

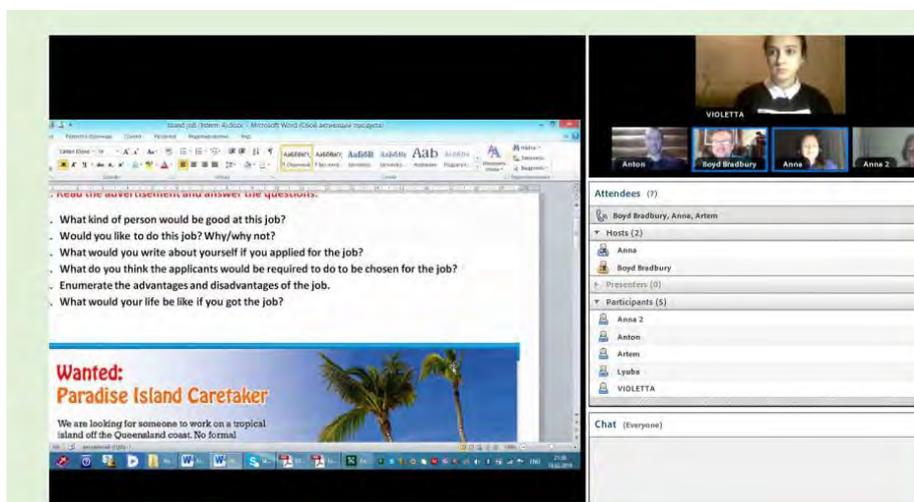
**THE INTERSECTION OF TECHNOLOGY, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND
GLOBALIZATION:
A CASE FOR SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION VIA DISTANCE EDUCATION
(INTERIM RESULTS)**

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Changing demographics and increased globalization require countries to put more of a focus on second language acquisition (SLA). Therefore, educational establishments throughout the world are searching for the most effective tools to speed up the language learning process. There has been a development of alternative ways of learning, including those that have emerged through technology, such as online learning. The last couple of decades have resulted in rapid growth within the area of technology-assisted learning. A large number of educational programs, applications and services for training language skills have been created and are widely used by educators to facilitate SLA. Language learners have access to online dictionaries, textbooks, online audio and video materials, grammar and vocabulary exercises of various types and language proficiency levels which means there are numerous opportunities to study and practice most of the basic language skills. However, little can be done in training second language speaking skills without a real interlocutor.

The main advantages for learners who have the opportunity to interact with native speakers include: expanding authentic and practice-oriented vocabulary, understanding the culture as well as the language, targeting accent and pronunciation, exposure to grammatical rules in a completely natural way, and the requirement to use a foreign language. In addition to native speakers, students benefit from lessons with non-native bilingual teachers in the following ways: a better understanding between teachers and students in terms of culture, grammar and vocabulary, a trained educator who can translate from the second language to the native language, and increased awareness of potential language acquisition problems that may occur.

An American native speaker and non-native English teachers have been conducting a study entitled, “The Intersection of Technology, Second Language Acquisition, and Metrics.” The study is aimed at learning the impact of technology factors, bilingual instructors, and online interaction with a native speaker on the acquisition of English speaking and listening skills by English learners. The study involves the following stages: pre-classes surveys administered via Qualtrics, initial scaled speaking and listening assessment, quarterly learner assessments and surveys, learner progress journals, online classes held on an Adobe Connect (AC) platform, which can be seen in picture 1.



Picture 1 – Photo of a class on AC platform

An indispensable stage of the study is classes with bilingual instructors aimed at developing grammar and vocabulary skills assisted by padlet, quizlet and other mobile applications that were held in between virtual classes with a native American speaker.

This study demonstrated that participating in the online classes with a native speaker helped students feel more confident and use appropriate grammatical structures and vocabulary spontaneously; students' learning skills have got improved as well.

According to ACTFL Assessment, which was held in summer 2019, the higher one's starting ranking is, the more difficult it is to move it up. The changes in ACTFL ranking can be seen table 1. For example, An moved 2-3 steps with speaking, but Ar moved only 1. An moved 5 steps with listening, but Ar moved only 1.

| Name | Speaking October 2018 | Speaking August 2019 | Listening October 2018 | Listening August 2019 |
|------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| An | Intermediate mid | Advanced low/mid | Intermediate low | Advanced High |
| Ar | Advanced-low | Advanced low | Advanced-mid | Advanced High |

Table 1 – Demonstrated changes in ACTFL ranking

So far the following conclusions have been made:

- demographics and globalization are driving second language acquisition. In particular, English is helpful since it is the lingua franca;
- ACTFL and CEFR can help to determine language proficiency and design lessons accordingly;
- access to both Belarusian instructors who teach/tutor English and a native English speaker helps with language acquisition;
- technology (e.g., AC) can be a helpful tool;
- exchange opportunities can be invaluable.