

SECTION 9. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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THE ROLE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES AND CHALLENGES

РОЛЬ ЦИФРОВИХ ТЕХНОЛОГІЙ У ФОРМУВАННІ МІЖКУЛЬТУРНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНЦІЇ: ІННОВАЦІЙНІ ПІДХОДИ ТА ВИКЛИКИ

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In the modern world, digitalization encompasses all spheres of life, including education and intercultural communication. The use of digital technologies significantly transforms learning approaches, promoting the development of interactive methods, distance education, and opening access to global information resources. In the context of globalization, the need to develop intercultural competence becomes particularly relevant, as digital platforms and communication tools enable people from different countries to interact, exchange knowledge, and share experiences in real-time. Digital technologies facilitate effective information exchange, fostering mutual understanding among representatives of different cultures, which, in turn, stimulates integration and cooperation processes at the international level.

The study of foreign languages has become significantly more interactive, accessible, and effective thanks to digital tools. As noted by Umiarov K.T., Makarov V.B. [3], one of the most relevant aspects is the role of digital technologies in developing intercultural competence, which is a crucial component of modern language courses. Intercultural competence involves the ability to communicate with representatives of different cultures, understand and respect their customs, traditions, and worldview, which is critically important for the effective use of a foreign language in real-life situations. Digital technologies can greatly enhance this aspect of learning, as they allow students to interact directly with native speakers, familiarize themselves with their culture and traditions. Social networks, blogs, video and photo platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook provide students with the opportunity to communicate with native speakers, follow events in other countries, and learn about the specifics of their cultural life. As a result, students can see real-life examples of how the language is used in everyday situations, which is a crucial element in developing intercultural competence.

Saenko N. [1] points out that digital technologies enable personalized learning, allowing students to independently choose topics for study based on their interests and cultural preferences. Thanks to adaptive learning platforms, each student can receive individualized tasks that match their level and specific interests, which not only deepens language knowledge but also helps adapt to the specifics of another culture.

Gamification of learning through digital games and simulators helps create interactive conditions where students can practice their intercultural communication skills in a safe environment. Gaming platforms provide opportunities to learn a language by completing tasks that simulate real-life situations, including intercultural aspects such as meeting people from different cultures, participating in international projects, or engaging in business negotiations. Artificial intelligence technologies, particularly automatic translation systems like Google Translate or DeepL, allow users to quickly understand the meanings of words and expressions, making language learning easier. However, it is important to recognize that these tools are only supplementary, and students should not only focus on translation but also develop an awareness of the cultural nuances of the language.

Among the key advantages of using digital technologies for developing intercultural competence are accessibility to information, the ability to learn anytime and from anywhere, interactivity, and a variety of educational resources. However, there are also certain challenges: the need for a stable internet connection, technical difficulties in using some platforms, and the risk of information overload [2].

Digitalization in foreign language learning and the development of intercultural competence offers vast opportunities, but it also comes with certain challenges. Technologies make the learning process more interactive, accessible, and engaging; however, there are obstacles that may hinder the effective use of these tools for fostering intercultural competence. One of the main challenges is the unequal access to modern digital technologies. In many regions, especially in rural areas or developing countries, infrastructure for a stable internet connection may be insufficient, significantly limiting students' ability to access online courses, virtual exchanges, or multimedia resources. This creates a digital divide, where not all students have equal access to technology.

Digital technologies provide opportunities for communication with people from different cultures; however, cultural barriers may arise in the process. Students might not fully grasp the importance of context and cultural nuances, which are essential elements of intercultural competence. Misunderstanding cultural differences can lead to miscommunication, reinforce stereotypes, or even cause conflicts.

Digital platforms, including gaming and multimedia tools, can be highly engaging, but they sometimes encourage superficial learning. Students may focus on completing simple tasks or games without immersing themselves in a deeper cultural context or developing critical thinking skills, which are essential for genuine intercultural competence. The lack of real interaction with native speakers and their culture can also limit the effectiveness of language learning.

The use of digital platforms can raise issues related to ethics, privacy, and security. For example, when participating in online exchanges or sharing information between cultures, there may be concerns about privacy violations. It is also important to adhere to ethical standards in online communication, avoiding offensive comments that may arise in intercultural dialogues.

Digital technologies are actively used to develop intercultural competence in various areas of education and professional activities. Here are some examples of the successful application of digital tools that contribute to the formation of intercultural competence. Coursera, one of the largest online education platforms, offers courses for learning different languages, as well as programs focused on intercultural communication and international cooperation. The Global Campus course on Coursera allows students from different countries to study together, discussing global issues through the lens of their own cultures. This gives students the opportunity to develop intercultural communication skills by working in international teams, discussing current issues, and solving problems related to different cultural approaches.

Online platforms such as edX, FutureLearn, and Udemy offer courses that promote the development of intercultural competence. For example, the "Intercultural Communication" course on edX provides students with the opportunity to study strategies for effective communication in an intercultural context. During such courses, participants interact with people from different cultures, allowing them to develop skills in negotiation, conflict resolution, and collaboration with representatives of other cultures.

Online communities such as Reddit, Facebook Groups, or topic-specific forums allow people from different cultures to exchange experiences, ask questions, respond to requests, and develop intercultural communication skills through discussions on various topics. This enables participants to gain knowledge not only about languages but also about the cultural nuances, traditions, and values of different peoples.

Therefore, digital technologies play an important role in developing intercultural competence, providing extensive opportunities for interaction between representatives of different cultures. Innovative approaches, such as educational online platforms, virtual reality, and social networks, significantly contribute to the development of intercultural communication. However, there are also certain challenges that need to be considered when developing digital educational programs. Further research in this field can help improve the methods of using digital technologies in intercultural education.

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