EXPLORING LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: A PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH TO OPTIMIZING FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH DIGITAL CONTENT

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Summary. The article demonstrates key positions regarding the effectiveness of using digital applications and gamified tools in foreign language classes. The prevalence of clip thinking among contemporary learners, shifting attention from text to images, from static to dynamic, has directed educators towards utilizing the possibilities of a digitized educational environment. The article emphasizes several advantages of digital content, including the formation of motivational components, the ability to engage not only individuals with typical perception but also learners with special educational needs, providing open access to content at a convenient learning time, effectiveness in knowledge acquisition, independence, creativity, and reliance on visual memory. It is proven that the integration of forms of digitization into the educational landscape allows each learner to work at their own pace, considering their individual abilities. The mechanism of personalized learning shifts traditional education models, activating concepts of self-education, self-organization, self-development, aiming to shape a harmonious personality. The article outlines prospects for further research on the effectiveness of integrating digital content into the foreign language teaching environment.

Keywords: digitization, educational environment, modern technologies, inclusion, digital content, online platform, personality-oriented approach.

The globalization of the modern educational environment, both normative and inclusive, leads to a spectrum of significant transformations, requiring the mastery...
of innovative practices and radical modernization of pedagogical approaches. The networked society permeates almost all aspects of human life, including the educational domain, particularly the mechanisms in teaching foreign languages. Contemporary demands no longer focus solely on the traditional presentation-explanation of program material but guide educators in a constant search for innovative teaching forms.

A significant leap has occurred in the system of educational values: gaining experience in the form of informational blocks and possessing a range of facts or statistics has shifted to the ability to effectively apply necessary knowledge in practical activities, i.e., in the profession and life. The essential skill remains the ability to prioritize, find necessary information, and be capable of filtering it. The search for optimal paths and the effectiveness of the educational process in learning foreign languages will be maximized if education for learners is individualized, oriented toward curiosity, cognition, engagement, motivation, and creativity.

The extensive and active informatization of the education system primarily anticipates the emergence of new information and communication technologies, innovative learning tools, the gradual formation and development of the computer-technological platform of the informational educational space, electronic educational resources, their collections, and networks. Services that meaningfully enrich and support the informational-educational space are integral to this process.

The aim of the article is to outline the effectiveness of using digital content in foreign language classes, taking into account a personality-oriented approach. The rhythmic and spontaneous updating of the educational material in the process of learning foreign languages requires the improvement of mechanisms for its delivery, adapting to maximize the implementation of competency and personality-oriented approaches – all of which are impossible without the use of innovative gamified teaching tools. The modern educational space offers a wide range of various digitized technologies through which program educational goals can be achieved. According to W. Kecik-Zinchenko's sound reasoning, practice based on personality-oriented learning promotes the formation of open, equal, and partnership strategies, where the roles of the teacher and learner become a unified «organism», known as the «person-centered approach», moving towards the realization of a common goal [1].

According to K. Nigametzyanova, personality-oriented learning «develops individual cognitive abilities», contributing to productivity not only in learning but also in essential professional qualities [2].

Professionals in the field of education increasingly agree that learning should take place where learners spend most of their time. The digitized world has become a didactic «home» for many, as diverse real-time interaction takes place through the network, along with the practice of rapid feedback [3]. The use of digital platforms in the educational process significantly increases interest in independent extracurricular work by integrating educational and methodological materials into the online space. This practice allows learners to choose optimal ways of working while mastering a foreign language course. Digital content tools can be used to organize joint telecommunication projects with foreign educational institutions or facilitate communication with native speakers via Skype [4]. The use of electronic social networks in education can have a synergistic effect, as the combination of
several coordinated pedagogical strategies is more beneficial than the isolated implementation of any one [5].

The appeal to modern means of communication between the teacher and the learner is carried out through educational network structures such as class networks, thematic groups, and educational electronic projects. Proficiency in digital literacy tools at a high level unquestionably provides an advantage in the professional sphere of educators and, at the same time, ensures high-quality education not only in a normative context but also in an inclusive one [6]. Through network structures, learners have a range of opportunities: they can legitimately participate in various types of activities, create, publish, edit, comment, select, and connect different types of digital objects. It is not about creating special pedagogical services and tools but about educators utilizing the existing possibilities in network communities [5].

The modern digitized world provides the opportunity to use various educational technologies involving information practices. This combination serves as an auxiliary tool to improve organizational and educational activities and communication between the teacher and the learner, key to changing forms and methods of mastering a foreign language, contributing to the formation of a modern information-educational environment.

