

THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF FUTURE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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Abstract: The paper deals with the problem of training future foreign language teachers from the perspective of education digitalization. The paper substantiates the idea that modern society needs a specialist who may quickly respond to the challenges of modernity and is capable of self-development and self-organization. The set of competencies necessary for a modern teacher includes universal, professional and digital competencies. The authors focus their attention on the digital competencies which are crucial for a modern teacher: ability to model virtual content, to use digital tools in the educational process, and to create online learning resources. The paper also describes the ample didactic possibilities of using certain online resources helpful in development of digital competencies of students.

Keywords: digital competencies, digital resources, foreign language teaching, learning materials, self-organization and self-development.

1 Introduction

The process of digitalization has touched all sectors of society, including the sector of higher education. In his address, Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation, noted that the advanced telecommunications will open the endless possibilities of the digital world for citizens. Digitalization is a tremendous breakthrough resource (Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly on March 1st, 2018). The process of digitalization in education is aimed to achieve two interrelated goals. The first goal is the creation of a digital learning environment incorporating digital learning tools, online courses and electronic educational resources. The second goal relates to the profound modernization of the learning process intended to prepare a person for living in a digital society and carrying out professional activity in a digital economy (Blinov et al., 2019). The process of information transformation into a digital form is associated with introduction of modern technologies, use of creative opportunities, saving labor costs in various areas of human activity (Kuznetsova, 2020).

The process of digitalization catalyzes fundamental changes in the very structure of learning, calling for a need to find innovative approaches to organizing the educational process. These changes will affect not only the selection of material for creating and delivering training courses, but also the way how the educational facility should be managed. As is commonly known, a modern teacher should possess the following combination of competencies: professional competencies, supraprofessional, or, as the Federal State Standard of Higher Education calls them, universal competencies, and digital competencies. The professional standard for teachers requires that teachers have the ability to apply modern educational technologies, including digital technologies. The multifaceted process of education digitalization leads to the imperative need to adopt new ideas and create new educational programs for training teachers with necessary digital competencies.

According to the Federal State Standard of Higher Education in the Field of Training 44.03.05 Pedagogical Education (with two training specialties) (2018), the future teacher should have digital competencies related to the search for information over the Internet, the use of online tools and social networks for implementing the most advanced teaching practices and facilitating professional development, as well as for expanding educational opportunities for students, the creation and editing of virtual sites and multimedia content, the dissemination of digital learning resources (Federal State Standard of Higher Education

in the Field of Training 44.03.05 Pedagogical Education (with two training specialties), 2018).

High relevance of the research presented in this paper is stemming from the need to revise the content of vocational training of future teachers in the context of education digitalization. The research makes its contribution to the development of foreign language teaching methodology, as the considered digital technologies and their application in the educational process will significantly expand the skill set of a modern foreign language teacher.

2 Literature Review

As noted by researchers, the training of specialists undergoes changes under the influence of new knowledge and modern technologies (Lazutova & Piskunova, 2020; Soltovets et al., 2019; Meyers et al., 2013). The need to bring changes into the teacher training is driven by the interests of public and state development (Antonova et al., 2019). The state together with IT companies and the pedagogical community is facing the task to develop, test and implement new teaching methods in the practice of education, to find the most optimal balance between digital and classical education, which shapes the new trends in modern education (Kazinet & Trinadtsatko, 2020). As their potential employee the employers want to see a graduate who is able and ready to successfully master new technologies within a short time, to independently fill the gaps in knowledge and skills, to learn how to apply them in practice in a plenty of unforeseeable situations, to ensure the effectiveness of professional activities (Kizrina & Yankina, 2016). This is due to the imperatives of a new socio-technical reality which requires that users have not only the skills and abilities related to the use of technological tools, but also the knowledge regarding their practical application (Meyers et al., 2013).

