МОВОЗНАВСТВО

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Olha BOIKO
PhD in Philology
Lecturer at the Faculty of Letters
Ataturk University
Erzurum, Turkey
e-mail: boiko.olga.onu@gmail.com
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5250-6538

SELF-ORGANIZATION AND DIGITAL MINIMALISM IN THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT OF A PHILOLOGIST*

The article examines the process of self-organization and the transition to digital minimalism in the life of a philologist working under conditions of forced migration. The scientific novelty lies in the presentation of a comprehensive six-year self-tracking experiment on time management and the subsequent conscious shift from digital control toward strategies of focus, essentialism, and digital minimalism. The relevance of the study stems from the growing role of digital technologies in academic and educational activities, which simultaneously provide wide opportunities for productivity while posing significant risks of cognitive overload and dependence. The research employs quantitative time analysis, as well as comparative and diachronic methods, which made it possible to identify key tendencies in balancing research, teaching, and personal activities. Special attention is given to the transformation of lifestyle following a change in sociocultural context, the shift from hypercontrol to conscious self-organization, and the implementation of digital minimalism practices. The results of the study may be useful for developing strategies to enhance productivity and concentration among researchers and students, as well as for further interdisciplinary studies at the intersection of linguistics, cognitive science, and digital culture.

Keywords: *cognitive overload, migration, productivity, mindfulness, digital dependence*

Introduction. Defining the Concept of "Lifestyle"

Lifestyle (or "way of life") is primarily the subject of sociological analysis. Alfred Adler defined lifestyle as a unique, unconscious, and repetitive way of responding to (or avoiding) life tasks – those of friendship, love, and work. This style manifests itself in the coherence of an individual's thoughts, feelings, and actions, which

* This article is a translated and adapted version of the author's Ukrainian-language paper prepared for inclusion in a collective monograph (forthcoming).

are formed in childhood and persist throughout life unless altered through deep psychotherapy [26].

Lifestyle is also shaped by political conditions and, more broadly, by the socio-economic context. As Pierre Bourdieu emphasized, "the model of the relationship between the universe of economic and social conditions and the universe of lifestyles […] proposed here is valid not only for the French case but, without doubt, for every stratified society" [6]. While Pierre Bourdieu stressed the dependence of lifestyles on socio-economic and political conditions, David Chaney focuses on the idea that lifestyle can be recognized through relatively stable patterns of behavior and markers of everyday life, which in turn influence social relations [7].

The **relevance** of the proposed study lies in the fact that the lifestyle of a modern scholar – particularly a philologist, whose academic and teaching activity is characterized by increased cognitive and emotional load – has been scarcely analyzed in academic research. Information regarding work schedules, the balance between professional and personal life, or sources of inspiration is typically found only in biographical works. Such reflections on personal experience and the search for the most productive modes of self-development constitute valuable material, yet they are almost absent both in Slavic-language and in English-language academic discourse. This gap determines the novelty of the present study.

The **aim** of this research is to present one aspect of the life of a young philologist living in emigration – specifically, the processes of planning, goal-setting, and time management. The article does not seek to provide an exhaustive analysis of the scholar's lifestyle; rather, it focuses on the process of implementing and evolving goal-setting and time-tracking practices as an element of self-organization, based on the principles described by M. Villarroel [31].

The article illustrates the influence of various social, cultural, and professional factors on the formation and transformation of a personal time-management system. It traces a dialectical movement from chaotic, externally controlled activity (typical of structured programs such as undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral studies) toward total control over one's use of time, and subsequently toward a conscious and mindful academic and teaching practice. The focus gradually shifts from mechanical time accounting to deriving satisfaction from the process of concentrated creative work, as well as from measurable outcomes expressed in published research, conference participation, and academic projects.

1. Socio-Cultural and Professional Determinants of the Lifestyle of a Philologist: Key Factors of Transformation.

First Key Stage: Doctoral Studies

Based on the above, it is appropriate to outline the socio-cultural and personal characteristics of the individual whose experience serves as the object of this study. As previously noted, lifestyle is shaped by such factors as social class, professional activity, regional, cultural, and age-related characteristics.

The author of this article (hereinafter referred to as "I") is a 34-year-old woman, a representative of the middle class, and a holder of a higher education degree. My primary professional domain is academic and teaching work in the field of philology.

My professional and personal environment mainly consists of educators and students. The lifestyle elements described in this study underwent two significant transformations: the first occurred in 2018, after entering the PhD program at the Department of Applied Linguistics of Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University; the second followed the defense of my dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and subsequent forced emigration in February 2022 due to the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The regional and cultural parameters of my life changed substantially following the relocation: the Slavic-Christian cultural environment was replaced by an Asian-Muslim context. The city of residence, Erzurum, is, on the one hand, a conservative center where Islamic traditions are actively observed, and, on the other hand, a place influenced by secular tendencies due to its large student population. At the Atatürk University with which I am affiliated approximately 500,000 students are enrolled, about 70,000 of whom attend classes on campus. In addition, the city hosts a Technical University and the well-known Palandöken ski resort, which further enhances the youthful, touristic, and educational atmosphere.

Six years ago, on September 22, 2018, I initiated a personal time-tracking experiment, prompted by the first key milestone in my professional life – my enrollment in the PhD program at the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Philology, Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University. The experiment was inspired by the approach of biologist Morris Villarroel, who reported beginning his lifelogging project in 2010, documenting daily activities such as what he did, where he was, what he ate, and when he woke up – at intervals of every 15–30 minutes. Villarroel argued that such a practice could not only enhance memory but also improve time management and create a clearer record of one's lived experience [31].

After reading his blog, I developed a strong interest in time management. Within this field, scholars typically distinguish the following key processes:

- ✓ Analysis – identifying how and where time is currently spent;
- ✓ Strategy modeling – developing behavioral models based on prior analysis;
- ✓ Goal-setting – defining objectives or outlining key directions of personal and professional development;
- ✓ Planning and prioritization – designing a plan to achieve the defined goals and determining the most important tasks;
- ✓ Implementation – performing specific actions according to the planned sequence;
- ✓ Monitoring and evaluation – assessing progress, reviewing outcomes, and drawing conclusions.

