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ABSTRACT

Introduction. The research is topical due to the need to find effective methods of teaching Ukrainian to foreign students. The development of information technology urged the development of communicative competencies in foreign students. So, the web quest method is becoming increasingly popular in the study of foreign languages in higher educational institutions around the world. This method is an effective tool that allows a full involvement of foreign students in learning Ukrainian as a foreign language. **Methods:** testing students for the level of proficiency in Ukrainian as a foreign language, statistical and mathematical processing of results using Pearson's formulas. **Results:** The results of the study showed the high efficiency of the web quest method in the experimental group in comparison with traditional teaching methods. According to all the criteria studied, the students of the experimental group showed higher results than the students of the control group, which proves the effectiveness of this method. Namely, the indicator of lexical skills of the experimental group with the excellent grade exceeds the indicator of the control group by 10.2%. The indicator of grammar skills of the experimental group with the excellent grade exceeds the indicator of the control group by 7.7%. And the indicator of phonetic skills of the experimental group with the excellent grade exceeds the indicator of the control group by 8.4%. There were 55.74% of foreign students who showed a high level of information search and analysis skills. **Conclusion:** The study notes the high efficiency of using the web quest method in the development of various communicative competencies in foreign students. Therefore, the expediency of using the web quest method in teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language to foreign students has been established. **Prospects:** further research will be aimed at studying the effectiveness of web quests for the development of professional communicative competencies for other subjects.

Keywords: web quests, foreign students, Ukrainian (language), higher education, Ukrainian as a foreign language.

INTRODUCTION

The ontological transformation of Ukrainian society, the integration of the domestic education system into the world educational space place high demands on the quality of language training of students. The search for effective tools in the modern methodology of the Ukrainian language as a foreign language resulted in the development of computer technologies and distance learning methods. In the educational environment of higher educational institutions (HEIs), the use of information technology in the study of professional subjects allows changing the form of presentation of linguistic material, thereby increasing the educational effect. Most students perceive visual information better, especially if it is well designed.

Studies of scientific literature have shown that teachers use educational, control, information retrieval, demonstration, game and other means of informatization in teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language. However, the existing electronic educational resources focused on teaching the Ukrainian language are not divided depending on the foreign students' major. Moreover, such means of informatization of Ukrainian language teaching are not designed to prepare students for learning specialized vocabulary.

Online learning gives every student the opportunity to take an active part in the learning process, to individualize it, to exercise self-control, to be not a passive observer but to actively acquire knowledge and assess his/her capabilities. So, the above positions allow talking about the relevance of the studying modern methods of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language, in particular, the web quest method.

Web quests are designed for maximum integration of information technology in various subjects. A feature of educational web quests is that some or all of the information for individual or group work of students with it is on different websites. Besides, the result of working with a web quest is the publication of students' works in the form of web pages and websites.

In this case, web quest is one of the types of problem-based learning and is the latest technology and tools that focus on the effectiveness of the process of acquiring knowledge. In order to develop a web quest, it is necessary to direct users, that is students, to the Internet website. If a link to the web quest itself is provided in the recommendations for students, the remote work on learning the Ukrainian language as a foreign language turns into an exciting activity in a single space of the Internet. The essence of the implementation of web quests is that students must collect the necessary materials on the Internet on the selected topic. The teacher prepares links to sources in advance, but students also look for some of the links on their own. After completing the work on the topic, students must present the result of the work in the form of an independently completed web-page. This can be presented electronically, in print or orally.

The obvious advantages of implementing a web quest in learning Ukrainian as a foreign language is that it does not require special technical knowledge and students can work on the quest both in small groups and individually. If we talk about working in groups, the competencies of students increase, namely the communicative competence. It is here that the process of information exchange between the participants of the quest is established, critical thinking, the ability to classify, compare, analyse information is developed. The quest also provides the clarity and multimedia of learning, which is also an incentive to develop the motivation of students who use modern means of communication, as well as literature in order to acquire the necessary communicative competencies in the Ukrainian language. The use of videos and presentations, as well as the display of graphics increases the visibility of the web quest. One of the properties of modern educational technologies is their interactivity, and it is very evident in the fact that virtual objects influence through the information environment and multimedia. This allows to fully implement personality-oriented learning.

