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TOPICAL ISSUE REFERRED TO UNIVERSITY LEARNERS' SKILLS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE IN THE ERA OF DIGITALIZATION

***Annotation.** The actuality of the presented research might be proved with the arguments below that in a society characterized by constant communication through conversations, tweets, and live streams, the ability to comprehend one another is essential; foreign languages serve as the quintessential tool for social interaction. Proficiency in foreign languages represents a vital global competency for the 21st century, significantly impacting our professional endeavors and our roles as both local and global citizens. Reports from 2017, including "America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century," "Not Lost in Translation: The Growing Importance of Foreign Language Skills in the U.S. Job Market," and "The National K-12 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey," have witnessed the actuality of this issue. The acquisition of knowledge is empowering, and the skills associated with foreign languages, along with cultural insights, enable learners and speakers to appreciate diverse cultures and analyze global issues from various viewpoints. These skills yield both personal and professional advantages and promote the cultivation of a mindset and values associated with global citizenship. Foreign language proficiency is not only a social, informational, and professional asset but, more importantly, a global competency that nurtures a global perspective and the core values of global citizenship in an interconnected world.*

***Key Words:** foreign language, skills, knowledge, language competencies, university learners, digitalization, education, digital competencies, intercultural interaction.*

***Анотація.** Актуальність даного дослідження підтверджується тим, що суспільстві, яке характеризується постійним спілкуванням через розмови, твіти та прямі трансляції, здатність розуміти один одного є важливою. Іноземні мови виступають основним інструментом соціальної взаємодії. Володіння іноземними мовами є життєво важливою глобальною компетентністю студентів 21-го століття, яка суттєво впливає професійні зусилля та роль як місцевих, так і глобальних громадян. Звіти за 2017 рік, у тому числі «Мови Америки: інвестиції в мовну освіту для 21-го століття», «Не втрачено в перекладі: зростаюча важливість навичок іноземних мов на ринку праці в США» та «Національне опитування щодо включення іноземних мов до вищої школи» свідчать про актуальність даного питання. Здобуття знань розширює можливості, а навички, пов'язані з іноземними мовами, разом із уявленнями про культуру дають можливість студентам і носіям цінувати різні культури та аналізувати глобальні проблеми з різних точок зору. Ці навички надають особисті та професійні переваги та сприяють розвитку мислення та цінностей, пов'язаних із глобальним громадянством. Володіння іноземною мовою – це не лише соціальна, інформаційна та професійна перевага, але, що більш важливо, глобальна компетенція, яка виховує глобальну перспективу та основні цінності глобального громадянства у взаємопов'язаному світі.*

***Ключові слова:** іноземна мова, уміння, знання, мовні компетенції, студенти ВНЗ, цифровізація, освіта, цифрові компетенції, міжкультурна взаємодія.*

Acquiring knowledge is a source of strength, and proficiency in foreign languages, along with an understanding of diverse cultures, enhances our capabilities on personal, professional, and global levels. Mastery of foreign languages and cultural awareness are vital social competencies for individuals navigating their personal lives, engaging as professionals in an interconnected marketplace, and fulfilling their roles as global citizens in an increasingly globalized environment.

Transformative changes in the knowledge economy of the 21st century, along with the development of a networked society and the urgent digitization prompted by quarantine measures, have necessitated significant revisions to the interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral skill requirements for university graduates entering the workforce. This situation calls for a reassessment of interdisciplinary strategies concerning the acquisition, education, and application of comprehensive professional competencies in foreign languages. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digitalization efforts within higher education, driven by the imperative to swiftly implement comprehensive measures aimed at converting educational environments into interdisciplinary digital, remote, and hybrid formats.

The resulting functional objectives to address this challenge in the educational sector are identified as follows:

- 1) to modify existing educational frameworks for digital, remote, and hybrid delivery;
- 2) to enhance the ICT competencies and digital literacy of all stakeholders involved in the educational process;
- 3) to activate complex interdisciplinary skill sets that may have been previously dormant or underutilized within the educational context (Anthony P., Smith N., Strohl J., 2021).