This structured framework became the conceptual foundation of my long-term experiment, which aimed to explore how consistent observation and reflection on time use could influence productivity, self-organization, and the broader philosophy of an academic's lifestyle.

In addition, several time management techniques have proven to be more or less effective for goal-setting, planning, and task implementation. Among them is the ***Pomodoro Technique***, developed by Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980s. The method takes its name from the tomato-shaped kitchen timer Cirillo used while studying. The Pomodoro Technique is based on 25-minute intervals of focused, undistracted

work, followed by a 5-minute break; after four such cycles, a longer rest of about 15–30 minutes is recommended [8, 20].

Another well-known approach is the ***Pareto Principle*** (80/20 rule), which posits that roughly 80% of results stem from 20% of causes or efforts. In quality management, this approach was popularized by J. Juran as the "vital few and trivial many," while in productivity studies it was widely disseminated through the works of R. Koch [13, 14]. The ***Eisenhower Matrix*** is another prioritization tool that classifies tasks along two axes – important/unimportant and urgent/non-urgent – producing four quadrants that help determine which tasks to act on immediately, schedule, delegate, or eliminate. Its modern popularity is largely attributed to Stephen Covey [27].

My own experiment was inspired by Morris Villarroel's lifelogging practice. He noted that he could review "almost every day and practically every hour" of his life over a ten-year span and that he devoted about one hour daily exclusively to writing in his journal. In addition, Villarroel captured visual records of his life every 30 seconds. By 2019, he had accumulated 307 notebooks documenting this experience [19]. Motivated by his example, I decided to design my own system of time tracking though without visual documentation, focused instead on analytical and reflective observation of my daily activities.

2. Using the aTimeLogger Application for Tracking and Analyzing Time Use

When analyzing the nature of time, scholars have concluded that it is "an abstract entity created by the human mind based on the experience of change. Physical reality is a process of continuous becoming and disappearance; time is not part of this process" [22]. It is also defined as "nature's way of preventing everything from happening at once" [10]. This idea sparked my academic interest and inspired me to design my own system of time measurement.

The initial methodology involved using the aTimeLogger application to record various types of activities, such as journaling, studying foreign languages, writing the dissertation, and exercising. The experiment began within the framework of a self-designed challenge titled "100 Days to the New Year", which required tracking the time spent on specific actions. Thus, the application performed the analytical function of collecting and structuring data (Figure 1).

Through this approach, each day's activities were quantified and categorized, enabling the observation of behavioral patterns over time. The systematic recording of actions provided both numerical and visual feedback, helping to identify periods of high productivity, cognitive overload, or inefficient time allocation. In this way, aTimeLogger became not merely a digital diary, but a research instrument – one that combined the precision of quantitative monitoring with the introspective nature of qualitative self-observation.

The most valuable portion of time was that devoted to the activity labeled Science (initially named PhD, later renamed after the dissertation defense). This category encompassed all hours spent collecting and processing material, as well as working on academic texts. It should be noted that my PhD dissertation, entitled "The Complementation of the Category of Intertextuality in the Literary Discourse of Fantasy" [3], was written under the supervision of Doctor of Philology and Professor Nataliia Kondratenko. Our productive collaboration facilitated the completion and

successful defense of the dissertation within two and a half years of entering the PhD program. During this period, I published nine single-authored scholarly papers, including one international publication, and participated in numerous conferences – both in-person and online.

We can observe that during the 100-day challenge, I devoted 91 hours to academic work – a fairly strong indicator, as it reflects net time, that is, the actual hours spent writing scientific texts or collecting research material. Beginning on January 1, 2019, I expanded the scope of tracking to include all 24 hours of the day, incorporating sleep as well. New categories were added to the application's structure, and for daily activities such as cleaning, cooking, eating, communication, and other household tasks, a general category titled "Other" was introduced.

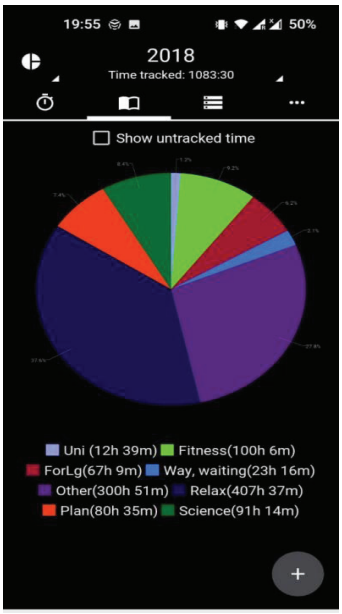

Figure 1. Report from 22.09.18-31.12.18

However, in August 2019, the need arose to refine this category, which led to the creation of additional subcategories such as "Meals," "Cleaning," "Watching Movies," and others. The updated set of categories appeared as follows (Figure 2):

The color, icon design, and name of each category can be customized by the user (the app offers a fairly extensive set of icons to choose from). Over time, I completely redesigned the interface several times, as prolonged use tended to create a sense of routine and monotony.

The most frequently used categories were placed in the top rows:

Talk. Communication: in person, by phone, or via online platforms.

Care. Self-care and hygiene routines.

Lecture. Teaching activities. This category was originally labeled Work during the period from 2018 to 2020, when I was pursuing my PhD and working in the field of copywriting. Later, when I began teaching at the university, I decided not to delete the category (as that would erase all previous data) but to rename it.

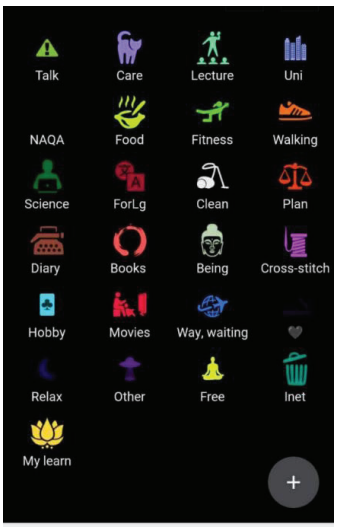

Fig. 2. Enhanced activity system

Uni. Time spent at the university, including duties beyond lecturing (such as report writing and administrative paperwork). During my postgraduate studies, this category also included hours spent attending classes.

