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DIGITAL COMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

This article investigates the crucial role of digital technology competence in foreign language teaching amidst the increasing adoption of blended and online education models. The study proposes a pedagogical framework aimed at enhancing digital skills among pre-service and in-service language teachers. Empirical evidence from qualitative and quantitative data supports the framework's effectiveness in improving teaching practices and learner engagement.

Keywords: Digital competence[1], foreign language teaching, blended learning[2], educational technology, teacher professional development, online pedagogy

Introduction

The digital transformation of education has enhanced rapidly, particularly due to global shifts toward remote learning during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Johnson et al., 2020). Digital competence is increasingly vital in foreign language teaching as it enables educators to effectively integrate modern technologies into their pedagogical practices, thereby enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. In an era where digital tools such as online platforms, multimedia resources, and interactive applications are becoming standard components of education, teachers' ability to navigate and utilize these tools directly influences the quality and accessibility of language instruction. Moreover, digital competence supports the creation of flexible and learner-centered environments, accommodating diverse learning styles and needs. Developing digital skills among language teachers is essential to maintain instructional continuity and foster communicative competence in learners. Therefore, digital competence not

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only enriches teaching methodologies but also prepares educators and students for the demands of a digitally interconnected world.

Foreign language teaching has been deeply impacted, requiring educators to integrate digital tools effectively into their pedagogy to maintain learner motivation and interaction (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020).

Digital competence involves a complex set of skills, including technical proficiency, pedagogical adaptability, and critical thinking about technology use[1] (European Commission, 2021). For language teachers, this means not only mastering digital platforms but also creatively designing and facilitating interactive learning experiences that leverage technology (Kessler, 2018). This paper aims to present a methodological framework for developing such competence within teacher education programs, ensuring educators are prepared for evolving educational demands.

Methods

The study took place at a leading pedagogical university in Uzbekistan, involving 30 pre-service English teachers enrolled in a 12-week "Digital Literacy in Language Teaching" course. The curriculum combined theoretical modules with hands-on practice using LMS tools (Moodle, Google Classroom), content creation apps (Canva, Quizlet), and synchronous communication platforms (Zoom, Padlet).

Digital competence was measured using the latest version of the European Digital Competence Framework for Educators (DigCompEdu, 2021)[2] before and after course completion. Qualitative feedback was gathered through reflective journals and focus group interviews, analyzed via thematic coding.

Results

Quantitative results demonstrated a significant increase in digital competence levels, particularly in areas such as "Teaching and Learning" and "Assessment" on DigCompEdu. The average participant competence shifted from A2 (Basic User) to B2 (Independent User) over the course period. Participants reported enhanced confidence in developing multimedia materials and managing virtual classrooms. Qualitative data revealed a deeper understanding of digital pedagogy

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benefits, with many noting improved learner engagement through tools like Ed puzzle and interactive quizzes.

Discussion

The findings align with recent literature emphasizing the necessity of digital skills in teacher professional development (García-Peñalvo et al., 2021). The framework's emphasis on experiential learning and peer collaboration effectively bridged the gap between theory and practice, consistent with approaches recommended by Bonk and Graham (2021). Challenges included varying initial skill levels, highlighting the need for differentiated instruction. Future research should explore longitudinal effects of digital competence training and scalability in diverse educational contexts.

Conclusion

Digital competence is essential for foreign language educators to thrive in today's blended and online learning environments. The proposed framework offers a practical pathway to develop these skills, enhancing teaching quality and learner outcomes. Institutions should prioritize digital literacy in teacher education curricula to prepare educators for ongoing technological advancements and pedagogical shifts.

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