THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIVE AND LINGUISTIC SKILLS IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE FROM INTERACTIVE DIGITAL PLATFORMS

EL DESARROLLO DE COMPETENCIAS COMUNICATIVAS Y LINGÜÍSTICAS EN LENGUA EXTRANJERA A PARTIR DE PLATAFORMAS DIGITALES INTERACTIVAS

Vitalii Vasyukov[1*]
E-mail: vvf0109@yandex.ru
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0743-5616
Anara Zhumasheva[2]
E-mail: anara-zhash@mail.ru
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2552-6565
Elena Pogozheva[2]
E-mail: pogosheva@mail.ru
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8100-633X
Irina Murzak[3]
E-mail: imurzak@yandex.ru
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8470-4192
Elena Panova[4]
E-mail: panova_ep@mail.ru
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3868-3834
[1] Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Russia.
[2] Toraighyrov University, Kazakhstan.
[3] Moscow City University, Russia.
[4] Moscow Polytechnic University, Russia.
*Corresponding author

ABSTRACT

The article explores the use of interactive educational platforms to enhance the professional foreign language communicative and linguocultural competencies of philology students. The study employed various scientific methods, including systems analysis to assess existing research, content analysis of digital platforms, and synthesis to organize research materials. Developing these competencies boosts student motivation, broadens cultural perspectives, and enriches teaching methods. Expanding educational content with digital technology components is crucial. While interactive methods and technologies are key to competency development, further research is needed to identify effective approaches for their use in language teaching.

Keywords:

Foreign language, digital learning, interactive digital platform, communicative competency, linguocultural competency.

RESUMEN

El artículo explora el uso de plataformas educativas interactivas para mejorar las competencias comunicativas en lenguas extranjeras y las competencias lingüístico-culturales de los estudiantes de filología. El estudio empleó varios métodos científicos, incluyendo el análisis de sistemas para evaluar la investigación existente, el análisis de contenido de plataformas digitales y la síntesis para organizar los materiales de investigación. El desarrollo de estas competencias aumenta la motivación de los estudiantes, amplía sus perspectivas culturales y enriquece los métodos de enseñanza. Es crucial ampliar el contenido educativo con componentes de tecnología digital. Aunque los métodos interactivos y las tecnologías son clave para el desarrollo de competencias, se necesita más investigación para identificar enfoques efectivos para su uso en la enseñanza de idiomas.

Palabras clave:

Lengua extranjera, aprendizaje digital, plataforma digital interactiva, competencia comunicativa, competencia lingüocultural.

INTRODUCTION

The socioeconomic aspects of today's life have pushed to the fore the issue of training competent and competitive philologists. The challenges of linguistic globalization, the proactive orientation of the information space, and the intensive development of information technology (Balova et al., 2022) have shaped the high priority of professional training in foreign languages by philology students. In the 21st century, successful language learning is associated with the use of digital learning technologies, which have entered the educational environment and made a breakthrough in acquiring knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Modern digital learning technologies provide invaluable support in implementing and supporting language learning. A way to improve the efficiency of the process is to use advanced online platforms and digital technologies (Gabidullina et al., 2023). These technologies help ensure learning interactivity and create a special learning environment for foreign language learners. Today, various educational services can be recognized as a powerful lever for managing the educational process.

The contradiction between the rapid development of digital technologies, the informatization of higher education, and insufficient systematic application of modern trends in the training of philology students outlines the theoretical and methodological problem of support for the use of interactive digital platforms in developing the professional foreign language communicative and linguocultural competencies in philology students.

We believe that the transition to using interactive platforms in language learning will significantly increase training effectiveness. It becomes relevant to conduct a detailed study of the implementation of interactive digital platforms for developing professional foreign language communicative and linguocultural competencies in philology students.

The research community still lacks a common perspective on the structure of professional competency of philology students and the types of competencies at its basis. Today's pedagogy does not have a generally agreed-upon list of key competencies of philology students, which is confirmed by a significant body of scientific works. Our analysis of scientific sources and our position on the issue suggest the following key competencies that need to be developed in philology students: communicative, linguocultural (Guskova, 2016), and informational (Vorobeva, 2011).