Foreign language skills significantly influence both our personal and professional spheres, promoting the cultivation of a global citizenship mindset and associated values, while also enhancing creativity and problem-solving abilities. These skills

represent a fundamental competency for the 21st century, encompassing social, global, and informational dimensions (Wolf, A., 2022).

In an increasingly globalized and interconnected environment, the ability to communicate effectively with speakers of other languages is crucial. Individuals proficient in foreign languages can access a wider array of educational resources and information, leading to a more comprehensive skill set and a well-rounded perspective. In an era marked by misinformation, including fake news and alternative facts prevalent in media and social platforms, the capacity to engage with international news sources in their original languages underscores the critical importance of foreign language proficiency as a key competency of our time. Foreign language skills serve as personal, professional, informational, and, by extension, social and global competencies. While achieving fluency is a commendable objective, even possessing basic communication skills can distinguish a foreign language learner in a competitive job market.

The European E-competence Framework Guideline (European Commission, 2020), tailored to align with the European Professional Competence Framework, encompasses various soft skills pertinent to digital competence requirements for vocational activities in foreign language education. These skills include service orientation, meticulousness, strategic learning, leadership, social influence, cognitive creativity, flexibility, coordination, time management, and human resources management (Carnevale A., Smith, N., 2024).

The UNESCO ICT Competence Framework (UNESCO, 2018), designed specifically for pre-service foreign language teachers, incorporates essential soft skills related to digital competence requirements. These skills consist of collaboration, teamwork, problem-solving, reasoning, and ideation.

The Digital Competence 2020 framework (European Commission, 2020), aimed at the general public, identifies key soft skills necessary for effective digital citizenship. These skills include communication and collaboration, creativity and adaptability, learning and innovation, trustworthiness, emotional intelligence, and complex problem-solving (Barack, L., 2024).

Key digital competencies, effective for the implementation of foreign language acquisition activities, were quantified as follows:

1) for oral speech activities the dominant digital competencies are information and data literacy, communication and collaboration;

2) for written speech activities the dominant digital competences are communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety;

3) for audial activities the dominant digital competences are Information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation;

4) for vocabulary acquisition activities the dominant digital competences are communication and collaboration and digital content creation;

5) for stylistic acquisition activities the dominant digital competences are Communication and collaboration, digital content creation, problem-solving (King, M., 2021).

Foreign language proficiency and an understanding of diverse cultures offer significant cognitive, social, and cultural advantages. Research indicates that learning a foreign language is associated with enhanced performance on standardized assessments, and regular engagement with a second language may delay the onset of dementia. The social advantages encompass the capacity to communicate effectively with individuals both locally and internationally.

Culturally, this proficiency allows for a deeper appreciation of literature, music, films, and popular media in their original languages. Furthermore, multilingualism has been correlated with increased creativity and improved problem-solving abilities. For individuals with foreign language skills, studying and traveling abroad can become more accessible and enriching experiences.

The global pandemic has necessitated emergency e-learning strategies and has catalyzed a significant transformation in the digital economy, which has informed the extensive modeling of interoperability among various competency principles. These principles are derived from essential marketable soft skills and the anticipated digital literacy requirements for foreign language education within established digital literacy frameworks.

A thorough analysis of the dimensions of digital competence relevant to foreign language education, as outlined in current frameworks, has revealed the interconnectedness of soft skills and digital communication abilities across different timeframes and stages of language acquisition among students enrolled in European and Oriental Languages programs, as well as those undergoing early career training.

Overall, the implementation of Foreign Languages Education within the context of emergency online learning necessitates that all participants possess at least medium to advanced levels of digital literacy. The concepts of digital domain, digital communication, and digital literacy are recognized as interoperable elements across various e-competence frameworks, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of foreign language education during the period of Covid-19 emergency e-learning measures.

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