
Uzbek Teachers' Digital Competence in Remote English Language Teaching for Non- Linguistic Majors

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Annotation *This article examines how teachers' digital competence affects remote English language teaching for non-linguistic majors in higher education. We focus on the key dimensions of digital competence in this context – including the use of learning platforms, online assessment tools, and communication technologies – and how these influence teaching practices and student outcomes. Employing a mixed – methods approach, the study surveyed 100 teachers and conducted interviews with 30 participants. We also identify the challenges teachers face in developing and applying digital competence (e.g. lack of training, resistance to technology, maintaining student engagement, the digital divide especially in rural areas) and propose realistic, evidence-based solutions. The study also examines the relationship between teachers' digital competence, their academic qualifications, and teaching experience, noting higher competence among doctoral degree holders and mid – career teachers. By drawing on recent empirical studies and educational reports, our aim is to provide a comprehensive analysis that can inform professional development and policy efforts to enhance digital competence among language instructors in non-linguistic faculties.*

Keywords *Digital competence, remote teaching, student – centered approach, English language instruction, higher education, non-linguistic majors*

Цифровая компетентность узбекских преподавателей в дистанционном обучении английскому языку для неязыковых специальностей

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Аннотация *В данной статье рассматривается влияние цифровой компетентности преподавателей на дистанционное преподавание английского языка студентам неязыковых специальностей в высших учебных заведениях. Мы фокусируемся на ключевых аспектах цифровой компетентности в этом контексте, включая использование образовательных платформ, инструментов онлайн-оценки и коммуникационных технологий, а также на том, как они влияют на методы преподавания и результаты студентов. В исследовании, используя смешанный подход, были опрошены 100 преподавателей и проведены интервью с 30 участниками. Мы также выявляем трудности, с которыми сталкиваются преподаватели при развитии и применении цифровой компетентности (например, отсутствие подготовки, сопротивление технологиям, поддержание*

вовлеченности студентов, цифровой разрыв, особенно в сельской местности), и предлагаем реалистичные решения, основанные на фактических данных. В исследовании также рассматривается взаимосвязь между цифровой компетентностью преподавателей, их академической квалификацией и опытом преподавания, отмечая более высокую компетентность среди обладателей докторских степеней и преподавателей среднего звена. Опираясь на недавние эмпирические исследования и образовательные отчеты, наша цель — предоставить всесторонний анализ, который может быть использован для разработки программ профессионального развития и разработки политики по повышению цифровой компетентности преподавателей иностранных языков неязыковых факультетов.

Ключевые слова Цифровая компетентность, дистанционное обучение, личностно-ориентированный подход, обучение английскому языку, высшее образование, неязыковые специальности

O'zbekistonlik o'qituvchilarining nofilologik yo'nalishlar uchun ingliz tilini masofadan o'qitish bo'yicha raqamli kompetensiyasi

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Annotatsiya Ushbu maqolada o'qituvchilarning raqamli kompetensiyasi oliy ta'limning nofilologik mutaxassisliklari uchun masofaviy ingliz tilini o'qitishga qanday ta'sir qilishini ko'rib chiqadi. Biz ushbu kontekstda raqamli kompetensiyaning asosiy o'lchovlariga, jumladan, o'quv platformalari, onlayn baholash vositalari va kommunikatsiya texnologiyalaridan foydalanishga va ularning o'qitish amaliyoti va talabalar natijalariga qanday ta'sir qilishiga e'tibor qaratamiz. Aralash usullardan foydalangan holda tadqiqot 100 nafar o'qituvchilardan so'rovnomalar olingan va 30 nafar ishtirokchi bilan suhbatlar o'tkazgan. Shuningdek, biz o'qituvchilar raqamli kompetensiyani rivojlantirish va qo'llashda duch keladigan muammolarni aniqladik (masalan, treningning yetishmasligi, texnologiyani joriy etishga nisbatan istaksizlik, talabalarning faolligini saqlab qolish, ayniqsa qishloq joylarida raqamli tafovut) va real, dalillarga asoslangan yechimlarni taklif qilamiz. Tadqiqot shuningdek, o'qituvchilarning raqamli kompetensiyasi, ularning akademik malakasi va o'qitish tajribasi o'rtasidagi bog'liqlikni o'rganadi, doktorlik darajasiga ega bo'lganlar va o'rta martaba o'qituvchilari orasida yuqori kompetensiyani qayd etadi. Bizning maqsadimiz so'nggi empirik tadqiqotlar va ta'lim hisobotlariga tayanib, nofilologik fakultetlardagi til o'qituvchilari o'rtasida raqamli kompetensiyani oshirish bo'yicha kasbiy rivojlanish va siyosat harakatlari haqida ma'lumot beradigan keng qamrovli tahlilni taqdim etishdir.