Analyzing various sources allows the classification of digital content based on the following components:

1. Network Type: Personal and business communication, video, audio, photos, geolocation, purchases, blogs, news, Q&A, bookmarks, virtual worlds, thematic networks, social networking.
2. Content Accessibility: Open, closed, mixed.
4. Development Level: Web 1.0, Web 3.0, and so on [7].

The advantages of organizing independent learning activities in a networked format for learners of different social statuses (not only those with normative cognitive abilities but also those with information perception and processing disorders) include:

1. Unlimited Time Frames: Learners have the flexibility to access and download materials at their convenience.
2. Individualized Learning: The principle of individualization allows tailored learning experiences, catering to the specific needs and abilities of each student.
3. Team Collaboration Experience: Students gain experience working in teams, fostering collaboration skills.
4. Multifunctional Communication: The multifunctionality of communication enables connectivity not only from computers but also from other devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops.

The paradigm of gamified practices has expanded rapidly due to the institutionalization of digital education [8]. The educational process should be structured to teach learners to work independently, quickly, qualitatively, and efficiently acquire the necessary future professional practices. A personality-oriented practice allows the successful combination of theoretical and empirical components, fostering interest in learning a foreign language and involuntary self-motivation towards mastering speech in a foreign language.
The digital paradigm with a set of tools for learning a foreign language performs several crucial functions, including:

1. **Stimulative Function**: Encourages the needs, motives, interests, and desires of the learner.
2. **Personality-Directed Function**: Allows the choice of tools and methods of learning according to the needs and abilities of the learner.
3. **Inclusive Function**: Involves learners with special educational needs in the learning process.
4. **Executive-Productive Function**: Appeals to a set of specific actions and operations, the implementation of which achieves educational goals.
5. **Control-Evaluative Function**: Conducts corrective measures to alleviate psychological and emotional stress during learning.

According to the research conducted by O.V. Vlasova, 82% of surveyed students positively perceived the introduction to the interactive space of the virtual Miro board, while 9% had a negative perception, and 9% were unable to respond to the question. Based on the same author's research, 5% of students independently used the Miro board during classes, 9% used it with the help of their peers, and 36% of students reported a lack of time for mastering the platform. The results of the research show that the majority of students feel positive about the shift to interactive mode of learning while there are still students who need more time and scaffolding during the transition [9].

Another researcher, Khair Allah, describes students’ positive response to using Miro for brainstorming ideas to elicit opinions about specific topic as a warm up activity before a speaking task as well as while conducting a project about honour killing. The teacher structured the lesson content based on students’ responses to her questions to enhance their engagement, asked open-ended questions and allowed students to add their ideas in the form of post-it notes to the board to draw their attention to the problem and propose solutions as a way to document discussion. The researcher views Miro as an effective mixed-media co-work, useful in evaluating students’ concentration and attitude during class, suitable for group work activities as well as individual work allowing to check progress in real time and provide assistance if necessary. According to our teaching experience with Miro board we can also agree that working individually on separate frames can facilitate students’ autonomy.

Among other positive aspects of using interactive whiteboard there were mentioned such as follows:
- encouraging students to respond to the feedback and edit their work significantly improves learning outcomes;
- Miro board provides a structure for collaboration and meetings, not depending on travel and meeting in person;
- getting better in digital participation.

Among the limitations of Miro board Khair Allah mentions lack of structure, difficulty in locating specific posts at times, feeling of isolation from peers if the course is asynchronous, getting lost in on-screen information when a lot of frames are simultaneously in use, screen fatigue, excluding people that for some reason cannot work collaboratively using these types of platforms, such as blind people,
limitation to three boards that can be created for free as well as the fact that challenges may emerge with users unfamiliar with digital platforms.

Having taken into consideration her advice that careful planning and organization are needed to make the experience more satisfying, we put it into practice and can state with a significant degree of assurance that it really makes the learning process more engaging and fulfilling [10].

In another research Miro promoting collaboration through online whiteboard interaction the authors discuss multiliteracy approach and how it can be applied through a digital platform Miro and shared their experiences. The authors compare Miro board with other boards and underline that unlike Jamboard and Zoom, Miro can be accessed by students at any time, synchronous or asynchronous and has board history. The authors view benefits of Miro board for the teachers of language learning classes as such:

- having another method on their hands to present class notes and activities;
- sharing written directions, language tasks, and model answers;
- preparing all of it in advance to save class time;
- seeing the entire classes work at a glance;
- checking and comparing students' work and leaving feedback if necessary.