Scientific research into developing foreign language communicative competency covers a range of issues, the resolution of which involves different conceptual approaches and interpretations of the phenomenon. We should note major discrepancies in the definition of foreign language communicative competency. For instance, Krasilnikova (2009), sees foreign language communicative competency as a system of inner resources for effective interaction: communicative positions, roles, stereotypes, attitudes, knowledge, abilities, and skills. Levitan (2007), interprets the foreign language communicative competency of philology students as an individual quality of a subject in professional translation necessary and sufficient for performing translation at the normatively set level, which positively correlates with the main performance parameters of this activity –quality, accuracy, productivity, and reliability.

According to Gurkina (2015), foreign language communicative competency is a three-level structure (strategic, operational-tactical, and technical levels) with subordination and coordination relationships, comprising knowledge, skills, and dispositions. As noted by Taiurskaia (2015), communicative competency is a synthesis of professional qualities manifested through analytical-perceptive, motivational-communicative, professionally-oriented, and tactical-psychological communicative skills in solving professional tasks. Kobzeva et al. (2015), consider foreign language communicative competency as an individual's ability to use language creatively and purposefully in interaction with different interlocutors.

Given these approaches to the concept of communicative competency, we understand the communicative competency of philology students as a system of knowledge, abilities, skills, values, value orientations, and personal qualities. The level of communicative competency determines students' ability to communicate in the native and foreign language, effectively organize professional communication, work in a team, resolve conflicts, adequately perceive themselves in communication, encourage communication partners to work together to achieve the goal, and quickly assimilate new and more effective forms of communicative behavior.

According to Gorodetskaia (2009), the specificity of linguocultural competency development consists in the fact that it is an important indicator of readiness for multicultural communication. As suggested by Khalupo (2011), linguocultural competency is an integral system of linguistic units with a national-cultural component of semantics and the assimilation of knowledge about the country of the target language and linguocultural knowledge and skills that allow one to perform language activities in a foreign language.

According to Sadokhin (2008), argues that linguocultural competency is an integral part of communicative competency because it ensures communication at the level of identifying concepts, associations, and images arising in communication. Linguocultural competency is a system of nationally codified background knowledge that ensures adequate communication with native speakers

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(Morozkina, 2006). As part of their linguocultural competency, students develop an understanding of the national customs, traditions, and realities of the country of the target language and the ability to obtain cultural information from the language units and use it to achieve effective communication (Vartanov, 2009). The lack of or insufficient development of linguocultural competency may become a prerequisite for discommunication.

The linguocultural component is especially important for philology students, since a philologist must be fluent in foreign languages and understand the social and ethical values of foreign societies. We interpret linguocultural competency as a system of linguocultural knowledge, abilities, and motives that allows students to organize their activity relying on their linguocultural horizon and communicate well in intercultural communication. The development of this competency is regarded as the active interaction of participants in obtaining knowledge and skills that ensure successful intercultural communication.

Regarding professional foreign language competency of philology students, researchers note that the development of digital technologies and their broad distribution and positive influence contribute to the development of new strategic language learning methods. The need to access information regardless of time and place has amplified the influence of digital and mobile technologies, which have adjusted language learning (Sysoev, 2013).

The application of digital technologies and interactive platforms in language learning is becoming increasingly widespread. In the last decade, digital technologies have proven beneficial in language learning (Sidorova, 2017). Owing to digital technology, the provision of pedagogical support in language learning is becoming a demand of the time, so educators need to consider accessibility when developing curricula (Bloch, 2013).

Digital learning is the process of applying digital technologies and interactive platforms that enable students to more quickly and comprehensively grasp educational concepts, apply theory, and improve teaching methods, using the teacher's time effectively and facilitating a broad exchange of knowledge (Kilicheva & Turmanov, 2020). An interactive platform is a personality-oriented Internet resource or a limited interactive network fully dedicated to subject-specific and developing content, filled with learning materials, and providing them to users on certain conditions. The resources of interactive educational platforms for language learning can serve as the main source of learning materials and as a supplement to organize the learning process most effectively. Unlike traditional methods, the mechanism of work on interactive educational platforms enables constant monitoring of students' activities.