If we talk about the students' motivation for the process of learning Ukrainian as a foreign language, it can be formed through different types of information, including high visibility of situational tasks. If we consider the quest structure, it has its own specific conditions of implementation. First of all, it is the presentation of the material, that is cards with information, as well as a clear quest scenario, where the role of each participant is differentiated. It is also necessary to have a list of tasks for each participant, according to the role he/she has chosen and the end result of independent work, which is planned. This also includes a list of information sources for the quest and the algorithm of actions and developed criteria for evaluating the web quest, as well as templates for developing quests presented on the websites. These are Google websites, they are free, but there are also websites in Ukrainian. And those who do not know the language can use the built-in translator, which provides an opportunity to translate everything into the language of a foreign student.

The aim of the study was to test the effectiveness of web quest methods in teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language to foreign students to prepare them for externship. The aim involved the following objectives:

1. Analyse the adequacy of the proposed web quest method for learning Ukrainian as a foreign language by foreign students to prepare them for externship;
2. Identify technologies, methods and conditions for the development of speech activity and communicative competence of foreign students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of domestic and foreign scientists have studied the effectiveness of web quests in education. Adanan et al. (2020) studied the effectiveness of web quests in teaching students of higher educational institutions in Indonesia. Mervat (2016) studied the features of the use of web quests in the preparation of applicants for an international certificate in English. Almazova et al. (2018) studied the formation of information culture through digital learning tools. The web quest method was considered as one of the effective tools. Baguzina (2020) studies the effectiveness of the web quest method in learning a foreign language in HEIs. Baker (2018) compares the effectiveness of different technologies in learning a foreign language among tourists in the United States and Asia, including the web quest method and the face-to-face method.

Dandashly et al. (2019) study the effectiveness of the use of educational blogs and websites in postgraduate education. In his work on the use of Internet resources in the study of Ukrainian as a foreign language, Fomenko (2021) notes the high efficiency of the web quest method. Truba (2021) in his work explores suggestology as an effective method of learning Ukrainian as a foreign language. In their work, Hodik and Ivanenko (2021) outline the general problems of learning Ukrainian as a foreign language. Hvozdetzka (2021) studies the formation of linguistic competence in Ukrainian as a foreign language at the initial stage of education in HEI in terms of distance learning. Betsenko (2021) considered the issue of literary text as a means of learning Ukrainian as a foreign language. Tsichouridis et al. (2020) study the use of websites and web quest in teaching the humanities. Zeng and Fu (2019) dealt with language learning in mobile education. In their article, Yenmez et al. (2017) cover the use of web quests to study mathematics. The use of web quests in learning English in high school is covered in Tran (2019). Sumarno et al. (2017) studied the features of the use of web quests in preparation for the TEFL exam. Pinantoan (2013) reviewed the general principles of using web quests in teaching. Park and Faerman (2019) and Melnik et al. (2019) studied the acquisition of social competencies using the web-quest method. Marasi (2019) considers the development of students' teamwork skills through web quests. Janlert and Stolterman (2017) covered the issue of interactivity in learning. Skills and knowledge management in higher education were covered in Halberstadt et al. (2019). The impact of using web quests on improving writing skills was studied in AL-Khataybeh and AL-Awasa (2016).

METHODS

Research Design

Education of foreign students in Ukrainian HEIs is conducted in English. However, the study of the Ukrainian language is necessary for communicative activities in the social, cultural and professional spheres of communication: participation in scientific conferences, forums, communication with colleagues during education and externship (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The effectiveness of the use of web quest methods for learning Ukrainian as a foreign language by foreign students was studied in several stages (Table 1).

Table 1: Research plan

Stages of research and their tasks	The term of the stage	Diagnostic methods	Subjects
<p>SUMMATIVE STAGE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of a plan for the experiment; - Development of a system for testing foreign students' knowledge of Ukrainian; - Identification of the primary level of foreign students' knowledge after two years of learning Ukrainian as a foreign language in control and experimental groups. 	September 2020 – December 2020	Testing systems for Ukrainian language to identify primary knowledge.	Foreign students of the international faculty: 118 people in the control and 136 in the experimental groups.
<p>CONTROL STAGE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of the final level of foreign students' knowledge of Ukrainian as a foreign language in the control and experimental groups. - Checking the effectiveness of the web quest method in online teaching Ukrainian to foreign students; - Processing of test results, summarizing and developing recommendations and a plan for further research. 	January 2021 – May 2021	Testing systems for Ukrainian language to identify the control level of knowledge after applying the web-quest method.	Foreign students of the international faculty: 118 people in the control and 136 in the experimental groups.