NAQA. Time dedicated to duties as an expert for the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance: reviewing documents, conducting online accreditation visits, and writing accreditation reports. This activity accounted for over 500 hours

across two and a half years. After the completion of these duties, the NAQA category was retained to preserve historical data.

Food. Cooking and eating.

Fitness. Physical exercise, including gym workouts or home yoga sessions. For a certain period, this category also included breathing practices.

Walking. Time spent walking. During excursions or trips to other cities, the percentage share of this category increased.

Science. As previously mentioned, one of the earliest categories, originally named PhD and later renamed after the dissertation defense.

ForLg. Foreign language study. For the first three years, this category was used only occasionally; however, after relocating to another country, the percentage of time devoted to this activity increased to nearly 20%. This does not include everyday conversational practice, but only formal lessons with an instructor or independent study using textbooks.

Clean. Time dedicated to maintaining order at home.

Plan. Planning and reflection. This category also includes bookkeeping of income and expenses, which I continue to maintain. It is important to note that, in parallel with digital tracking, I kept written notes in a paper planner. This allowed me to analyze time distribution over different intervals, from weeks to several years, and to trace fluctuations in activities depending on the season (for example, during the summer, lecture-based classes stop, and thus the Lecture category remains empty) or location (the Movies category, over the past three years, has been active only when I return home, when my husband and I spend time watching pre-selected films or series. While in Türkiye, I prefer handicrafts or reading instead of watching films).

During 2020 and 2021, I regularly devoted time to weekly and monthly planning followed by summarizing results (see below). However, as shown in the illustration, the total time spent on planning was relatively small – about 60 hours per year, or 359 hours over five years (Figure 3).

Diary. Keeping a personal diary, one of the earliest introduced categories. Morris Villarroel has also kept diaries since 2010, both in digital and handwritten formats. Villarroel explained that he began journaling with the idea that it could improve his memory and time-management skills, as well as provide a clearer record of what he had accomplished in his life. He added that this practice makes him feel as though he has lived a longer life and contributes to better emotional regulation [25].

Similarly, I have kept diaries throughout this entire period, though mine focus primarily on emotions and personal reflections. Notably, the first day of the war is absent from these entries – my notes begin only from the third day – but from that point onward, I recorded events regularly. I have kept diaries since childhood, but consistently since 2017. Maintaining diaries provides an invaluable opportunity for retrospective analysis, reconstruction of life's chronology, and an objective, distanced view of one's experiences after several months or years.

Books. Reading fiction.

Being. Initially intended to represent time spent on meditation and spiritual practices. However, as it was not always possible to devote time to these activities, I allowed myself a kind of self-deception by including in this category moments of "doing nothing" – for instance, the period between lying down in bed and falling asleep (which sometimes lasted up to three hours).

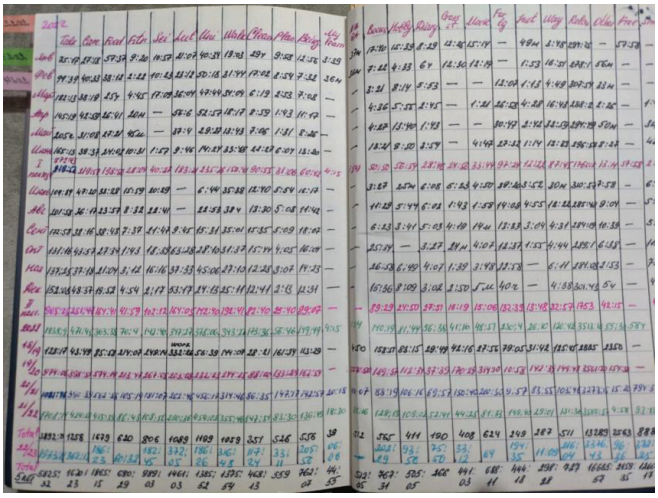

Fig. 3. Duplicated reports from aTimeLogger on paper

Cross-stitch. Time devoted to my favorite hobby, cross-stitch embroidery.

Hobby. Time spent on all other hobbies, including occasional engagement with online games.

Movies. Hours spent watching films and TV series.

Way/Waiting. Combines two categories of "wasted" time: commuting and waiting (for example, in queues). During travel periods, this category increased significantly. The category marked with a black heart icon symbolizes time spent on harmful habits.

Relax. Sleep time.

Other. One of the oldest categories, encompassing all unclassified (household) activities. Later, it came to include time periods that were difficult to assign to any specific activity.

Free. Periods of time not recorded in the tracking system. These were noted retrospectively, after resuming time tracking. The longest gap in this category lasted about one and a half months. After completing my PhD dissertation in May 2021, I decided to abandon the practice of strict time control. The time-tracking app was deleted from my phone, though the account and statistical data were preserved. However, about a month later, I felt the absence of this habit, accompanied by a sense of losing control over my own life.

Of course, this was merely an illusion of control – something that advocates of minimalism intentionally strive to abandon. As The Minimalists aptly note, "It's easy to feel like we control every aspect of our lives. But much of what happens to us each day is entirely outside our influence" [28]. At that point, however, I was not yet ready to completely give up this illusion.

A month later, I reinstalled the app and restored the data from the cloud account. This interval without records led me to introduce a new category – Free, which reflected moments when I deliberately turned off my phone and disconnected not only from time tracking but also from constant online presence.

Inet. Time wasted in mindless internet surfing.

MyLearn. The newest category, added in 2023, when I felt the need to resume learning something new, particularly through online platforms such as Coursera and Prometheus. However, this category did not include foreign language study.