The article aims to study the possibilities of using interactive educational platforms to develop professional foreign language communicative and linguocultural competencies of philology students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In accordance with the approaches to using interactive platforms in language learning, the study adopted a qualitative approach to research.

The study was conducted in the form of a review of scientific literature on the topic and an analysis of interactive platforms that contribute to the development of professional foreign language communicative and linguocultural competencies in philology students.

The purpose of the study was to summarize research findings related to specific research questions, namely:

1. What are the criteria for selecting interactive educational platforms determining their accessibility and functionality within the framework of the development of professional foreign language communicative and linguocultural competencies of philology students?

2. What interactive digital platforms satisfy these criteria?

The study used the following set of general and special scientific methods, the complex of which was designed to obtain objective and reliable results:

- systems analysis – to establish the extent to which the research problem has been elaborated when searching for scientific developments that could potentially answer the first research question;

- content analysis – to study the content of interactive digital platforms;

- synthesis – to systematize the research materials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of scientific literature shows that the main criteria for selecting interactive digital platforms that determine their functionality include the following (Table 1).

Table 1. Criteria for selecting interactive digital platforms.

No.	Criterion	Description	Source
1	Understandable interface	Implies an understandable layout of the sections, high-quality design, and convenient navigation	Morozkina (2006); Khalupo (2011)
2	Methodologically justified selection of content	All objectives need to be methodologically valuable and target specific educational and linguistic skills and abilities; the presence of multimedia learning elements (images, animations, audio, and video)	Vorobeva (2011); Guskova (2016)
3	Interactivity	Interaction with other participants	Sysoev (2013); Bloch (2013)
4	Variability of tasks	The presence of a variety of tasks designed to improve language skills at different proficiency levels and with different language learning abilities	Gorodetskaia (2009); Kilicheva & Turmanov (2020)
5	Opportunity to monitor the results of learning and diagnose mistakes throughout the learning process	Allows documenting the problematic aspects of language learning. A detailed portrait of the student with their strengths and weaknesses is drawn up, and a source of big data is created to provide the student with variable content	Sadokhin (2008); Sidorova (2017)
6	User feedback	Assumes the presence of functions allowing the student to contact the teacher or virtual instructor to get consultations	Sadokhin (2008); Sidorova (2017)
	Students' ability to make additions to the task base	Allows determining students' cognitive interests, as they typically share only those tasks, materials, and topics that are interesting to them or cause no difficulty	Sadokhin (2008); Sidorova (2017)

Source: Prepared by authors

The content analysis points to the following 10 platforms that meet the criteria (Table 2).

Table 2. Interactive digital platforms contributing to the development of foreign language communicative and linguocultural competencies in philology students.

No.	Platform	Brief characteristic
1	Duolingo	A digital platform with lessons, which include listening, translation, and colloquial vocabulary tasks; incorporate the components of testing and learning everyday vocabulary while applying various approaches. The learning process is gamified: the completion of tasks is rewarded with in-game currency, lingots, which can be spent in the in-game shop or gifted to other users
2	BBC Learning English	A platform with special interactive exercises that significantly improve the user's linguocultural competency
3	Livemocha	A platform where users can find a partner to get practical experience in speaking English
4	Bussu	A platform with lessons and interactive tasks designed to facilitate the memorization of vocabulary and promote clear pronunciation of words, phrases, and sentences where the completed tasks are checked by native speakers
5	Callan Method	A platform that allows one to learn new words and constructions, perform interactive exercises quickly, develop correct pronunciation, use the built-in voice recorder, and write dictations read by native English speakers
6	HiNative	A social networking platform for those seeking to learn English by communicating with others; features live interaction with native speakers, allowing users to learn proper pronunciation. Once signed in (versions are available for regular web browsers, Android, and iOS), students can ask community members questions related to the translation of words or phrases and correct pronunciation
7	Padlet	A website allowing one to communicate with other users via text messages, images, links, etc. The place for communication is called a «wall». Each page-wall has its unique URL. By sending it to colleagues or students, the user enables collaborative work
8	Qiuzizz	An educational service targeting educators for creating interactive lessons, group assignments, exams, unit tests, and pre-tests
9	LingQ	Offers a database of online lessons and a huge online library of materials. The mobile app for Android and iOS is especially convenient to use. The app gives the user tools to read, translate, and listen to different texts in English. The advantage is the so-called Ling-oes: unfamiliar words selected by the user are highlighted depending on the difficulty of memorization when a new text appears
10	Rosetta Stone	Not just a single service for language learning, but a set of mobile applications for one of the most famous interactive textbooks. There is a large set of interactive lessons, the purpose of which is to create an associative series. Using a microphone, the user can assess the correctness of pronunciation

