

## DEVELOPING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' DIGITAL COMPETENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

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### Abstract

Information communication technologies and media resources have been incorporated into various social areas, education including. The use of modern technologies and software results in a great change in the content and forms of training and teaching. Contemporary communication tools give a great opportunity to use specific types of tasks aimed at self-regulation and development of the students' skills. Training media competences in various settings has become a part of the higher education curricula. Moreover, media resources provide interactive studying, the communicative approach to studying and simulation of the situations of real life. Information communication technologies and media resources stimulate visual components of the students' mentality, associative and logical thinking, focus on the creative component of the educational process. But, to realize all these essential features into teaching practice, trainers, instructors, and educators should have a certain level of proficiency in the application of computer technologies and software in education.

The Increasing implementation of modern tools and resources resulted in the change of the social and professional roles of a teacher and a student, the interpretation of tasks and ways of assessment. The students' independent and creative activity also enhances.

The integration of the tools and resources mentioned above in higher education and professional training; the implementation of the new educational paradigm determines the goal of the research: to evaluate the teacher's willingness and readiness to work with a variety of media resources and technologies in modern educational environment; to assess the teachers' proficiency level of media competences.

The research findings can be used in training educators, instructors, and teachers; Continuing Professional Development courses; teaching practice of the learners in all settings, improvement of the curricula.

**Keywords:** media resources, digital competences, information communication technologies, professional training; skills development.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The diversity of modern means of communication facilitates the use of communication resources in learning and professional activity. The development of media competences in the academic and professional settings has become a significant part of the higher education curriculum for training lawyers-to-be and teaching foreign languages for specific purposes. To evolve the learners' competences the educators should also have an appropriate level of the media competences, skills of the ICT implementation and the use of modern software in teaching foreign languages.

The goals and content of professional training are determined by the demands of practical reality, global

changes, the dynamic evolution of the information space, the use of new technologies and media. The teachers' digital skills and competences development are of utmost importance. It contributes to the boost of digital education, the formation of personality capable of the selective and creative use of media products, as well as of the critical analysis of needs and opportunities in the multifaceted areas of life.

Modern training of teachers in higher education institutions of the Russian Federation implies the skills development of professional activity in the media environment.

The research question concerns the factors that make effect on the development of the teachers' media competences in a higher education institution environment.

The purpose of the research was to determine the ability of university teachers of foreign languages to use various media resources and the integrated technologies in teaching practice and also to assess the proficiency level of teachers in this area.

The following tasks were completed:

- To consider the conditions of the students' media competencies development;
- To study the main components of the teachers' media competencies;
- To identify factors aimed at the assessment and further improvement of media competencies.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The issues of the teachers' competences development is studied in many research works. Some authors examine the specifics of the university foreign language teachers' activities in the context of the formation of media competencies (Atayanz, 2015; Morgado, et al., 2019; Pérez, et al., 2012; Robert, et al., 2008; Teichler, 2017).

In some cases, the evolution of university teachers' media competencies is influenced by the international university rating in global competition (Buhari, et al., 2017; Gieure, et al., 2019; Roberts, 2015). In this connection, the activities of the faculty and higher education institutions are assessed (Howard, et al., 2019; Rowanna, et al., 2018; Yonker, et al., 2019). Publication activity of the faculty members is one of the criteria of the proficiency level assessment (Alipova & Lovakov, 2018; Morrissey, et al., 2010; Ogawa, 2017).

Modern media technologies and their integration into teaching practice can promote the balance between the theoretical research and teaching practice (Abramov, et al., 2017; Agnes et al., 2013; Burke, et al., 2008; Kurtulmus, et al., 2016).

Much attention is paid to the development of competences of specialists in a special setting, e.g. language mediators (Atabekova, et al., 2018; Lutskovskaia, et al., 2019)

An analysis of publications on the research proves that now the issues of methodological, psychological and pedagogical approaches to the issue of assessment and development of the university foreign language teachers' media competence require further examination.

## **3 METHODOLOGY**

The authors assumed that some factors contribute to the effectiveness of the educational activities of a university teacher in a media environment:

Media competences can be improved if a teacher has intrinsic motivation.

An educational institution should have modern equipment and software.

A university instructor should be stimulated and motivated to transfer his/her media competences to form students' media competences.