Of course, I was not always completely honest with myself, especially in cases when I spent time on activities to which I wished to devote less attention. In addition, a practical question often arises: what should one do when engaged in two activities simultaneously – for instance, walking with a friend while talking, or watching a film while having dinner?

In such cases, there are two possible approaches. The first is to activate both activities at once, so that later the report shows their combined duration (e.g., Talk + Walking: 2 hours). However, since the app allows up to 25 activities, which can each be combined with the remaining 24, this could potentially produce around 600 overlaps, creating chaos in the report.

A similar problem occurred when I attempted to round up recorded time: approximately 2–3 minutes of logged activity "disappeared" daily due to brief pauses between switching categories, which in the annual summary resulted in about six hours of "lost" time. To correct this, I began overlapping one minute of the previous activity with one minute of the next. After another software update, all these intersections began to appear in the reports: one, two minutes, and occasionally none. However, when generating reports, there remains an option to disable the display of overlapping activities.

The second approach I adopted involved **determining the priority level** of each activity. Priority was assigned to the activity to which I consciously aimed to devote more time, in accordance with my personal values and needs. For example, when walking and talking occurred simultaneously, preference was given to walking, since communication already occupied a significant part of my daily life, while my lifestyle in general was relatively sedentary. Similarly, in the case of watching a film while eating, the priority was given to watching the film: eating is a daily routine, whereas film viewing happens rather infrequently.

At the same time, when engaging in activities that held a high position in my personal hierarchy of values – such as Science, Books, MyLearn, and Cross-Stitch – I maintained the highest possible precision in recording time. Not a single minute could be omitted or artificially added, since it was crucial for me to obtain objective data on the actual amount of time devoted to these activities.

3. Gamification of the Process and Duplication on Paper Media

An attempt to model strategies led to the decision to gamify certain aspects of academic work, in particular to use the Scrivener program for collecting, classifying, and further utilizing illustrative material in the dissertation for obtaining the degree of Doctor of Philosophy [4]. Goal-setting involved the distribution of life activities into groups: family, research, teaching, self-development, and health. At the beginning of each year, I bought a new planner (its aesthetic component was as important as its practical function) and drew up an annual plan on the first pages; then, at the beginning of each month, I detailed the monthly plan, and at the end of the month, I summarized the results achieved, engaging in a retrospective analysis

of accomplishments. The planner contained plans related to self-development, dissertation work, and the study of foreign languages (at that time – German), formulated in the grammatical form of the present tense (I record all plans for the day, week, and month in my diary; I track all spent time using the aTimeLogger app and a habit tracker; I try to perform standard tasks in non-standard ways, etc.). Thus, in the "Self-Development" section, the first four items were devoted specifically to the practice of time tracking and goal-setting. In the "Work on the Dissertation" section, the hourly plans were specified: 10 hours per week, 40 hours per month. These were rather optimistic plans; in practice, I became convinced that even 30 hours of productive work per month yield excellent results: that amount of time can produce two high-quality academic articles or a section of a dissertation.

Weekly plans and reports were written on colored A5 sheets. For example, the first week of 2019 (January 1–6) contained more plans related to self-development and household activities ("I dedicate 15 hours to physical health, clean the house, record all time spent," etc.) and corresponding reports ("physical health: 6 hours 34 minutes, household tasks: 69 hours 24 minutes, tracked expenses, 9 hours of physical exercise," etc.). The plan for the 25th week of 2019 (June 17–23) included more academic and administrative goals, such as "work through half of Nikki Kallen's The Rose, call the editorial office about the collection, try working at night when the heat subsides." The report for that week included a list of books read and films watched, which were later summarized in the annual report.

It is worth noting that the weekly plan included not only household chores but also mindfulness practices (awareness and meditation, finding harmony with oneself), self-development, and hobbies. Thus, during the first week of the year, there was no teaching or research workload: the week was devoted to household matters and leisure, whereas in the middle of the year, greater attention was paid to academic and administrative work as well as to copywriting.

In addition, at the beginning of the year, I followed a specific stylistic pattern in formulating plans: the planned future was grammatically expressed in the present tense (e.g., "I finish reading," "I do," "I record," "I scan"). Later, I finally switched to the infinitive form, answering the question "what needs to be done?" – to write, to continue, to clean.

By mid-year, the reports began to include a table of movies watched and books read, which was subsequently incorporated into the annual summary. Thus, a continuous transformation of reports can be observed depending on the goals set.

At the end of each year, I summarized the results not only through diagrams in aTimeLogger and time-distribution records but also by documenting the books I had read, the films I had watched, and – in accordance with mindfulness practices – expressing gratitude for the past year and compiling a report of achievements, including a separate list of things accomplished for the first time.

For instance, the report on books read included entries such as: "K. Adams, *Journal to the Self*. Self-Development. 20–22.01.2019; R. Dilts, *Changing Belief Systems with NLP*. Self-Development, NLP. 22–27.01.2019; Sher, Gottlieb, *It's Not What You Think*. Self-Development. 11–19.02.2019," and so forth.

The film report featured titles such as *Roma* (dir. A. Cuarón, Academy Award, 2019) (06.01.2019); *The Colour of Magic* based on Terry Pratchett's novel (dir. V. Jean, 2008); *Amadeus* (dir. M. Forman, 1979) (13–14.02.2019), among others.

The achievements report indicated that in February I wrote 40 pages of the theoretical section, in April I completed two articles, and in May I submitted them and participated in a departmental conference.

Thus, the period from 2018 to 2021 was devoted to self-development and steady, focused work on the dissertation.

4. Second key point: thesis defence and emigration

Let us analyze the reports for 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. I chose this particular period not only because I emigrated in 2022 but also due to the fact that in May 2021 I successfully defended my dissertation. After that, external control – that of my academic supervisor – weakened, and I had to devote considerable attention to self-motivation.

Thus, in 2022, two significant changes occurred simultaneously, both of which defined my subsequent lifestyle (Fig. 4).