Source: Prepared by authors

Our findings demonstrate that in the development of foreign language communicative and linguocultural competencies, interactive digital platforms are employed to create the conditions and educational situations in which subjects interact in individual, pair, and group forms.

Interactive digital learning is marked by a shift from the leading role of the teacher as a subject in educational activity to students actively involved in the learning process, by a transition from the teachers' predominance to students; autonomy with occasional interventions by the teacher, when necessary, in which the teacher and student are equal (Turanin & Posokhova, 2023). The interactive learning classroom transforms from a place of passive transfer of knowledge from instructor to students to a community with a common purpose and responsibility for learning outcomes, where the student is motivated to learn from the instructor and other students, so their self-motivation increases (Khilchenko & Olar, 2014). In addition to motivation, greater involvement in learning activities allows the student to better assimilate information and understand relationships, which in turn ensures better memorization and assimilation of educational material.

Interactive digital platforms motivate students to be more attentive and active as they understand the interconnectedness of education with real-life experiences. This practice is also believed to be more effective for the memorization and assimilation of educational material and the development of practical communicative skills than passive learning forms, such as the teacher's explanation of educational material, frontal questioning, reading, listening to audio texts, or watching videos, which mainly form receptive skills. Interactive learning on digital platforms allows students to master the learning material more deeply and tap into higher levels of mental activity related to analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, to form non-verbal communicative skills, such as the ability to work effectively in a team, etc. (Kilicheva & Turmanov, 2020). Using interactive information technologies in language learning contributes to higher engagement and motivation and the formation of important non-verbal communication skills. Interactive digital platforms are an effective tool for organizing interactive learning (Bloch, 2013).

Language teaching cannot remain traditional in the face of profound changes in the forms of communication and communicative needs, entailing the transformation of language education, particularly changes in the methods and means of mastering a foreign language. Traditional interactive methods and forms of academic work in class and during self-study, such as the Sokrates method, brainstorming, skimming, storytelling, the interview method, the case study method, and the project method, need to be revisited to be applied in the context of digital learning. Innovative forms are emerging alongside traditional ones, particularly in the classroom environment where digital tools are used.

Digital learning materials on interactive digital platforms provide students with opportunities beyond what an instructor can offer with manuals and other printed materials. The key to capitalizing on these opportunities lies in recognizing what they are and how best to use them. Choosing the right methods and digital tools to get the most out of ensures the achievement of learning objectives.

CONCLUSIONS

The development of communicative and linguocultural competencies increases students' motivation, expands their cultural outlook, diversifies the techniques and formats of work, and appeals to their intelligence and emotions. To improve students' communicative and linguocultural competencies, it is critical to expand the criteria and content of educational material by applying components in the foreign language course that involve digital technologies.

Interactive methods and information technologies in language teaching are important factors for the development of foreign language communicative and linguocultural competencies. The organization of interactive learning using digital platforms requires determining the criteria for selecting the platforms that determine their functionality and identifying specific platforms that meet these criteria. Despite the considerable interest, the issue of digital technologies in language teaching requires further linguodactic research, particularly in the quest for effective approaches and methods of utilizing interactive technologies.

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