In the framework of the current research, a survey was held in the Department of Foreign Languages, Law Institute, RUDN University (Peoples' Friendship University of Russia). 56 teachers of foreign languages who had worked at the university for more than 3 years took part in the study.

The methods of comparative analysis, data analysis and generalization of the information were also used.

## **4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Media competence is considered as one of the five key competencies. It implies the awareness of information technologies, understanding the ways of their application, and critical view on the information

and advertising on the net. (Hutmacher, 1997; Council Recommendation, 2018). Media competence also includes the ability to use such modern information technologies as e-mail, Internet, audio-video recordings etc., that are based on the analysis, search, selection, transmission, storage and the conversion of the received information (Khutorskoy, 2005).

The results of a survey held in the RUDN University (Peoples' Friendship University of Russia) on the identification of factors contributing to the improvement of the teachers' media competence are presented below.

The greatest number of participants (45%) think that modern concepts of goals and higher education environment facilitate the teachers' intention to develop media competences. The least number of participants (5%) think that globalization is such a factor. Approximately an equal number of respondents are sure that the main factors of media competences improvement are the dynamic development of the information environment (22%) and the rapid evolution of new media technologies (28%).

The balance between research, publication activity and pedagogical activity of a university instructor can form and improve the needs of students, focused on the use of modern media technologies. The formation of a common information space, the increasing role of media in modern society and the popularity of distant education, have resulted in important transformations of all the components of educational and methodological activity.

Media competences of the teaching staff are realized in the following cases. The information technologies are used in communication and collaboration with colleagues. Media information is selected and then uploaded on the information communication platform of the university in the public domain for students and their parents, colleagues and university management. Media resources are incorporated in the class and after class activities. The strategy to increase the effectiveness of teaching a foreign language for specific purposes is developed. Students' media competencies are evolved to estimate and differentiate learning a foreign language for specific purposes. Teachers' individual continuing professional development is carried out.

The researchers agree with the opinion of the scholars who define media competences in the field of pedagogy as a set of a teacher's motives, abilities, knowledge, and skills that contribute to media education development of the learners of different ages (Grafe, et al., 2016; Heinecke, et al., 2019; Smyrnova, et al., 2019).

The participants of the research experiment assumed that teachers' media competences are realized as

- Urgent need for the integration of modern information communication technologies into teaching and learning practice – 85%;
- Ability to search for the essential information in the media more effectively - 76%;
- Ability to evaluate the information content of media resources critically - 67%;
- The intention of selecting the received media information in accordance with the stated goals - 53%;
- Assessment of media information following personal values - 49%;
- Use of various ways and technologies to search for information in media space - 42%;
- Awareness of the importance of media education in the context of class and after class activities - 35%;
- Understanding the shortage of information in the media space - 31%;
- Drafting individual educational tasks in the subject using media resources - 30%;
- Perception of the excess of information in the media space - 24%;
- Determination of the media information validity - 19%;

## **5 CONCLUSION**

The output of the research showed that most of the foreign language teachers consider the formation and improvement of media competence is an essential component of their professional activity. It results from the importance of media education in modern society and the integration of Russian research into the international scientific environment (Gui, et al., 2019; Leifeld, et al., 2017; Petruk, 2017). The formation and

improvement of the teachers' media competences facilitate the activities aimed at the development of the students' media culture.

However, the experiment data confirmed that a significant part of the foreign language teachers are not inclined to improve their media competences, as, first, the equipment of the classrooms does not meet modern requirements, and, second, the time spent on searching and adaptation of the learning material is not included in the workload of teachers. Some survey participants were not satisfied with the quality of the continuing professional development courses on the use of media technologies. All these issues prove the fact that only 25% of the interviewed foreign language teachers of RUDN University have the intention to improve their media competencies; 18% of respondents consider the compilation of such programs unnecessary, and 22% admitted that they had never had such a plan. 15% of teachers (professional experience over 20 years) noted that they have to spend more time and effort on research and further publications in international journals and magazines than for classes with students. In their opinion, the priorities are shifted from teaching activities to the knowledge assessment.

In the context of students' increasing needs for media education, the policy of modern universities should be aimed at updating the media potential of higher education teachers, and developing the teachers' media competences, the use of appropriate learning materials and technical and information support.

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