Kalit so'zlar Raqamli kompetensiya, masofaviy o'qitish, talabalarga yo'naltirilgan yondashuv, ingliz tilini o'qitish, oliy ta'lim, nofilologik mutaxassisliklar

Introduction

In recent years, the landscape of education has undergone a significant transformation, driven primarily by advancements in digital technology and the increasing demand for flexible learning environments. The shift towards remote education, accelerated by global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, has compelled educators to adapt their teaching methodologies to incorporate digital tools and resources. This transition has been particularly pronounced in the field of language education, where the ability to effectively teach English as a foreign language has become a critical competency for educators, especially in non-linguistic disciplines. In Uzbekistan, a country with a rich cultural heritage and a growing emphasis on English language proficiency, the role of teachers in facilitating remote English language learning for non-linguistic majors has become increasingly important. This study focuses on the digital competence of Uzbek teachers as they navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by remote English language teaching.

Digital competence encompasses a range of skills and knowledge that educators must possess to effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices. This includes not only technical skills related to the use of digital tools and platforms but also pedagogical knowledge that enables teachers to design and implement engaging and effective online learning experiences. The importance of digital competence has been underscored by various educational frameworks and policies that advocate for the integration of technology in teaching and learning. For example, the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu) outlines the key competencies that teachers should develop to enhance their teaching practices in a digital era. These competencies include the ability to

create and share digital content, facilitate online collaboration, and assess students' digital skills, among others.

In the context of Uzbekistan, the development of digital competence among teachers is particularly critical given the country's ongoing efforts to modernize its education system. The Uzbek government has recognized the importance of English language proficiency for the nation's socio-economic development and has implemented various reforms aimed at improving English language education. However, the successful implementation of these reforms hinges on the ability of teachers to effectively utilize digital tools in their teaching practices. As such, understanding the current state of Uzbek teachers' digital competence in remote English language teaching is essential for identifying areas for improvement and informing future professional development initiatives.

One of the primary challenges faced by educators in Uzbekistan is the disparity in access to digital resources and training opportunities. While urban areas may have better access to technology and internet connectivity, teachers in rural regions often encounter significant barriers that hinder their ability to engage in remote teaching effectively. This digital divide not only affects the quality of education but also exacerbates existing inequalities in educational outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate how these disparities impact teachers' digital competence and their ability to deliver effective English language instruction to non-linguistic majors.

Furthermore, the pedagogical approaches employed by teachers in remote English language teaching can significantly influence students' learning experiences and outcomes. Research has shown that effective online language instruction requires a shift from traditional teaching methods to more interactive and student-centered approaches. This necessitates a deep understanding of how

to leverage digital tools to foster communication, collaboration, and engagement among students. In this regard, teachers' digital competence plays a pivotal role in determining the effectiveness of remote language instruction. By exploring the specific competencies that Uzbek teachers possess, as well as the challenges they face in developing these skills, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the current state of remote English language teaching in Uzbekistan.

Literature Review

The emergence of digital technologies has transformed educational practices across the globe, necessitating a reevaluation of teachers' competencies, particularly in the context of remote language teaching. This literature review synthesizes existing research on digital competence among teachers, focusing specifically on Uzbek educators' experiences in remote English language teaching for non-linguistic majors. The review is organized into several key themes: digital competence frameworks, challenges faced by teachers, pedagogical implications, and the role of professional development. Digital competence is increasingly recognized as a critical component of effective teaching in the 21st century. Digital competence as the ability to use digital technologies to communicate, collaborate, and create content. This framework has been adapted and expanded in various contexts, including language education. In the context of Uzbekistan, where English is a foreign language, teachers' digital competence is particularly vital for effective remote teaching. (The European Commission, 2017)

Several studies have explored the concept of digital competence in education. For instance, a comprehensive framework that encompasses various dimensions of digital competence, including technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and content knowledge. This framework emphasizes the necessity for educators to integrate technology into their teaching practices effectively (Voogt and Roblin, 2012).

