

## MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND THE COMPETENCE APPROACH IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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*The article focuses on the ways of intensification of educational activity of students, increasing the level of their motivation to learn a foreign language using the competence approach. The authors describe the results of a survey on the use of modern technology in the classroom - electronic dictionaries, various apps and sites on this topic. These technical means as one of the elements of the communicative competence not only provide opportunities for effective acquisition of the material to be studied, but also have a strong emotional impact on students, serve as an incentive for creating additional motivation in further learning, and creative activities. The skills of using this kind of technology are developed by students in the process of learning a foreign language, motivating students to independent creative work and problem solving. Through interaction, students can increase their vocabulary in the process of reading or listening to authentic materials, talking and discussing information with other students, as well as working on group assignments. In order to use technical means effectively, while preparing for classes it is necessary to make sure that the content of these technical means corresponds to the level of students and to the content of the materials they use to study. In general, the approach to learning a foreign language discussed in the article produces a cumulative effect. In its turn the effect gained is expressed in the accumulation of communicative competence, ability to cooperate, the ability to search for a way of solving problems, tolerance etc.*

*Keywords: competence approach, competence, communicative competence, foreign language, electronic dictionary, electronic applications, thematic sites*

Competence oriented professional education is objective phenomenon that has occurred due to socio-economical and pedagogical changes in society. Such response of professional education to ongoing changes was urgent as there were new requirements introduced to specialists in labor market, which had not been taken into account in training programs before. These requirements do not only concern the contents of education, but also goals, results, and learning technologies.

A goal of modern education is formation of a student's corresponding competences. In a glossary for Federal State Education Standard, competence is defined as 'a list of duties and rights given to a person or organization to solve particular tasks, and a combination of knowledge, abilities, and skills a person should possess and have experience working with' [3].

Specialized literature review has shown that competence as a complicated, multi-component, interdisciplinary concept has no single meaning definition in academic literature. Authors' definitions differ due to extent, contents, semantic and logical structures. Competence can be described as a personal characteristic (feature or element), a whole formation in personality's structure, a feature regulation system, or a condition which appears after acquiring knowledge,

experience, abilities, and skills (proficiency, awareness, knowledge, legitimacy, efficiency). However, competence is simply identified with knowledge and experience. In academic literature there are several definitions of a term ‘competence’ (Table 1).

Table 1

Competence: terminological approach

Author	Definition for ‘competence’
Verbizky A.A., Il’yazova M.D. [2 , p. 230]	distinguished and realized competences of a person that define the extent to which he or she is familiar with technologies for practical activities (everyday, social, spiritual, general cultural, professional, and scientific) and development of socio-moral personal characteristics: citizenship, responsibility, independence, ability to make decisions on their own or in a group, communication, ability to study constantly and proceed with self-education, etc.
Khutorsky A.V. [4, p. 35]	A student’s possession of an appropriate competence that includes their attitude to it and to a subject matter, and a combination of student’s personal characteristics (value perspectives, education, abilities and skills), which are determined by their particular activities and experiences in a particular personally meaningful and social sphere.
Baydenko V.I. [1, p. 27]	A certain way to organize knowledge, abilities, and fundamental skills that allow a person to be successful in a particular activity.
Choshanov M.A. [5, p. 35]	A qualification to solve problems. It includes substantial (knowledge) and procedural (skills) elements and suggests knowledge of a problem and ability to solve it.
Elkonin B.D. [7, p. 65]	A measure of a person’s involvement into an activity.
Shishov S.E. [6, p. 65]	A general ability based on knowledge, values, interests that allows to establish a connection between knowledge and a situation and to define a procedure (knowledge and activity) that is appropriate to solve a problem.

After generalization of experts’ definitions from the table above, it can be concluded, that competence is a new measurement unit for education as knowledge, abilities, and skills do not and cannot completely satisfy and measure the education quality level. Competence suggests a person to have inner motivation for qualified realization of their professional activities and professional values, and to treat a job as value.

A competence approach is an educational priority perspective to get the following results: formation of necessary general cultural and professional competences, self-determination, socialization, personal development, and self-actualization.

In the process of learning a foreign language within a competence approach, professional aspect is taken into consideration, in particular, a communicative competence is being formed. Academic literature review and real teaching practice study showed that depending on how problem of competence is included in researchers’ scientific interests they choose the main aspects to study it. Communicative competence is defined as ‘possession of knowledge that allows to judge something’ (A.V. Volovik). The essence of this phenomenon is explained from a point of view of secondary linguistic personality that is capable of joining intercultural communication with representative of other cultures (N.I. Gez). It is stated, that communicative competence is

actually a combination of competences, where foreign-language communicative competence is in the center, and its elements are also distinguished. (I.L. Bim, N.I. Gez, I.A. Zimnyaya, R.P. Milrud, etc.)

