

# Modern Technologies of Teaching Foreign Languages in the Context of Digitalization of Foreign Language Education<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** This article analyses the problem associated with improving the quality of professional training of foreign language teachers. The quality and level of foreign language training in higher education are determined by the teaching staff, who are the bearers of the ideology of education renewal. In the context of the digitalization of education, improving the quality of foreign language training involves the widespread use of digital learning technologies. The digitalization of education has brought the foreign language training of students to a new level in terms of quality, which makes it possible to raise the culture of teaching foreign languages, ensure the social adaptation of the student, and create an appropriate digital educational and developmental environment for the personal development of the student. This article examines the most significant trends in the higher education system that create the conditions for training competitive specialists, who become the main indicator of the quality of university education. The fluency in a given foreign language of educators trained using next-generation technologies is proof of the advantages that the new system of foreign language training through the use of digital learning technologies provides. The introduction of digital technologies in the process of teaching a foreign language substantially expands the possibilities of education, significantly enriching the educational process.

**Keywords:** foreign language training, competitive specialist, digitalization of language education, digital technologies, educational trends, quality improvement

Speaking at international research conferences and symposiums, Elena Solovova invariably emphasized the fact that the theory of foreign language acquisition today focuses on the active work of the student to master that language. This is fully in line with ideas about developing education. In this regard, new goals and objectives

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of foreign language training are set, new concepts, teaching methods and technologies appear, and more advanced training materials are published, including electronic learning tools (Solovova 2004; Solovova 2005).

Budding experts in intercultural contacts should have the tools to deal with professional and non-professional tasks in the context of the digitalization of education. They will need to be able to carry out research and pedagogic work in accordance with modern standards, which involves using digital education resources and digital learning technologies, and this, in turn, increases the overall quality of teachers of foreign languages and cultures.

Training students in intercultural communication involves developing their intercultural sensitivity, which implies the ability to conduct intercultural communication in compliance with the norms or rules of speech behaviour adopted in the country of the language being studied. New-generation learning technologies allow the student to gain experience in intercultural communication in the process of modelling cultural space in a foreign language class. Digital technologies for teaching foreign languages and cultures make it possible to enrich classes in terms of their content, while at the same time stimulating high levels of cognitive activity among students. This is made possible by ensuring an optimal combination of the educational material presented by the instructor and the independent work of the student, getting the class to complete creative tasks and assignments, implementing flexible methods of testing knowledge and skills using the educational and development environment that has been created, and indirectly assessing student progress during role-playing and business games (Dmitrenko 2021).

The problem of training young foreign languages teachers in the context of updated techniques of foreign language teaching was something that Elena Solovova struggled with at a deep level. One of the most important ideas that permeates her published works is that the foreign language training of language instructors today is of better quality than ever before, and not only because new teaching aids have appeared in the methodological arsenal of the foreign language teacher that allow us to construct the educational process more dynamically and productively, but, more importantly, because the foreign language training of language instructors involves teaching languages using next-generation technologies (Solovova 2004; 2010).

To be sure, digital technologies for teaching foreign languages using the internet, as well as active and interactive methods and forms of learning in the digital educational space have become widespread. These methods involve problem solving, role-playing and business games, conducting dialogues between cultures, completing projects, analysing business situations, etc.

## Research materials and methods

Research into the professional training of specialists in the system of higher language education and the analysis of educational practice indicates that the integration of Russian education into the global education space has helped produce new precepts for the training of professionals in intercultural communication:

- The increased competitiveness of modern specialists in the labour market.
- The professional fluency of experts in accordance with international standards.

This implies a reasonably high level of foreign language proficiency in the course of dealing with issues, work-related and otherwise, within the framework of international cooperation.

An analysis of educational practice has shown that a number of psychological and pedagogical conditions that make it possible to raise the quality of teaching culture as a whole need to be met in order to implement an effective system for the teaching of foreign languages and cultures. Chief among these are:

- improving the digital literacy of teachers, which implies having both the necessary digital resources and the willingness to work in a digital educational environment, as well as developing new electronic materials that are commensurate to the learning goals that have been set;
- organizing the learning process according to the personal characteristics of students and with due account of their level of foreign language proficiency;
- getting teachers to use modern digital educational tools and selecting the best ones in terms of the goals and objectives of the training;
- using digital tools both in the classroom and in the process of planning independent study;
- providing modern technological support for the process of teaching foreign languages and cultures, including the provision of the necessary software, access to the internet, etc.;
- increasing student motivation by creating the necessary psychological and pedagogical conditions for meeting their foreign language needs for both personal and professional purposes.

Student surveys and testing confirm that developing a curriculum for the teaching of foreign languages and cultures with due account of the psychological and pedagogical conditions listed above helps to not only increase motivation and cognitive activity among students, but also contributes to the development of their creative thinking, the development of skills that allow them to navigate the modern foreign language digital space and gain experience in intercultural communication.

Thus, in the context of the digitalization of foreign language education, the path has opened for the transition to a higher quality of teaching as a whole. As an analysis of educational practice shows, the teaching of foreign languages produces results when

an authentic language environment is created, one that reflects the real environment of the bearers of the language being studied. Foreign language teachers are thus forced to model foreign language teaching environments as close as possible to “natural”. This is where digital educational technologies come in, as they can immerse students in a virtual environment that is as close to the authentic language environment as possible.

### **Discussion of the results of various studies**

Studies carried out over the past decade show that virtual reality is a set of ordered and hierarchically built components of the educational process that is focused on creating the necessary conditions for expanding the communicative experience of students in their chosen foreign language and provides them with both an artificial foreign language environment and educational and developmental conditions that promote the assimilation of speech material in a foreign language. In this regard, digital technologies are also a source of untapped potential in terms of organizing the educational process – namely, the development of speed learning.