Similarly, the UNESCO framework for teacher education emphasizes the importance of digital literacy as a foundational skill for educators, advocating for the incorporation of technology in curriculum design and delivery (UNESCO, 2011).

In Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Education has recognized the need for enhancing teachers' digital competencies, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated a swift transition to online learning (Khamraev, 2020). Many Uzbek teachers possess basic digital skills, their ability to integrate these skills into language instruction remains limited. This gap highlights the need for targeted professional development programs that address the specific challenges faced by teachers in remote teaching contexts (Abdurakhmanova, 2021).

Despite the recognition of the importance of digital competence, many teachers encounter significant challenges in implementing remote English language teaching. A study by Khamidov identifies several barriers, including a lack of access to reliable internet, insufficient training in digital tools, and limited familiarity with online teaching methodologies. These challenges are exacerbated in rural areas of Uzbekistan, where infrastructure may be inadequate, leading to disparities in educational opportunities (Jumaniyazova, 2022).

Moreover, teachers often report feelings of isolation and lack of support when transitioning to remote teaching. The psychological impact of remote teaching on educators, noting that many experience anxiety and stress due to the demands of adapting to new technologies and pedagogical approaches. This emotional burden can hinder teachers' effectiveness and ultimately affect student learning outcomes (Bekmurodova, 2021).

The shift to remote teaching necessitates a rethinking of pedagogical approaches, particularly in language education. Effective remote teaching requires not only

technological skills but also an understanding of how to engage students in a virtual environment. The design of online courses should promote active learning and interaction among students. This is particularly crucial in language learning, where communication and collaboration are essential components (Anderson, (2008).

Research by Wang et al. emphasizes the importance of synchronous and asynchronous communication in online language courses. Synchronous sessions allow for real-time interaction, while asynchronous tools provide flexibility for students to engage with content at their own pace. In the context of Uzbekistan, teachers must be equipped with strategies to balance these modes of communication effectively, ensuring that students remain engaged and motivated (Wang et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the use of multimedia resources can enhance language learning in remote settings. Videos, podcasts, and interactive activities can improve learners' language skills and increase their motivation. However, teachers must be trained to select and utilize these resources effectively, aligning them with learning objectives and student needs (Chen and Chang, 2021).

Professional development is crucial for enhancing teachers' digital competence and supporting their transition to remote teaching. Research by Desimone outlines key features of effective professional development, including content focus, active learning, coherence, and sustained duration. In the context of Uzbekistan, professional development programs must be tailored to address the specific challenges faced by teachers in remote English language teaching. (Desimone, 2009)

Several initiatives have been implemented in Uzbekistan to support teachers' professional growth. For example, the British Council has launched training programs aimed at enhancing teachers' digital skills and pedagogical approaches in online teaching (British Council, 2020). However, the effectiveness of these programs depends on

their alignment with teachers' needs and the provision of ongoing support and resources.

Additionally, peer collaboration and networking can play a significant role in professional development. Research by Vescio et al. highlights the benefits of collaborative professional development, where teachers share experiences, resources, and strategies. In the context of remote teaching, online platforms can facilitate such collaboration, enabling teachers to connect with colleagues and experts from around the world (Vescio et al., 2008).

Results and Discussion

The research aimed to investigate the digital competence of Uzbek teachers engaged in remote English language teaching for non-linguistic majors. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data on teachers' digital skills, challenges, and strategies in the context of remote education. The results are organized into three main sections: (1) Quantitative Survey Findings, (2) Qualitative Interview Insights, and (3) Comparative Analysis of Digital Competence Levels.