Currently, such concepts as "digital didactics," "digital content," "digital literacy," "digital education," and "digital transformation" are on the active agenda in professional circles (Bortvik & Hansen, 2017; Kroksmark, 2015; McKnight et al., 2016; Jahnke & Norberg, 2013). Today's digital world has changed our lives and is technologizing the system of education (Deryuga, 2020). The potential of new information, learning and communication technologies and digital tools, keeps growing, and the scope of their application in the educational process is expanding. In the current conditions, for effective planning of lessons and use of innovative technologies in the classroom the teachers need additional knowledge and new skills (Potemkina, 2018). It is during the period of schooling that one becomes familiar with the broad possibilities of digital tools and obtains the first skills of their use. Thus, the advanced development of students is achieved. Modern school students obtain the competences necessary for living in a digital society before their professional training, which, in turn, significantly improves absorption of new knowledge and academic mobility of future students. Digital tools facilitate social development and learning (Smith & Hull, 2013). The modern teacher must be media competent, meaning their ability to find necessary and useful information in the virtual space (Blatt, 2000).

3 Research Methodological Framework

The research purpose is to analyze the modern digital technologies from the perspective of their use in the professional training of foreign language teachers. The stated purpose predetermined the need to address the following objectives:

- 1) provide an overview of the didactic possibilities of trello.com, an online project management tool, for training foreign language teachers;
- 2) describe the potential of an educational platform Stepik.org for creating an online training course;

- 3) reveal the methodological value of visualization in foreign language education;
- 4) present the infographics tool, Canva.com, as a means of forming foreign language communicative competence.

As the research methods the general scientific methods of cognition were used, the main of which were the methods of analysis and synthesis of the phenomena under scrutiny.

4 Results and Discussion

Among the multitude of digital tools, trello.com, a cloud-based program, deserves special attention as a way to develop digital competencies of future foreign language teachers. It is a visual tool that helps to plan lessons and the trajectory of professional development, to organize classes and collaborative work with colleagues. In addition, the resource allows the teacher to monitor how the students perform the received assignments. In the templates on trello.com in the Education tab exists a board "Learn a foreign language". In practical training, students may design foreign language lessons by creating virtual boards on any topic. The board may represent elements (columns) of the lesson's technological map: stages of the lesson, teacher's activity, students' activity, targeted universal learning skills. The advantage of the virtual technological map of the lesson on trello.com is the possibility for the teacher to assess the level of universal learning skills after students complete all homework. As is known, the use of digital controls in the educational process is an obligatory component of the teacher's professional pedagogical competence (Bates, 2015). The teacher may in real time monitor how students perform the assignments, identify problems related to the learning of certain material related to a foreign language, write comments and assign additional checklists containing necessary tasks.

By designing lessons on trello.com, the future foreign language teacher may search for the necessary authentic multimedia materials on the Internet, since it is impossible to teach a foreign language without such materials. Among the educational Internet resources that may be effectively used in the classroom we may mention Learn English (2021) - educational website of British Council; Online-Aufgaben und Übungen (2021) - service for learning German language Schubert Verlag; Learn German (2021) - service of Deutsche Welle. After selecting the relevant content, the teacher includes a link to it into the card's checklist, formulates the task, and establishes a deadline for students. It is a common knowledge that the main goal of teaching a foreign language is to develop a foreign language communicative competence for all types of speech activity. With the help of trello.com designing tool, future teachers may structure lexical and grammar material, audios, videos, texts for reading by class and thematic planning. This tool can be used in distance learning.

One of the requirements concerning the expected results of the study program prescribed by Federal State Standard of Higher Education in the Field of Training 44.03.05 Pedagogical Education (with two training specialties) (2018) is the development of future teachers' competence UC-6, i.e. the ability to manage own time, build and follow a trajectory of self-development based on the principles of lifelong learning. Continuous professional education is considered as a holistic systemic organizational process of learning throughout the entire working life or a person. Its implementation requires employers to comply with a number of regulatory prescriptions. In particular, if changes in the working environment are associated with imposition of new labor functions on employees, employers must provide the necessary conditions for their employees to acquire new professional knowledge and skills. This will help employees to perform their duties effectively, remain competitive in the domestic and foreign labor markets, and maintain proper social living conditions (Skvortsov, 2013). With the help of trello.com service, future teachers can improve their self-organization and plan their own self-development trajectory. By creating a board "Trajectory for Self-Development", teachers may assess their personal resources for achieving professional

goals, determine the best time management strategies, build a trajectory for professional and personal growth, and in particular: plan time for professional development, organize research and experimental work, publish research papers, work with children with disabilities.