In order to acquire this competence, it is important to justify the need to use modern technologies, which are getting popular worldwide, during English lessons. The purpose of implementing modern technologies and teaching methods in educational process is the following [9]:

- communication teaching methods provide maximum involvement of students into the learning process;
- web chats allow the shyest people to practice speaking a foreign language;
- internet resources provide a lot of available authentic materials;
- social networks allow to communicate with native speakers of different cultural backgrounds;
- various portable devices that were previously used for entertainment and communication currently become a powerful teaching tool along with traditional resources.

Table 2

Usage frequency of various technologies in English as a foreign language

Communication	Content browsing/downloading	Language study
The most frequently used technologies		
Social networks: 58% - daily/frequently 14% - never	Informational websites: 71% - daily/frequently 2% - never	Online dictionaries: 94% - daily/frequently 0% - never
E-mail: 45% - daily/frequently 9% - never	Downloading/streaming video: 74% - daily/frequently 5% - never	Applications to learn the English language: 42% - daily/frequently 11% - never
Less frequently used technologies		
Blogs: 10% - daily/frequently 65% - never	E-books: 7% - daily/frequently 66% - never	English language courses on CD/DVD: 1% - daily/frequently 89% - never
Voice chats: 14% - daily/frequently 41% - never	Space/cable television/radio: 31% - daily/frequently 25% - never	Websites to learn a language: 5% - daily/frequently 53% - never

However, despite of various opportunities and advantages of using modern technologies, this form of education is not suitable for everyone. Thus, while forming a language learning system, it is important to consider users' preferences and their attitude to different forms of education [6].

Table 3

## Technologies that students use to learn a foreign language

	Research by Ruth Trinder (2013): technology helped in learning, %	Research by EACEA (2007/09): technology helped in learning, %	Research by Ruth Trinder (2013): technology helped in learning (more, than others), %	Research by Ruth Trinder (2013): Frequency of using a technology in English, %
Online dictionaries	99	(dictionaries+grammar manuals) 89	74 (26)	94
TV/radio/video clips	93	65	67 (26)	73
News sites/magazines	91	-	51 (40)	45
Movies, including DVD/BluRay	85	85	60 (25)	41
Learning applications	85	-	38 (47)	42
E-mail	81	78	23 (58)	43
Informational web-sites/sites of companies	75		18 (57)	58
Social networks	74	40	23 (51)	36
Web-chats	74	50	23 (52)	18
Online grammar manuals	68	(dictionaries+grammar manuals) 89	22 (47)	22
E-books	63	-	41 (23)	14
Voice chats	52	38	15 (37)	27
Text messages/SMS	49	30	9 (41)	12
Discussion forums	42	48	7 (35)	Online - 5
Sites/courses on DVDs/CDs to learn a foreign language	35	68	7 (29)	DVD - 1
Blogs	30	49	7 (24)	9

One of recent researches on needs and preferences of people choosing forms of learning the English language has been conducted by Ruth Trinder, an employee at Vienna University of Economics and Business [8]. 175 students of Austrian universities participated in the research. They took part in surveys which defined the most frequently used technologies, the profit they provide in learning the English language, and preferred forms of learning English.

In Table 2, there are results of a survey that revealed the frequency of using various technologies in English, particularly, to learn this language. As it can be seen from the table, the most popular tool to learn English (second) language is online dictionaries (94% use them almost every day, 0% respondents have never used them). Moreover, learning a language with the help

of different applications is rather popular among students in comparison with usage of learning CDs/DVDs and themed sites (42% of daily/frequent usage against 1% and 5% accordingly).

In Table 3, there are united results of two researches conducted by 5–7 years (by Ryth Trinder and EACEA Agency [15; 8]), which allows to track dynamics of using different technologies. Respondents were asked to choose the technologies that had helped them to learn English (second) language, helped considerably, and helped more than other technologies.

The survey's results show that such services as online dictionaries, news sites/magazines, movies (including DVD/BluRay), learning applications, and e-mail are the most effective to learn the English language.

Efficiency in learning the English language in comparison with the previous research has decreased for such technologies as discussion forums, blogs, and learning sites/courses on DVDs/CDs.