Source: composed by the authors

Objectives

Sample

Foreign students of the fourth year of the seventh semester of the international faculty of the National Pedagogical Dragomanov University (Kyiv) studying at the Faculty of Computer Science and the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics made up an experimental base. The general sample consists of foreign students studying in higher education institutions of the city of Kyiv. A total of 254 students (19 groups) studied in the fourth year of the international faculty, who took part in the pedagogical research. Students were divided into two groups: control (118 participants) and experimental (136 participants). Sampling meets the gender criterion. Age of respondents from 17 to 29 years. Such a sample allows covering a sufficient number of respondents to

ensure a high level of validity of the results. The formation of a sample only among foreign students of one HEI of Kyiv can be considered the main limitation of the study. This, in turn, does not distort the reliability of the obtained results because the sample is formed in such a way as to cover all layers of foreign students studying in the average HEI of Ukraine.

The control group of foreign students studied the Ukrainian language in accordance with the traditional approach to informatization of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language, while web quests were used in the experimental group. Information technologies were used in teaching of both groups. The selected (already existing) electronic educational resources for the study of Ukrainian were used in the control group.

All respondents were warned about the need to answer the questions honestly. Testing methods, methods of collecting and processing information meet the criteria of integrity, respect for personality, validity, competence. All respondents agreed to the processing of personal data and the use of research results in scientific publications.

Methods

1. Method of testing in the Ukrainian language on the basis of the National Platform for the Study of the Ukrainian Language of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine (<https://speakukraine.net>). The testing included tasks from the material learnt for two years of studying the Ukrainian language. The test consists of 150 questions: questions on grammar, phonetics, vocabulary (basic and professional). The initial level of language competence of foreign students was analysed according to the criteria provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Criteria for the level of language competencies of foreign students

Criteria for the level of language competencies of foreign students within the course taught in the HEI	
Phonetic	Development of auditory and pronunciation skills; development of oral communication skills
Grammar	Development of graphic and written skills; knowledge of spelling and grammar systems of the Ukrainian language
Lexical	Knowledge of the lexical base of educational and professional sphere

Source: composed by the authors

A four-point grading system from “2” to “5” was used to assess the initial level of communicative competence of foreign students based on the test results.

3. Qualitative increase in the level of students’ readiness for teamwork, the statistical significance of the experiment is assessed using the non-parametric criterion — Pearson chi-squared test:

$$\chi^2 = \frac{1}{N_1 N_2} \sum_{i=1}^c \frac{(N_1 O_{2i} - N_2 O_{1i})^2}{O_{1i} + O_{2i}},$$

where N1 – number of students in the experimental group;

N2 – number of students in the control group;

O_{1i} – number of students in the experimental group who are at the *i*th level of proficiency in the Ukrainian language;

O_{2i} – number of students in the control group who are at the *i*th level of proficiency in the Ukrainian language;

C – number of levels of proficiency in the Ukrainian language (“i”).

Research methods are reliable and valid, test scales are tested and have high reliability. The study used reliable, standard testing methods that have repeatedly demonstrated their effectiveness.

Instruments

Google Forms, Viber and Telegram messengers were used for the survey. Data entry and processing was performed in Microsoft Excel and SPSS Statistics 18.0. All data are provided in relative (% of the number of respondents) values.

RESULTS

Learning Ukrainian as a foreign language is impossible to imagine without information technology. Informatization tools provide the necessary conditions for language learning, increasing the efficiency of traditional technologies and the quality of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language in general. Let us note that the use of web-quest technology is focused on the active participation of foreign students in the educational process, their collective activities. The most popular are blogs, podcasts, forums, which open opportunities for teachers of Ukrainian in creating and posting web quests on the Internet.

The diagnostics carried out at the summative stage of the research allowed determining the level of foreign students' skills of search and analysis of information when learning Ukrainian as a foreign language with the help of web quests (Table 3).

Table 3: The level of foreign students' skills of search and analysis of information in learning Ukrainian as a foreign language using web quests at the summative stage of the experiment

Methods	The level of skills of search and analysis of information		
	High (%)	Medium (%)	Low (%)
Observation	36.4	40.9	22.7
Assessment of the results of activity	29.7	42.5	27.8
Total	33.05	41.7	25.25

Source: composed by the authors based on the research results

Based on the obtained data on the results of observation and evaluation of students' products of activity, we determine the quantitative ratio of students at different levels of skills of search and analysis of information at the control stage (Table 4):

Table 4: The level of foreign students' skills of search and analysis of information in the study of Ukrainian as a foreign language using web quests at the control stage of the experiment

Methods	The level of skills of search and analysis of information		
	High (%)	Medium (%)	Low (%)
Observation	59.10	27.30	13.6
Assessment of the results of activity	52.40	35.60	12.00
Total	55.75	31.45	12.80

Source: composed by the authors based on the research results

The analysis of the results showed that the number of foreign students with a high level of skills of search and analysis of information increased after the pedagogical experiment. A visual comparison of the analysis of the results of the summative and control stages of the study is presented in the histogram (Figure 1).