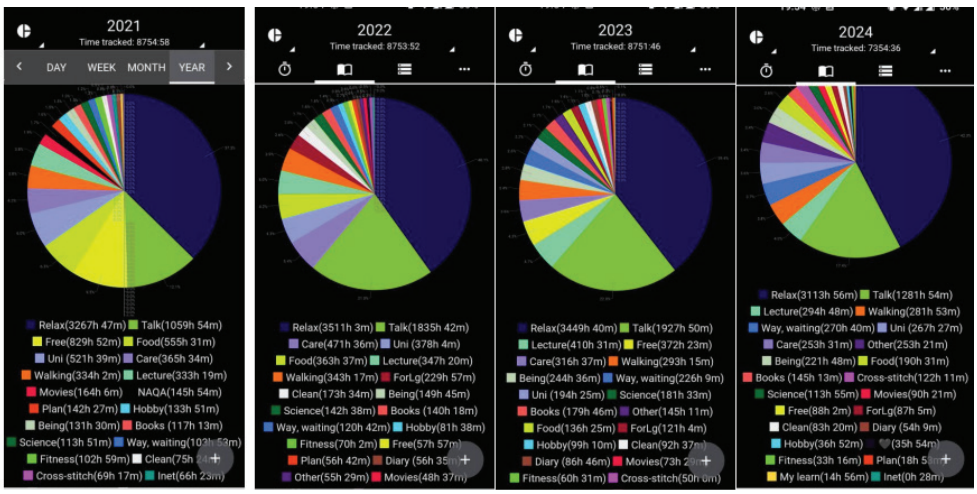

Figure 4. 2021-2024 reports

Let us compare the reports for 2021, the year of writing and defending my PhD thesis, as well as the beginning of my official teaching position at Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University. At that time, communication accounted for 17% of total time (1,059 hours).

In February 2022, I traveled to Turkey under the Erasmus program, and it was during that same week that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, an event that determined my decision to accept an offer to stay in Turkey and work there under contract.

The challenges of emigration and adaptation to a new environment required me to dedicate considerably more time to communication with colleagues, who actively helped me to settle in. As a result, the time spent on communication increased to 21–22%: in 2022 this amounted to 1,835 hours, and in 2023 1,927 hours.

Between January 1 and November 3, 2024, this percentage decreased again to 17%, though this reduction was the result of deliberate psychological efforts aimed at distancing myself from constant (and often obligatory) social interactions: a process that inevitably affected my relationships with some colleagues. Nevertheless, this self-imposed detachment did not lead to open conflicts, and my academic performance indicators at the end of the year continued to remain a top priority, both for myself and for my department leadership.

One of the most significant factors influencing the lifestyle of a philologist-scholar is **cognitive overload**. Writing high-quality academic papers, maintaining a heavy teaching workload, and engaging in intensive social interaction all require a substantial amount of cognitive energy by default.

In my case, as in that of many colleagues who were forced into emigration, this situation was further complicated by the fact that communication takes place in a foreign language, often one previously unknown. I teach linguistics to Turkish students; initially, our communication was conducted in English, a non-native language for both sides. Later, as I began learning Turkish, I started to explain material in the students' native tongue – a language new to me and belonging to an entirely different language family, the Ural–Altaic group.

This linguistic shift affected not only the syntactic, morphological, and grammatical levels but also the lexical one, since the majority of Turkish vocabulary has little in common with English or other Indo-European languages. Such psycho-cognitive overload often resulted in severe exhaustion by the end of the working day, which accumulated toward the end of each semester and academic year.

Let us draw attention to the sharply increased percentage of time dedicated to learning a foreign language. Whereas in 2021 this activity amounted to approximately 9 hours – that is, I was essentially not engaged in language learning – in 2022 I devoted 2.6% of my time (230 hours) to studying Turkish. At the initial stage, this included activities on the Duolingo platform, and later – private lessons. In 2023, I was forced to interrupt my studies during the summer due to my teacher's relocation to another city, which resulted in the time spent learning Turkish being reduced by half – to 121 hours.

The outcome of this active linguistic adaptation was increased independence in everyday life and the ability to resolve routine matters without involving colleagues; communication with Turkish colleagues and students became richer and more informative. In addition, thanks to the acquired knowledge, in May 2025 I successfully passed the C1-level Turkish language proficiency exam, which broadened my opportunities for collaboration with various institutions and granted me the right to officially supervise master's theses without the need for co-supervision from Turkish faculty members.

As for the **teaching workload**, it did not change significantly in 2022, 2023, or 2024. In the Turkish education system, the teaching load is calculated weekly rather than annually, and in my case it ranges from 19 to 27 hours per week (according to the contract, foreign lecturers are not allowed to exceed 30 hours per week, which corresponds to 15 teaching sessions).

In addition, a considerable amount of time and mental effort is devoted to supervising master's theses – in 2023 I supervised one thesis, while in 2024 this number increased to six.

Thus, **emigration** affected both the quantity and quality of time spent on various activities: during the first year, the year of adaptation, I had almost no time left for research work. However, over time, through a series of deliberate and mindful choices, I managed to reduce social load and return to my primary academic priorities.

Starting in June 2024, I began using the **To-Do Focus** application as a motivational tool for managing an increasing number of projects. This app, based on gamification principles, encourages concentration through a reward system. For every 25 minutes of focused work, following the Pomodoro method described above, the user earns 25 units of virtual currency ("suns"), which can be used to "grow a forest." The virtual currency becomes active after 24 hours, and additional bonuses are granted for daily logins. After 80 consecutive days of app usage, users receive 480 suns per day, with a maximum daily limit of 800 units.

This system promotes a balanced distribution of workload throughout the day. Each new level in the application requires an increasingly large number of resources: for instance, progressing from level 0 to level 1 requires 1,800 units, while advancing from level 5 to level 6 requires 33,000 units. After reaching level 11, according to user rankings, the process of growing a second tree begins – illustrating the long-term engagement encouraged by the app. Some users have achieved results of four trees and more than 250,000 points, indicating years of consistent use. (See Figs. 5–6).