The rapid advancement and rollout of digital technologies in educational space became a spur for the revision of technologies and methods used in teaching foreign languages. The development of blended learning concepts is one of the promising avenues for further research (Rösler & Tschirmer, 2005). It is hard to imagine creation of a foreign-language digital learning space without a properly planned and developed online course.

Especially relevant to the development of digital competencies of future teachers in the era of pandemic is the use of the constructor Stepik.org. This platform helps to design a foreign-language digital learning space and to create educational materials. Thus, students who are deprived of the opportunity to conduct foreign language lessons in a face-to-face format during their internships can create a course on the Stepik.org platform covering the topics from the school textbook. This resource allows students to create various online courses, develop interactive lessons using authentic video material and various assignments for students, and offer private courses for a limited audience. Using this platform, it is possible to organize subject olympiads and competitions, launch programs for professional retraining and qualification upgrade, and exchange experience with colleagues. One of the advantages of digital courses created on the Stepik.org platform is their public accessibility, which fosters the competencies related to the spread of digital resources among colleagues.

When teaching a foreign language, teachers often resort to such a teaching aid as the graphic visualization. Through the use of digital tools, the foreign language teacher may independently create interesting infographics relevant to the lesson. One of the digital tools for creating graphic visualization is canva.com. Infographics are graphic visual representations of information. When teaching a foreign language in the absence of an immersive environment, the modelling of objective world becomes possible through visualization. Visualization is not only an important tool of semantization, but also a means conveying situational causation of foreign language speech. Visualization in the learning process makes it possible to create learning situations for practicing various skills, including oral communication skills, which are crucial for a speech response to objective reality and various life situations.

The possibilities of Canva tool in the professional training of foreign language teachers make it possible to model a foreign language lesson from the perspectives of creative and activity approaches. By using this digital tool, a teacher can not only teach intercultural communication to students, but also teach them how to use this tool throughout life. Let's closely examine this resource. Canva.com. offers bright design solutions for designing a foreign language lesson, including by teams. Today, all professionals, and students as well, should possess the skills of teamwork, as teamwork is the key to success in handling the tasks at hand. With the help of canva.com it becomes possible to jointly prepare a presentation in a foreign language on a topic proposed by the teacher, and to work on different projects, both regional and international. Using the ready templates for Instagram stories, the teacher can develop students' lexical and grammatical skills and skills of creative writing in a foreign language on the topics from the school textbook.

The tools of infographics include not only images, but also other elements such as text, as well as arrows, diagrams, blocks and charts. Infographics are intended to quickly, clearly and vividly present the material. In the methodology of foreign language teaching, infographics is seen as a means of developing the language and speech skills of students in the framework of communication in foreign language. It is known that for teaching a foreign language various genres of texts are used: advertising text, culinary recipes, text with statistical data, instruction texts.

After mastering the digital resource canva.com., a foreign language teacher will be able to independently model infographics with texts, thereby developing both reading skills with a varying degree of reading comprehension and the ability to analyze data in a foreign language.

When teaching a foreign language, it is important to use thinking visualization technologies that facilitate the processing and memorizing of information. Canva allows to model mental maps as aids for retelling text in a foreign language, mental maps as excursions to cities in the countries of the studied language, mental maps for discussions, as the template allows demonstrating the relationships between ideas, to search for alternative solutions.

5 Conclusion

The development of digital competencies of future foreign language teachers hinges on the practical application of digital tools and technologies by students in the learning process. This means that the structure of the basic professional education programs should include digital components contributing to the following learning outcomes: ability to use different forms and methods of foreign language teaching; to develop scenarios for foreign language classes based on digital technologies; to organize various forms of work for fostering the foreign language communicative competence; to strengthen the learning motivation of students; to boost critical thinking of students through foreign language and digital tools; to cooperate with teachers in a meaningful way to jointly solve problems related to the use of digital technologies.

The use of digital technologies for professional training of students improves their readiness to apply them in future professional activities (designing lessons using the cloud program trello.com, creating online training courses with the help of the platform Stepik, creating graphical visualization using a digital tool canva.com, etc.) and the necessary practical skills for doing this.

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