The survey was administered to 100 English language teachers from various universities across Uzbekistan. The response rate was 90%, with 90 teachers completing the questionnaire. The survey assessed digital competence across several dimensions, including technical skills, pedagogical application, and attitudes towards technology use in teaching. The demographic data indicated that the majority of respondents were female (68%), with a mean age of 35 years. Most teachers (70%) took a master's degree, while 30% had a doctoral degree. The teaching experience varied, with 35% of the participants having 1-5 years of experience, 35% having 6-10 years, and 30% having over 10 years of experience.

The survey included items measuring teachers' self-reported technical skills in using digital tools and platforms. The results revealed

that 62% of the participants rated their technical skills as proficient, while 28% considered themselves as intermediate, and 10% as beginners. Specific skills assessed included:

- **Basic Computer Skills:** 85% of teachers reported being proficient in basic computer operations, including file management and software installation.
- **Use of Educational Software:** 70% of teachers indicated proficiency in using educational platforms such as Moodle and Google Classroom.
- **Video Conferencing Tools:** A significant 70% of respondents reported being comfortable using video conferencing tools like Zoom and Microsoft Teams for online classes.

When evaluating the pedagogical use of technology, the survey revealed that 66% of teachers frequently integrated digital tools into their lesson plans. The most commonly used tools included:

- **Interactive Presentation Software:** 75% of teachers utilized platforms like Prezi and PowerPoint to enhance student engagement.
- **Online Assessment Tools:** 60% reported using tools such as Kahoot and Quizlet for formative assessments.
- **Digital Communication Tools:** 80% of teachers employed messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram) to maintain communication with students outside of class hours.

Despite these positive findings, only 45% of respondents felt confident in their ability to design fully online courses.

To complement the quantitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 teachers selected from the survey respondents. The interviews aimed to explore in-depth perspectives on the challenges and strategies related to remote English language teaching.

Several recurring themes emerged from the interviews regarding the challenges teachers encountered during remote teaching:

- **Technical Issues:** Many teachers reported experiencing connectivity issues and technical glitches during online classes, which disrupted the flow of teaching.
- **Student Engagement:** Teachers highlighted difficulties in maintaining student engagement in a remote setting. One teacher noted, "It's challenging to keep students motivated when they are behind a screen. I often feel like I'm talking to myself."
- **Assessment Difficulties:** Teachers expressed concerns about the validity of online assessments. One participant stated, "I worry about whether students are completing assessments honestly. It's hard to monitor them."

Despite the challenges, many teachers demonstrated resilience and adaptability. Key strategies identified included:

- **Interactive Activities:** Teachers employed interactive activities such as breakout rooms and polls to foster engagement. One teacher shared, "Using breakout rooms has helped students collaborate and communicate more effectively."
- **Continuous Professional Development:** Many participants sought out online training and webinars to enhance their digital skills. One teacher remarked, "I attended several online workshops, which helped me learn new tools and techniques for teaching."
- **Peer Support Networks:** Teachers formed peer support groups to share resources and strategies. One participant noted, "We created a WhatsApp group where we exchange ideas and materials. It has been a great source of support."

To analyze the differences in digital competence levels among teachers based on demographic factors, a comparative analysis was conducted. The analysis focused on

teaching experience and educational background. Interestingly, teachers with moderate experience (6-10 years) displayed higher digital competence than those with less (1-5 years) or more (over 10 years) experience. This trend may suggest that teachers with moderate experience have had the opportunity to adapt to technological changes while avoiding the potential complacency that can accompany long-term teaching. Teachers with doctoral degrees reported higher levels of digital competence, particularly in the pedagogical application of technology. This finding suggests that advanced education may correlate with a deeper understanding of integrating technology into teaching practices.

Conclusion

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the digital competence of Uzbek teachers in remote English language teaching for non-linguistic majors. While many teachers demonstrated proficiency in using digital tools, significant challenges remain, particularly concerning student engagement and equitable access to technology. The findings highlight the importance of ongoing professional development and collaborative support networks to enhance teachers' digital skills and pedagogical practices. As remote education continues to evolve, these insights can inform policy and practice aimed at improving the quality of English language instruction in Uzbekistan.

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