An analysis of studies carried out shows that those who belong to the “digital generation” – people born in the 2000s – have what we call “clip” or “mosaic” thinking. Educational practice tells us that “clip consciousness visualizes the world, rather than thinking about it”. The digital world influences these students immensely. Lengthy and complicated texts are quite difficult, sometimes even impossible, for people with clip consciousness to analyse and summarise. They are simply unable to apprehend large amounts of certain information at a time. They need educational information to be presented in a fun way and in manageable portions in order for their attention not to wander and to be able to better assimilate the material.

The digital generation of learners has grown up with smartphones firmly in hand. They have great difficulty taking in large amounts of educational information. This is their biggest weakness. However, this generation is good at multitasking and making decisions in stressful situations under tight deadlines. Thus, educational information should be presented differently for these learners to how it was done in the past.

Given all this, information should be introduced in small portions using digital technologies in order for it to be better assimilated. This, in addition to the necessary emotional environment, helps to create a comfortable atmosphere in the foreign language class. This is why the use of short videos is becoming increasingly widespread in education today as a way of presenting new material. Presenting information in a nonlinear, modular and multidimensional fashion using digital technologies helps to transition from a reproductive, verbal teaching paradigm to a visual and logical one, which in turn forces both hemispheres of the student’s brain to work at the same time, influencing the main channels of perception in an integrated manner (Dmitrenko 2021: 43).

Processing information in bite-size pieces facilitates the process of memorization, while the instructor is responsible for the emotional presentation of language material through short videos on the topic being studied, which give food for thought. Educational practice shows that the use of digital technologies in the teaching of foreign languages and cultures is a more effective way of processing and comprehending information. Involving each and every student in the educational process allows them to process the flow of information in their own way, filtering out whatever is not needed or useful, which leads to the final result – ready-to-use knowledge. The use of digital resources in the learning process optimizes the mastery of foreign language speech activity and fosters the development of the appropriate skills in students, such as: the ability to use the tools of the media environment, internet sites, web conferences, wiki libraries, blogs, video hosting and sharing services, audio podcasts, presentations, etc. (Voevoda 2020).

New-generation technologies allow us to successfully tackle a broader range of tasks, since digital technologies create conditions for solving problems that simply cannot be solved without them. For example, the internet can be used to communicate with colleagues in different cities and countries in order to exchange experience in dealing with a specific issue in the framework of intercultural cooperation.

The digitalization of education has given teachers an extensive set of various tools and computer programs that allow them to prepare more advanced educational materials, create a language environment that is tailored for learning and development, and organize the learning process in a creative way. All this significantly stimulates communicative activity in the foreign language, immersing students in a virtual, interactive foreign language environment and creating the illusion that they are actually in a country where the language they are studying is spoken natively.

The training of competent specialists using digital technologies (training simulators, virtual classes, etc.) involves communicating in the foreign language, with due account of the socio-cultural context, which implies the creation of a cultural space in the classroom. Digital learning technologies allow us to recreate the sociocultural context, meaning a different vision of the world, different mentalities, customs and lifestyles. This is all experience in intercultural communication, which takes place alongside the process of mastering the foreign language itself during lessons.

The didactic potential of the new generation of educational technologies is extremely wide, and it points to the adaptability and personalization of the education process, the high speed of information processing, the transparency of activities, and a comfortable learning environment (in terms of speed of delivery, content, psychological wellbeing, etc.). With the digitalization of education, teachers must be ready and able to use digital technologies, which provide unlimited opportunities for the student to realize his or her full potential. Digital technologies make it easier to model intercultural interaction, where speech behaviour is not identical for people of different

cultures. This helps students develop intercultural sensitivity, which is vital for mutual understanding and establishing fruitful communication between people (Dmitrenko, Kadilina 2020: 19).

## Conclusion

In summing up, we should note that the use of digital technologies makes it possible to not only diversify lessons and make them more interesting and meaningful for students, but also to teach the culture of speech behaviour that is typical of the people of the country where the language being studied is spoken. The use of digital technologies involves transitioning to interactive methods and forms of education, stimulating cognitive activity and independence in the student, contributing to the creative understanding of the educational material, and providing experience in applying the material learnt in real life by communicating at the intercultural level.

Today, digital technologies play a significant role in foreign language training, as they allow the student to better master knowledge related to the culture of the country in which the language he or she is studying is spoken, and form the ability and willingness to understand the mentality of native speakers, as well as the specifics of their communicative behaviour, since knowledge (or ignorance) of cultural characteristics plays a decisive role in achieving mutual understanding in intercultural communication (Vetrinskaya, Dmitrenko 2017: 38).

Mastering a foreign language is unthinkable today without the use of digital technologies, which are specially selected by the instructor according to certain criteria (the methodological value in terms of developing basic skills and abilities, according to the interests of the students, their age group, the subject of the material being taught, etc.). The emotional impact achieved through the use of digital technologies increases student motivation and how well they assimilate cultural information in the absence of a true language environment.

In terms of realizing the ultimate goal in the foreign language training of a competent specialist, digital technologies are extremely important, especially when it comes to developing intercultural communicative competence, which is about more than simply mastering the language itself and involves observing the social norms of speech communication and the rules of speech behaviour typical for native speakers of that language.

Thus, the words of Elena Solovova that “it is important for specialists in all fields to be able to work with a computer and use the internet...” (Solovova 2005: 38) have proven to be truly prophetic, especially for those who work in the field of intercultural communications. Foreign language training carried out using digital educational technologies helps form commercially viable and qualified professionals who boast a creative mindset and active life philosophy, and who have a high level of intercultural competence.



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### Conflicts of interest.

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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