Their experience in a discipline English course for Engineering undergraduates being taught online to help students prepare for a poster presentation assignment was done as a virtual poster exhibition. Students uploaded their posters to the board, viewed their classmates work, and provided feedback to each other using the comments feature of sticky notes. This helped students to explore each other's creations and receive feedback on their work. Their suggestion was to strive for better resolution of images in order to avoid such problem as certain blurriness of images when zoomed in.

In the second case, they used Miro board in a pilot course in humanities as a platform for teamwork to create micro community: students presented information as a blog, including multimodal elements such as text, images, infographics and video.

Their experience proved the following aspects:

- the platform was effective in providing students with a common space that gave them a sense of community both inside and outside the online classroom;
- progress was seen as certain features presented in class were perfected by students on their own initiative outside the class;
- teachers were also able to learn from their students (e.g. using emojis to show their attitude and feelings during the task).

Among the drawbacks they mention the fact that students accidentally drag away the text or graphic frames, disrupting original layout. This can be aided by locking frames beforehand.

Their findings include ideas about positive influence on students' learning and skills development:

- multifunctional affordances for students to use text layout, music, moving pictures, and sounds to make meaning;
- greater student interaction;
- facilitate collaborative learning;
- can be also used for face to face lessons when sharing and preserving the group's work is necessary [11].

Case studies.

In our research Miro was used during one semester in two cases to investigate its usability and efficiency. The first was in a discipline English course for Business and Trade undergraduates being taught online. Students worked on the board on a group task frame as well as on individual frames doing different exercises and activities simultaneously or at their own pace. Students that were not able to join synchronously had the opportunity to do the task at their convenient time.

Exercises and activities created/used in Miro:

As the students were of different level of proficiency and there were fast finishers who got bored when they ran out of tasks, they were provided with external links to online exercises, grammar tests, video and audio material (British Council, TestEnglish, Bamboozle, Quizlet, Quizizz, Nearpod, etc.) When students were ready with the tasks usually cat pictures appeared on the frames. The teacher also was able to check students’ work and add explanation whenever necessary.
Students were asked to post their results from outside resources next to the sticky notes with the links for checking and feedback.

The second case was in a discipline English course for Law undergraduates being taught offline using board at times when in-class learning wasn't possible (e.g. during air raid alerts across Ukraine).

As a result of shifting to online learning some students that were not active in class showed more participation during online activities and made significant progress in skills development. We noticed that different students were more actively engaged in online learning than in offline learning. This is a good opportunity for students of different learning styles to be engaged in the learning process.

As for limitations we have to acknowledge the following:
- in case of unexpected change to online mode students were anxious being unable to grasp the idea and master the tools and board navigation in short period of time;

Fig. 5. Screenshots of the results.
Fig. 6. Explanations [14].

Fig. 7. Anti-stress Guessing game "What is it?" [15].
teachers had little or no time to prepare the task on the board; such rapid unexpected changes caused considerable stress to all participants. Nevertheless, we can state that the majority of students responded in a positive way to online learning mode, rather quickly figuring things out and helping each other feel more comfortable with working on the interactive board, at times letting teachers learn from them.

Students were building their dialogues based on the given model and presenting them in pairs.

As there were no printed books for students to read from Miro board provided a perfect opportunity to read and work on the text in an interactive way, leaving comments, translation, transcription of the words that are difficult to pronounce.

The research showed that using online tools like Miro board helped students to look at everything they did in class from another perspective, to analyse, to summarize, to categorize, to develop higher order skills, to enhance their learning experience, to self-pace the tasks, to be more autonomous, to be able to choose what to do and in what order. We showed some practical ways to engage students in online active learning.
Conclusions. The application of digital technologies in the educational realm, particularly in the process of foreign language learning, exhibits a diverse and interactive nature. The appeal to digital content proves relevant not only for the professional growth of educators and the enhancement of their teaching practices but also contributes to the motivational factor in learners. It fosters the development of their communicative skills, cultivates a flexible working system, and embraces a person-centered approach. Contemporary teachers of foreign languages must demonstrate flexibility in selecting methods and forms of work, creatively approach lesson planning, ensuring that learning becomes an engaging and continuous process for both typical learners and those facing cognitive challenges in education.

Therefore, digital content and online platforms have become crucial tools in shaping foreign language communicative competence and an essential format for acquiring knowledge. The integration of such practices will promote the development of language skills, proficiency in grammar and vocabulary, and a better grasp of materials in practical language situations. The era of digitalization and gamification inevitably demands modern and creative approaches focused on interaction, creativity, and successful communication. On a prospective note, exploring the experiences of foreign experts in teaching individuals with diverse learning abilities, particularly the use of digital content in foreign language and literature classes within the context of inclusive education, would be a valuable avenue for further research.

References:


