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The role of interactive platforms in learning foreign languages

Роль інтерактивних платформ у вивченні іноземних мов

Summary. *Ukraine's entry into the common educational space and the intensive development of the global computer network have necessitated the use of digital technologies in the study of foreign languages in higher education institutions. Knowledge of a foreign language is mandatory in our time. In this regard, it is relevant to analyze and improve the existing digital methods used in its study. The purpose of the article is to develop directions for improving digital methods in the educational process in the study of foreign languages in higher education institutions of Ukraine. The main tasks of the article are to establish the essence of the concept of "digital-methodology", to determine the main methods and technologies used in teaching foreign languages, to consider the main problems of implementing digital-methods and to develop ways to solve them. According to the results of the study, it was found that the main digital methods used in the study of foreign languages are M-Learning, Web-quest, Language portfolio and Online-Diary. Digital methods in combination with traditional teaching methods are able to solve the tasks provided by the curriculum. However, the analysis of domestic experience has shown that there are a number of problems that complicate the implementation of digital methods in the educational process: the unwillingness of some higher education institutions to change, lack of proper training of foreign language teachers in the use of digital technologies, slow pace of digitalization of higher education, lack of practice with the use of digital technologies among students studying foreign languages. The main ways to solve these problems are to revise the State Standards in terms of training foreign language teachers to use digital technologies, update computer equipment and provide broadband Internet access to higher education institutions, develop and support online learning platforms, and introduce dual education.*

Key words: *Digital-methods, digital technologies, M-Learning, blog, YouTube, educational platform.*

Анотація. Вхідження України в єдиний освітній простір та інтенсивний розвиток глобальної комп'ютерної мережі зумовили необхідність застосування цифрових технологій під час вивчення іноземних мов у закладах вищої освіти. Знання іноземної мови є обов'язковим в наш час. В зв'язку з цим є актуальним аналіз та вдосконалення існуючих digital-методик, які застосовуються під час її вивчення. Мета статті – розробити напрями удосконалення digital-методик у навчальному процесі при вивченні іноземних мов в закладах вищої освіти України. Основні завдання статті – встановити суть поняття «digital-методика», визначити основні методики та технології, які використовуються при викладанні іноземних мов, розглянути основні проблеми впровадження digital-методик та розробити шляхи їх вирішення. За результатами дослідження встановлено, що основними цифровими методиками, які застосовуються при вивченні іноземних мов, є M-Learning, Веб-квест, Language portfolio та Online-Diary. Digital-методики в поєднанні з традиційними методами навчання здатні вирішити завдання, передбачені навчальною програмою. Однак аналіз вітчизняного досвіду показав, що існує ряд проблем, які ускладнюють впровадження digital-методик в навчальний процес: неготовність окремих закладів вищої освіти до змін, відсутність належної підготовки викладачів іноземних мов у використанні цифрових технологій, слабкі темпи цифровізації вищої освіти, відсутність практики з використанням цифрових технологій у студентів, які вивчають іноземні мови. Основними шляхами вирішення цих проблем є перегляд Державних стандартів в частині підготовки викладачів іноземних мов до використання цифрових технологій, оновлення комп'ютерного обладнання та забезпечення широкосмислового доступу до інтернету закладів вищої освіти, розвиток та підтримка навчальних онлайн-платформ, впровадження дуальної освіти.

Ключові слова: Digital-методики, цифрові технології, M-Learning, блог, YouTube, освітня платформа.

Introduction. The educational process in any field is impossible to imagine without the use of digital technologies. Digitalization processes have affected not only aspects of the organization of educational activities, but also the content of educational and methodological content of disciplines. Changes in education under the influence of the dynamically developing digital environment require the participation of university administrations, teachers and students, as updates affect all levels of education [4]. Particular attention is paid to updating teaching methods to achieve the established educational outcomes. Teachers of higher education institutions are actively using computers, interactive whiteboards, and projectors to present visual materials. For a more effective implementation of the educational process, they use teaching materials posted on the information and educational portal of the educational institution or on special educational Internet resources [8].

Digital technologies are used in the educational process to develop students' knowledge, skills and abilities that will be relevant to them both

in their professional and social lives. Thus, the technical teaching aids that have long been used in higher education institutions are gradually being replaced by modern digital tools.

Ukraine's accession to the single educational space and the intensive development of the global computer network have necessitated the use of digital technologies in the study of foreign languages in higher education institutions. Knowledge of a foreign language is a must nowadays and one of the key requirements for specialists in any field of activity. In this regard, it is important to analyze teaching methods using digital technologies, i.e., digital methods. Together with traditional teaching methods, such methods are able to fully realize the tasks of learning a foreign language, which are provided for in the curriculum.

The issue of using digital methods in the training of students of higher education institutions is considered in the works of many domestic and foreign scholars (Dudeny and Hockly, 2013; Warschauer, 1997; Rogulska and Tarasova, 2016; Statkevych and Fenchuk, 2014; Kozachenko, 2016) [9; 11; 3, c. 318–319; 5; 1, c. 10]. However, the issue of using digital methods in foreign language teaching remains insufficiently researched to date.

The purpose of the article is to develop directions for improving digital methods in the educational process in the study of foreign languages in higher education institutions of Ukraine.

Methods and methodology of the study. The study used general scientific methods of cognition. The current state of the use of digital methods in the study of foreign languages in higher education institutions is determined by the method of critical analysis of domestic and foreign literature. In order to clearly demonstrate the information, graphic methods were used, for the preparation of which Excel tools were used. In the process of synthesizing information, the problems that complicate the introduction of digital methods into the educational process and require immediate solution have been identified. Recommendations for solving these problems were developed using the methods of induction and deduction.

Results and discussion. Computer technologies began to be used in foreign language teaching more than 70 years ago. Until recently, only a limited number of specialists have been studying this topic. However, the emergence of the Internet and the rapid development of computer technology have accelerated the integration of the latest technologies into the learning process.

The term "digital technologies" appeared not so long ago. In the English-language pedagogical literature, this term covers a variety of cloud, mobile, smart technologies and information and communication technologies (Dudeny & Hockly, 2013) [9]. In his article "The Use of Computers

in Foreign Language Teaching," a contemporary American researcher, professor at the University of California's School of Education, M. Warschauer, identifies three stages of computer technology use: behaviorist, communicative, integrative, and competence-connectivist (Warschauer, 1997) [11]. Each of the stages is characterized by a certain level of technology development, which is shown in Table 1.

The introduction of digital technologies has led to the emergence of new methods in the training of students of higher education institutions

Table 1

Stages of development of digital technologies in education

Years	Name of the approach	Features of application
1950–1970 years	Behaviorist approach	This period is characterized by the emergence of electronic computers, which were used as simulators for the development of speech activity. Computer exercises created at this time were aimed at training skills through repetition. The term "computer technology" was used to describe the latest technologies.
the 1980s	Communicative approach	This period is characterized by the emergence of intelligent learning systems and stationary personal computers.) Stationary personal computers were used as a simulator for the development of speech activity, as well as a reference resource. As with the behaviorist approach, the latest technologies are denoted by the term "computer technology"
the 1990s	Integration approach	This period is characterized by the emergence of the World Wide Web, the invention of multimedia and hypertext technologies, and the further improvement of communication technologies. A personal desktop computer is used as a tool for authentic speech interaction. The latest technologies are referred to as "information and communication technologies"
the 2000s – present day	Competency-based approach	This period is characterized by the emergence of mobile, cloud and startup technologies, smartphones and tablets. The laptop computer and mobile devices are used as tools for communication in an environment of linguistic and social interaction anywhere and anytime. The term digital technologies is used to refer to technologies that have recently emerged

Source: systematized by the author on the basis of (Warschauer, 1997)

(HEIs) in the study of foreign languages. To date, digital methods have become widely used, which should be understood as a clear algorithm of actions that allows you to learn a foreign language from beginner to advanced level (TEFL- TESOL, 2020). The main digital methods used in higher education institutions in the study of foreign languages are shown in Table 2.

This list of digital methods used in teaching foreign languages in higher education is not exhaustive. Today, the choice of such methods is quite wide. They are usually combined with traditional teaching methods.

Table 2

Digital methods used in higher education institutions for teaching foreign languages

Name of the methodology	Meaning
M-Learning	Methods based on M-Learning technology involve teaching a foreign language using the potential of gadgets available to students to work with applications in a foreign language. One of the advantages of M-Learning is the variety of forms of work – from games, quizzes, videos to podcasts and mini-series. The use of M-Learning methods makes it possible to combine full-time and distance learning, speed up the exchange of information and optimize the exchange of knowledge transferred to the student from the teacher
Web-quest	It is a modern methodology of project-based learning that involves solving a certain theoretical or practical problem by a student (theoretical or practical). To solve the problem, the student uses online information resources
Language portfolio	One of the most modern methods of working with students, which in recent years has become one of the most promising technologies for teaching a foreign language and monitoring the quality of education. According to the methodology, students record their achievements and experience in mastering foreign languages. Independently or together with a teacher, he or she can analyze and evaluate the amount of work and achievements in the subject. The purpose of the language portfolio is to develop student autonomy, improve language competence, and provide an opportunity to evaluate their achievements and experience in learning and using foreign languages.
Online-Diary	A modern method of teaching foreign languages that involves students keeping a foreign language learning diary. The diary reflects the student's individual activities. It includes such columns as the topic of the assignment, the planned and actual date of its completion, reasons for not completing it on time, learning goals, time spent on the work, difficulties, progress, evaluation and conclusions

Source: systematized by the author based on (Rogulska & Tarasova, 2016: 318–32; Statkevych & Fenchuk, 2014; Kozachenko, 2021) [3].