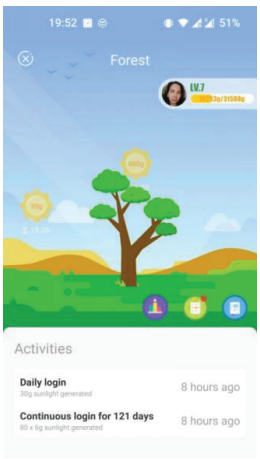

Fig. 5. "Growing tree"

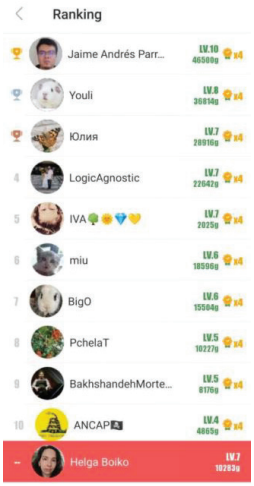

Fig. 6. User rating

The application allows users to organize tasks by project, estimating their workload in Pomodoros – time intervals that are, by default, set to 25 minutes, although users can customize the duration of each Pomodoro. For example, among my own projects were the writing of this article (2 Pomodoros) and the creation of a linguistic corpus (11 Pomodoros), among others.

The app also provides detailed statistics on the time spent in focused work and its distribution across projects on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. This tool proved useful both for maintaining motivation and for analyzing personal productivity.

Thus, the use of aTimeLogger made it possible to track personal time expenditure, which, over a long period, vividly illustrated major life changes – including relocation to another country, a new workplace, a different cultural environment, and everyday habits, leaving behind a kind of valuable historical record.

Meanwhile, the To-Do Focus app helped me restore concentration skills and reestablish not only the habit of planning, but also of adhering to those plans. Working in Pomodoro mode allowed me to stay focused on a task for at least 25 minutes – often a sufficient period for meaningful progress. Completing even a small portion of work brought a sense of satisfaction and self-respect.

5. Changing lifestyle elements: transition from hypercontrol and digitalism to awareness and digital minimalism

While working on this article, I realized that the need for strict time control gradually disappeared. This process evolved slowly and was accompanied by the introduction of new approaches to time organization and a reduction in the influence of digital technologies.

As Cal Newport argues, digital minimalism is "a philosophy of technology use in which you focus your online time on a small number of carefully selected and optimized activities that strongly support what you value – and then happily miss out on everything else" [17]. Similarly, Bharati and Das describe digital minimalism as "a philosophy that encourages individuals to use digital tools mindfully and selectively… aimed at eliminating nonessential digital noise, optimizing technology use for meaningful purposes, and reclaiming time for activities that promote personal growth and well-being" [2].

At the same time, the importance of digital well-being is underscored by the fact that it "promotes the use of technology precisely to counteract excessive screen time through self-regulation and health maintenance" [30].

In reality, the so-called "limitless opportunities" of the virtual world often deprive a person of freedom of choice, leaving them feeling lost and indecisive. Unfortunately, this leads to situations where decisions are made not by the user but by app and web developers, who trade in the most valuable commodity – human attention. As Sherry Turkle aptly notes in her interview with Henry Jenkins, "we make our technologies, and in turn our technologies make and shape us; technologies have an inner history that determines how we interact with them and how they shape our relationships with one another" [12].

This leads to a loss of attentional freedom: attention becomes a kind of "currency" in digital culture – it is bought, sold, and captured through carefully designed strategies. At the same time, the ability to concentrate under the influence of digital technologies has declined catastrophically – as confirmed by studies conducted by Cal Newport, Greg McKeown, Leo Babauta, and others. Constant exposure to digital media and information streams causes a significant decrease in focus and cognitive endurance.

For instance, in a study by Wallace (2023), it was demonstrated that increased screen time correlates with a rise in ADHD symptoms, with impulsivity serving as a key mediating factor [32].

The advocate of digital minimalism Leo Babauta, author of the ZenHabits blog [34], observes:

"I'm not sure we're ready for this way of living, because we created it too quickly. We have no effective strategies to deal with being online most of the time. We haven't developed cultural norms for such a lifestyle. Nor do we have a clear description of a better alternative at this level of connectedness. We plugged ourselves into all of this before we built a system capable of managing the flow of information." [1]

The desire to regain the ability to concentrate, which had significantly deteriorated due to intensive interaction with digital technologies, became the impetus for changing my life strategy – from digital control to mindfulness. A turning point was reading Catherine Price's book How to Break Up With Your Phone [21], which inspired me to take more radical steps, described below.

A significant influence also came from Cal Newport's Digital Minimalism [17] and Greg McKeown's Essentialism [5], which articulate the philosophy of eliminating the nonessential in order to achieve truly meaningful goals. My trust in Newport's ideas is reinforced by a pragmatic indicator: according to his Google Scholar profile [18], his h-index at the time of writing this article is 35 (it was 18 in 2019). This means that 35 of his works have been cited at least 35 times. When I first encountered his book in 2018, this figure was 25. Thus, Newport's own academic success exemplifies the practical efficiency of the methods he promotes and validates his philosophy of focused, meaningful work.

This approach gained additional motivation from my academic values: I clearly defined for myself the goal of increasing both the quantity and quality of my scholarly publications in journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, as well as improving my h-index (which, at the time of writing, is 3, with 35 citations [5]). In addition to intrinsic motivation, there is also an external factor – these metrics are taken into account by the university administration when deciding on the extension of my contract.

The first stage in transitioning to a more mindful digital behavior involved using the **AppBlock** application to restrict access to entertainment platforms that consumed a significant amount of time without providing any productive value. A typical situation occurred when reading a single online article led to hours of uncontrolled browsing, resulting in a feeling of "digital hangover" – fatigue and informational overload. Indeed, as confirmed by a study conducted by McLean Hospital, this state arises from excessive screen exposure, which leads to anxiety, exhaustion, and apathy [16].

Similarly, the phenomenon of social media "hangover" (overload) is manifested in mental fatigue after prolonged social media use, as described by Rex [23]. Therefore, I set strict limits on messaging apps such as Telegram and Viber, restricting their use on weekdays to no more than 30 minutes per day.

