentation:* in the active experimentation stage, learners not only observe others but also engage in hands-on practice. This stage reinforces the notion that learning is not solely achieved through observation but also through active participation and application.

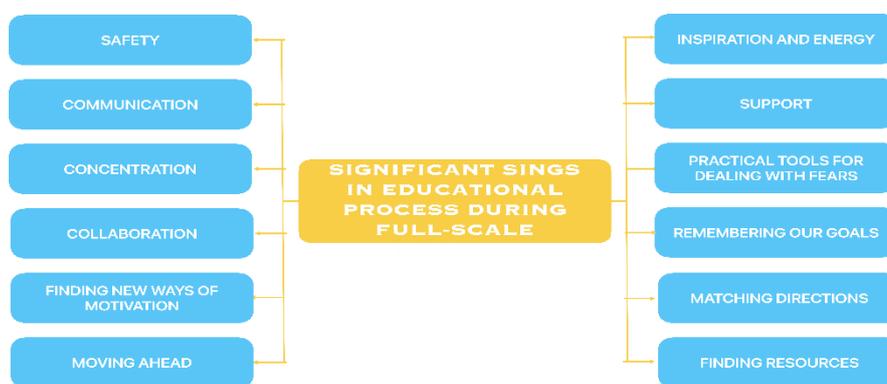
By understanding and embracing the characteristics of each constituent, learners can navigate the Experiential Learning Cycle effectively, facilitating comprehensive and holistic learning experiences.

With the onset of the full-scale invasion in Ukraine on February 24th, we found ourselves facing new teaching and assessment conditions, a new reality, but our goals remained the same – to provide the best professionally-oriented and high-quality education to our students.

On the day the full-scale invasion began, we were conducting university classes in Philology both online and offline due to the blended learning approach at that time. Our university comprised approximately 30,000 foreign and Ukrainian students, around 3,000 professors, and 6,000 employees. As the morning broke, the sound of explosions and air raids jolted us awake, and the news swiftly confirmed that Russia had launched rockets, conducted air bombings, and carried out armed attacks throughout the entire territory of Ukraine.

Simultaneously, our students, including international students, were residing on campus, requiring the administration of the university to take immediate action to ensure their safety and well-being. In the face of these extraordinary circumstances, we remained committed to maintaining our professionalism, coordinating our efforts, and acting with the utmost diligence and care.

As depicted in Figure (6), there were significant aspects observed in the educational process in Philology during the initial days and throughout the entire period of full-scale invasion.



*They included:*

*Safety:* ensuring a secure and protected learning environment for all students and educators.

*Communication:* promoting effective communication channels and strategies to facilitate information exchange and collaboration.

*Concentration:* encouraging focused attention and concentration on the learning objectives despite external challenges.

*Collaboration:* fostering teamwork and cooperative learning among students and educators to enhance collective problem-solving and support.

*Finding new ways of motivation:* exploring innovative approaches to motivate and engage students amidst challenging circumstances.

*Inspiration and energy:* seeking sources of inspiration and maintaining a positive and energetic mindset to overcome obstacles.

*Support:* providing assistance and guidance to students and educators to address their concerns and ensure their well-being.

*Practical tools for dealing with fears:* equipping individuals with practical strategies to cope with fears and anxieties that may arise during the learning process.

*Remembering our goals:* maintaining a clear focus on educational goals and objectives to stay motivated and directed.

*Matching directions:* aligning educational activities and approaches with the evolving situation to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

*Finding resources:* identifying and utilizing available resources, both within and outside the educational system, to support learning and teaching.

*Moving ahead:* continuously progressing and advancing in the learning process, adapting to changing circumstances.

*Partnership:* cultivating partnerships and collaborations among students, educators, and other stakeholders to strengthen the learning community.

These observed aspects played a crucial role in navigating the educational process during the challenging period of full-scale invasion, promoting resilience and ensuring continued progress in learning.

Initially, a major challenge we encountered was the lack of security to conduct online courses. The persistent bombings and air alerts posed significant obstacles, along with the added complexity of managing time-zone differences. Consequently, we had to *adopt a combination of synchronous and asynchronous methods for teaching and assessment, as you can see in Figure (7).*



*In the asynchronous way* both in teaching and assessment we used m-learning as well. It was changing e-mails, messages in group chats, google classrooms, using instructions, planning discussions, writing tasks and creating projects, giving feedbacks, completing different tests, making video and audio recordings with tasks etc.

*In synchronous* we worked with the help of video-conferences via Zoom as official video-zone in our university, chats, meeting rooms, face time calls and video calls for teaching, group work, discussions, listening, project presentations speaking, brainstorming, oral activities etc.

During blackouts we used *asynchronous ways of teaching and assessment* which gave an opportunity to work with projects, tests and exercised, making audio and video recordings of speaking parts. We had an extra task - to exclude cheating and make the study process clear and qualified. Another moment in my work with foreign students was a time-difference.

So, I had to be ready with different kinds of tasks and assessments in case, my students had no possibility to join online *synchronous lessons*.

Instead of that we created our rules and instructions to deal with studying process and assessment in the full scale invasion period.

During the war period, the implementation of creative assessment methods of studying in Philology proved to be both significant and highly beneficial. These innovative approaches to assessment allowed for a more holistic evaluation of students' learning and provided opportunities for them to showcase their knowledge and skills in unique and creative ways. Additionally, creative assessment fostered critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and adaptability, which are essential skills during times of conflict and uncertainty. By incorporating creative assessment strategies, educators were able to create a supportive and engaging learning environment that empowered students to demonstrate their understanding and resilience amidst challenging circumstances.

### **Conclusions**

Creative teaching methods and assessment strategies in Philology in extreme circumstances play a vital role in online Professional English courses. By incorporating innovative approaches, utilizing various assessment methods, and adopting technologies that facilitate interactive learning, educators can enhance the learning experience. The integration of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle promotes creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. However, during periods of full-scale invasion, additional challenges arise, necessitating the adaptation of class organization and the implementation of specific rules and instructions. Despite these challenges, with resilience, flexibility, and a student-centered approach, educators can successfully navigate the teaching process and ensure meaningful learning outcomes.

Incorporating creative teaching methods and various online assessment strategies can greatly enhance online Professional English courses. By leveraging technology, fostering collaboration, and embracing the principles of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, educators can create engaging and interactive learning experiences in Philology and successfully use them in extreme circumstances. During full-scale invasion periods, effective philological class organization becomes crucial, as educators must adapt to remote learning environments while supporting students' needs. By recognizing significant indicators in the educational process, addressing challenges, and implementing clear rules and instructions, educators can overcome difficulties and facilitate a successful studying process and assessment during these challenging times.

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