Thanks to this, it is possible to solve a number of problems, namely:

- to ensure the presentation of educational information;
- to ensure the availability of educational material: text, sound, graphic and video materials that have different topics and focus;
- to ensure control over the learning process;
- to develop the skills and abilities of students learning a foreign language in writing, reading, and listening using digital technologies;
- to develop students' independent work skills;
- to apply different forms of learning activities (individual work, pair work or group work);
- to form a positive attitude towards the subject and increase motivation to learn a foreign language;
- to unleash students' creative potential by completing project tasks using digital technologies provided by a particular digital methodology.

An obligatory component of digital methods is digital technologies used in the study of foreign languages in higher education institutions.

Blogs are not teaching materials and are not intended for learning, but more and more foreign language teachers are paying attention to them and using them for educational purposes. The use of blogging technology in foreign language teaching is most consistent with the principles of the constructivist approach. It focuses on the student who creates the learning environment and interacts with it, acquiring knowledge by solving non-standard tasks. Depending on the functions performed, blogs are divided into several types:

- a teacher's blog (created and used by a teacher as an additional resource to traditional teaching);
- a student blog (created by a student in accordance with the teacher's instructions);
- a teacher-student blog (created by a teacher who invites students to collaborate);
- lecturer-lecturer blog (created and used by lecturers of one or different subjects to share materials and useful resources in their field);
- a blog of a higher education institution (created on behalf of a higher education institution in order to establish contact and maintain communication with other educational institutions);
- a professional blog (created and maintained by a person who knows his or her business well and shares his or her useful tips). In the case of foreign language teaching, the teacher uses the materials of this blog as an authentic text presented by a native speaker.

As an example, consider a popular blog based on the personal stories of its creator, Ollie Richards, who owns a blog called "I Will Teach You A Language" (Story learning, 2022) [10]. He travels a lot and is fluent in

eight languages, so he shares his personal experience with readers about the techniques he uses to learn languages. The blog's peculiarity is that, in addition to language material, it contains a vivid emotional component that motivates people to learn a foreign language.

The 2019 pandemic and full-scale war have significantly affected the educational process in Ukraine. Most higher education institutions have switched to distance or blended learning. In such circumstances, the use of digital methods in the training of students, including in the study of foreign languages, has become extremely relevant.

In June 2022, the Center for International Projects "Euroeducation" together with the international group IREG Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence compiled the rating of higher education institutions "TOP-200 Ukraine" [2]. The rating was based on a number of indicators. Particular attention was paid to the introduction of digital technologies in the educational process. According to the ranking, the top ten was led by Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. The second place was taken by the Kyiv Polytechnic Institute named after Sikorsky. V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University rounded out the top three. Lviv Polytechnic National University and National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute" took fourth and fifth place respectively (Osvita, 2022). Thanks to the introduction of digital technologies in the educational process, these and other Ukrainian higher education institutions have been able to achieve significant success in academic, research, and international activities [4].

Platforms specifically designed for learning foreign languages include:

- Duolingo, Easy Ten, FluentU, BBC Learning English, Simpler, LinguaLeo, Memrise (English);
- Goethe-Institut, Deutsche Welle, Rosetta Stone, Easy Online German, Audio Lingua, TestDaF (German).

The use of digital technologies, which is an important element of modern digital methods, is approved by the majority of teachers and students, as evidenced by the results of a survey conducted by the State Education Quality Service of Ukraine among teachers and students of higher education institutions [6; 7].

Having analyzed the national experience, we can conclude that modern digital methods are actively used in the training of students in learning foreign languages, as well as a high level of satisfaction with the use of digital technologies, which are the main element of such methods. At the same time, there are a number of problems that complicate the implementation of digital methods in the educational process and require immediate solution.

Conclusions and perspectives. The use of modern digital methods in the study of foreign languages in institutions of higher education

increases the effectiveness of education, makes it more interesting and meaningful. In connection with the transition of the educational process from face-to-face to remote and mixed modes, the introduction of digital methods into the educational process is becoming even more urgent than before. Considering this, as well as the advantages of using modern digital methods, we see prospects for further research in the study of new and improvement of existing digital methods and their introduction into the educational process when learning foreign languages.

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