Telegram, in particular, poses a serious threat to concentration, functioning not merely as a messenger but also as a social network: the ability to subscribe to channels and create one's own facilitates a stimulus–response–dopamine loop, which quickly fosters addictive behavior. As described in the Dartmouth Undergraduate Journal of Science, "dopamine feedback loops" reinforce compulsive user behavior, further intensifying the problem [29].

To mitigate this risk, I unsubscribed from most channels and suspended my own online activity, thus reclaiming both time and attention.

As part of optimizing digital behavior, a 30-minute daily limit was set for reading from a mobile device. Despite occasional exceptions driven by deep engagement with literary texts, this practice proved to be effective.

Additionally, a digital hygiene routine was implemented: the smartphone was no longer used in the bedroom, and at night, both internet connectivity and notifications were automatically disabled. This measure significantly reduced the negative impact of gadgets on sleep quality.

A comparative analysis of smartphone usage statistics revealed a marked shift: during the second week after installing the blocking app, the daily interaction time with the device reached almost six hours, most of which consisted of messaging and unstructured web surfing. Two months later, after fine-tuning the restrictions, the average daily use decreased to 1–1.5 hours.

It should be noted that WhatsApp remained the primary communication tool, serving as the main channel for staying in touch with family in Ukraine and colleagues in Türkiye. In this context, Telegram never gained significant popularity, while Viber was rarely used. (See Figs. 7–8).

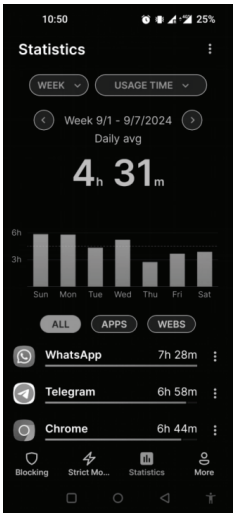

Fig. 7. First week of use

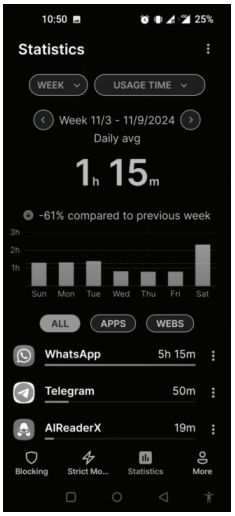

Fig. 8. Two months later

The reduction in time spent interacting with digital devices can be viewed through the lens of the attention economy, which conceptualizes attention as a limited resource that becomes the object of competition among media platforms [9]. In this context, establishing digital limits represents not only an individual practice of self-control but also a means of resisting the systemic mechanisms of digital environments designed to maximize user attention retention.

As part of implementing digital minimalism, the smartphone's display was switched to monochrome mode, reducing its visual appeal and, consequently,

the frequency of use. All notifications – except those necessary for emergency communication – were disabled, and most applications were deleted. In practice, this resulted in all remaining apps being placed on a single screen, while the home screen was left icon-free, except for a few essential tools pinned to the bottom tray. The smartphone thus became a purely utilitarian instrument.

Only local online shopping platforms (Trendyol, Dolap, Hepsiburada) were retained, but their use was limited to situations involving an actual need to purchase specific items. In such cases, color settings could be temporarily adjusted if necessary. However, the default monochrome mode effectively neutralized the visual appeal of these applications, eliminating the sense of novelty and reducing the motivation for impulsive browsing in search of new, brightly colored offers (see Figs. 9–10).

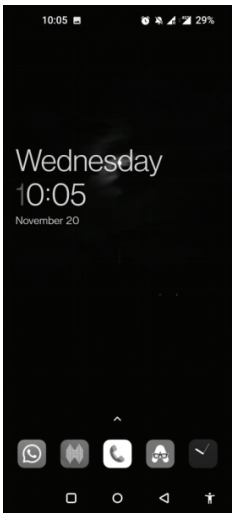

Fig. 9. Smartphone home screen

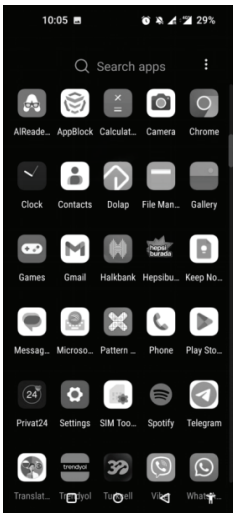

Fig. 10. List of applications

I was not the only one who tried this method to reduce the smartphone's appeal. As The Guardian journalist Rick Samadder notes, quoting Catherine Price:

"I start with Price's advice – make the screen monochrome. It's a truly radical change. Apps no longer show off; photos in the feed lose their appeal. The deprivation of colour can be the decisive factor" [24].

An important step was the decision to delete the aTimeLogger and To-Do Focus applications. Their use required daily logins, activation during various tasks, and constant screen unlocking – all of which contradicted the principles of digital minimalism. It is worth noting that the number of smartphone unlocks decreased by 32%. Most of these unlocks lasted no longer than 30 seconds and were connected solely with switching between activities in the app. However, even such short actions encouraged picking up the phone and distracted from the main activity.

In the context of developing digital self-regulation, reducing the number of smartphone unlocks (unlocking behavior) plays an important role. Studies show that mobile devices are often activated not for practical purposes but as a result of

conditioned habits: in field studies, simple unlocking occurs during an average of 2.9% of total phone interaction time [11], and repeated activation behavior often correlates with psychosocial parameters, including the level of anxiety [33].