Table 4

A preferred learning method	To learn a new language, %	To enhance the level of the second (English) language, %
With a teacher in class (traditional approach)	20	4
Using software (including online learning)	2	3
In a mixed learning environment (a combination of traditional approach and approach based on using software)	24	6
Using full language immersion abroad (learning/travelling/working in a country where people speak the target language)	42	70
Using interactions with native speakers at home (for example, learning a language in tandem, classes, discussions, communication)	8	15
Using traditional tools and resources (books, grammar manuals, television, etc.)	5	2

It should be noted, that students prefer technologies that provide visuals and sounds such as TV-shows, video clips, etc. It comes from a fact that these technologies are rich in materials to learn informal, real English and different accents. According to students, they can have a good time and improve their language skills and pronunciation.

In Table 4, there are results of a survey which defined form preferences of learning the English language. With constant development of technologies, applying them and various mixed forms of education becomes more popular. In only several years the level of technology integration in the teaching process has changed considerable: in a research by EACEA conducted in 2009, 18% of respondents had not come across systematical usage of digital/mobile technologies in learning a language. In comparison, in a research by Ruth Trinder there were only 4%.

Therefore, formation of artificial foreign-language environment to learn foreign languages is one of the main issues of modern methodology. It is tightly connected with realization of mass (including simultaneous active involvement of many people) teaching of two out of four types of language processes: listening and speaking (conditionally-communicative or communicative). The role of technologies in solving these tasks is great because such tools help to solve them in practice.

Considering the modern social order of the Russian society for artistic people capable of working independently and feeling the need for constant education, it is especially important to enhance students' English language skills.

However, there is a paradox. The educational system limited by the government plays a special part in developing artistic skills of the younger generation. At the same time, modern technologies, which are often left outside practical classes in universities, have a unique opportunity to stimulate students' artistic skills while learning a foreign language.

The main goal of teaching a foreign language is not about simple acquirement of learning materials, but about enhancing personal intellectual resources of students, creating comfortable conditions to discover artistic potential of every learner and their self-realization in order to conduct artistic, scientifically practical, scientific, and project activities.

A survey has been conducted in two groups of students of a linguistic and a non-linguistic faculty of Yaroslavl Demidov State University and Yaroslavl State Technical University accordingly. 40 students were asked to answer questions corresponding the ones in methodology of Ruth Trinder and EACEA (Table 5).

The results of the survey showed that students from Yaroslavl use similar services to learn a foreign language – online dictionaries and movies. Learning applications and e-mail are rarely used in the learning process among students of both linguistic and non-linguistic faculties. According to students from Yaroslavl, the most effective technologies to learn English are social networks, e-books, news sites and online grammar manuals.

Table 5

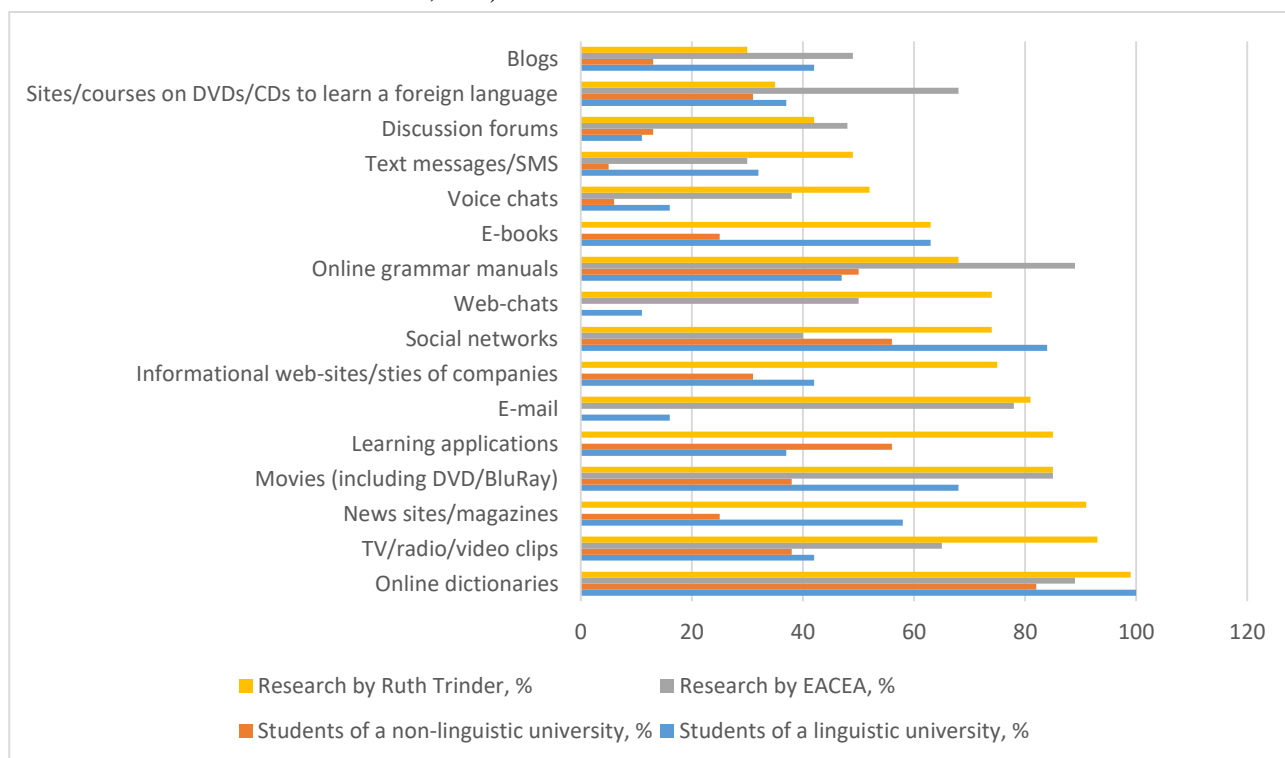
Technologies, which students from Yaroslavl use to learn a foreign language

Technologies	Number of students of a linguistic university using a technology, %	Number of students of a non-linguistic university using a technology, %
Online dictionaries	100	82
TV/radio/video clips	42	38
News sites/magazines	58	25
Movies (including DVD/BluRay)	68	38
Learning applications	37	56
E-mail	16	-
Informational web-sites/sties of companies	42	31
Social networks	84	56
Web-chats	11	-
Online grammar manuals	47	50
E-books	63	25
Voice chats	16	6
Text messages/SMS	32	5
Discussion forums	11	13
Sites/courses on DVDs/CDs to learn a foreign language	37	31
Blogs	42	13

Effective learning of English is not a priority in using such technologies as discussion forums, blogs, and web-chats.

The results of the surveys are compared in Picture 1. Naturally, the main goal of competence approach is acquiring a skill of independent answer search and learning through interactions. Although, the key point is obviously the interaction of students.

To the forms of learning a language mentioned in Table 6, some students added such activities as preparation of reports, participation in conferences, and abroad publications. According to students, these competences allow them to enhance their language skills and acquire new skills of practical interactions with foreign sources (writing and formatting articles due to international academic standards, etc.).



Picture 1. Comparative analysis of technologies used by foreign and Russian students to learn a foreign language

Table 6

Form of learning English by students of a non-linguistic university

A preferred learning method	To learn a new language, %
With a teacher in class (traditional approach)	25
Using software (including online learning)	25
In a mixed learning environment (a combination of traditional approach and approach based on using software)	56
Using full language immersion abroad (learning/travelling/working in a country where people speak the target language)	50
Using interactions with native speakers at home (for example, learning a language in tandem, classes, discussions, communication)	13
Using traditional tools and resources (books, grammar manuals, television, etc.)	25

Summing everything up, it should be noted, that competences, which students acquire, currently perform as an integral socio-personal and behavioral phenomenon, which is a result of educational process. Contents and conditions of high education should let students approach their future professional activities. Communicative competences, which are typical for particular spheres and jobs, allow it to happen.

A goal in competence approach is called behavioral, which actually is observed behavior of a learner. It has at least two characteristics: it describes what a student should do, and not a teacher, who points at the behavior of an observed student [9].

Process of learning foreign-language communication suggests not only acquiring of particular language skills, but also development of students' speaking skills, which allow them to become participants of intercultural communication. These skills can be acquired with the help of modern educational technologies which provide students with motivation for independent artistic work and problem solving. In learning English, modern technologies allow students to switch to independent basis of getting knowledge.

The results of researches show that among students the most popular modern sources for learning a foreign language are online dictionaries, various applications, news, and themed sites.

The most preferable are the technologies that provide visuals and sounds: TV-shows, video clips and others, which can be explained by the fact that these technologies offer materials to learn informal, real English in different accents. Moreover, the researches showed that digital modern technologies are often implemented into the language learning process. The results proved that mixed educational systems, which combine independent interactive learning and traditional classes with teachers, become more popular.

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