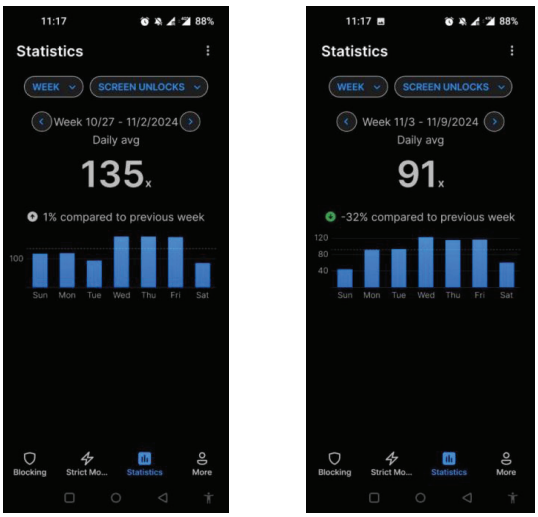

Fig. 11 Number of screen unlocks immediately after installing AppBlock and two months later

Therefore, I prepared screenshots of these applications in advance to illustrate the ideas presented in this article and then deleted the apps. The aTimeLogger account and all data were preserved, as historical and chronological data have their own value. However, unlike the experience three years ago, this time I do not feel a lack of the habit of controlling my time, since I now try to manage it consciously. This approach gives me a sense of joy and satisfaction from the work accomplished rather than from the mechanical recording of hours spent.

At the beginning of the 2024/2025 academic year, my class schedule was changed so that most of my lectures took place between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m., leaving the morning hours free. I decided to dedicate this time to research and began coming to the faculty specifically for this purpose. However, over time I discovered that working at the faculty, even in a private office, created inner tension due to the anticipation of possible distractions. This prevented deep concentration and caused psychological discomfort. After teaching classes, I experienced both moral and physical burnout, which led to nervous exhaustion, as teaching requires switching to an extroverted mode, whereas research work demands an introverted mode, deep focus, and solitude.

Awareness of my introverted nature and my role as a researcher played a crucial role in improving the organization of my working time. The solution was to start working in the university library, where the atmosphere fosters concentration and minimizes distractions. This allowed me to restore the balance between research activity and teaching work, effectively replenishing my energy before classes.

My path from digital control and “digitalism” to digital minimalism demonstrates the importance of adapting to changing life circumstances. Six years of time tracking

provided insight into the key aspects of my lifestyle: sufficient time was devoted to sleep (42%) and reading fiction (5%), an excessive share to communication (about 20%), while physical activity (around 3% of recorded time) and scientific work (about 2%, totaling 1,120 hours since the start of the experiment) were insufficient. At the same time, after deciding to work in the library and abandoning the use of the aTimeLogger application, not only the quantity but also the quality of my work improved. The library opens at 9 a.m., and arriving on time allows me to secure a technically convenient place with access to power outlets and to work with deep focus for 2–3 hours. Over the course of two weeks (seven working visits), I completed work on four academic papers: three were revised according to reviewers' comments and submitted to journals, and one was written from scratch.

At the present stage, control in my life has given way to mindfulness. I find satisfaction in research, which remains my main priority, and in meaningful interactions with students. The practices of minimalism and essentialism help me to focus on what truly matters, eliminating the unnecessary. The smartphone has retained its usefulness as a tool, but now it serves my goals–rather than dictating the rhythm of my life.

Conclusions and prospects for research

The conclusions presented in this article are based on the analysis of a six-year longitudinal experiment (2018–2024). Keeping detailed diaries and recording all time expenditures made it possible to identify key trends, define personal values and priorities, and adapt schedules and time-management strategies under the conditions of emigration.

Based on this experience, a promising direction for further research would be to conduct a similar study involving students of the Faculty of Literature at Atatürk University. Particularly valuable could be the participation of students from various departments – such as Sociology, Turkish Language, and English Language. As an instructor at the preparatory faculty, I have observed a growing tendency among students who have recently graduated from high school or entered university within one to two years after graduation to lose their ability to concentrate, memorize, and stay focused. The likely cause of these cognitive changes is the excessive use of smartphones and other digital technologies.

The practice of temporarily limiting digital habits, which I introduce in my classes, reveals the presence of pronounced digital dependency among students. For instance, when students are asked to hand in their phones during tests or assignments – a measure designed to prevent the use of translators and distractions from messaging apps – they often experience noticeable psychological discomfort. This observation highlights the relevance of studying their digital behavior and searching for strategies to minimize the negative effects of technology.

In this context, an experiment involving students could be both theoretically valuable and practically significant. It might include self-observation of digital habits, analysis of personal time patterns, and the development of strategies for behavioral adjustment over a period of three to six months. The main goal of such an experiment would be the transition to a more mindful lifestyle, based on concentration and effective time allocation.

The successful implementation of this approach will require fostering in students the skills of goal-setting, intrinsic motivation, and the development of a balanced work-rest routine, including sufficient sleep and physical activity. These aspects are particularly important, as in just a few years students will become professionals in their respective fields. To perform their future professional duties effectively, they must not only possess solid domain-specific knowledge but also develop competences in self-organization and life management strategies.

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Ольга БОЙКО

САМООРГАНІЗАЦІЯ І ЦИФРОВИЙ МІНІМАЛІЗМ ЯК АКАДЕМІЧНЕ СЕРЕДОВИЩЕ ФІЛОЛОГА

У статті розглянуто процес самоорганізації та мінімалізації використання електронних пристроїв в житті науковця-філолога. Проаналізовано чинники вимушеної еміграції та зростання когнітивного перевантаження. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена діджиталізацією наукової та освітньої діяльності та необхідністю об'єктивно оцінити позитивні та негативні сторони такого підходу. У статті використано методи кількісного аналізу витрат часу, компаративний та діахронічний підходи, що дозволяє виявити ключові тенденції у балансі між науковою, викладацькою та особистою діяльністю. Особливу увагу приділено зміні стилю життя після переходу до іншого соціокультурного контексту, відмови від гіперконтролю на користь усвідомленої організації праці та використанню практик цифрового мінімалізму. Результати дослідження можна впровадити для розробки стратегій підвищення продуктивності та концентрації науковців і студентів в різних гуманітарних галузях.

Ключові слова: *цифровий мінімалізм, діджиталізація, стратегії продуктивності, усвідомленість, цифрова гігієна*