A comparative analysis of the results at the summative and control stages shows that the number of foreign students with a high level of information search and analysis skills increased by 22.7% after the application of web quest method. At the same time, the number of students with a low level of the said skills decreased by 12.45%. So, an experimental study was conducted, the results of which allow concluding that the web quest method helps to increase the level of foreign students' skills of search and analysis of information while learning the Ukrainian language.

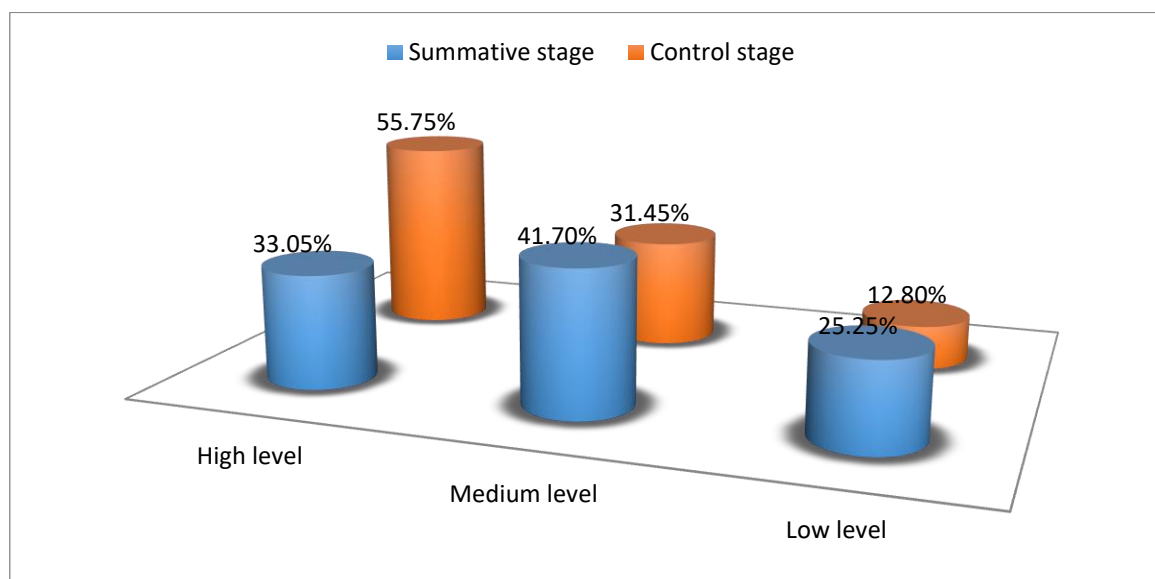


Fig.1: Histogram of the dynamics of the level of foreign students' skills of search and analysis of information.

Source: composed by the authors based on the research results

We will use the chi-squared test to process the experimental data of the summative stage to compare the level of communicative competence of foreign students on the Phonetic Skills criterion of the control and experimental groups. The results of two samples of students are used to test the null hypothesis: foreign students of control and experimental groups have the same level of communicative competence on the Phonetic Skills criterion at the summative stage of the experiment.

Therefore, the control and experimental groups of foreign students have the same level of communicative competence on the Phonetic Skills criterion at the summative stage, which is confirmed by the visual analysis of the chart in Figure 2.

Summary results of control and experimental groups of students at the summative stage are presented in Figure 3 by the level of communicative competence of foreign students on the Grammar Skills and Lexical Skills criteria.

At the summative stage of work, the empirical values of chi-square for the Grammar Skills and Lexical Skills, Terminological Vocabulary criteria are less than the critical value at the level of significance of 0.05 ($0.67 < 7.78$; $0.13 < 7.82$). Therefore, the characteristics of the groups at the summative stage coincide with the significance level of 0.05. Visual analysis of the charts in Figures 1 and 2 also shows the same level of language competence of foreign students in the control and experimental groups. The results of the level of language competence on the Phonetic Skills criterion are presented in Figure 4.

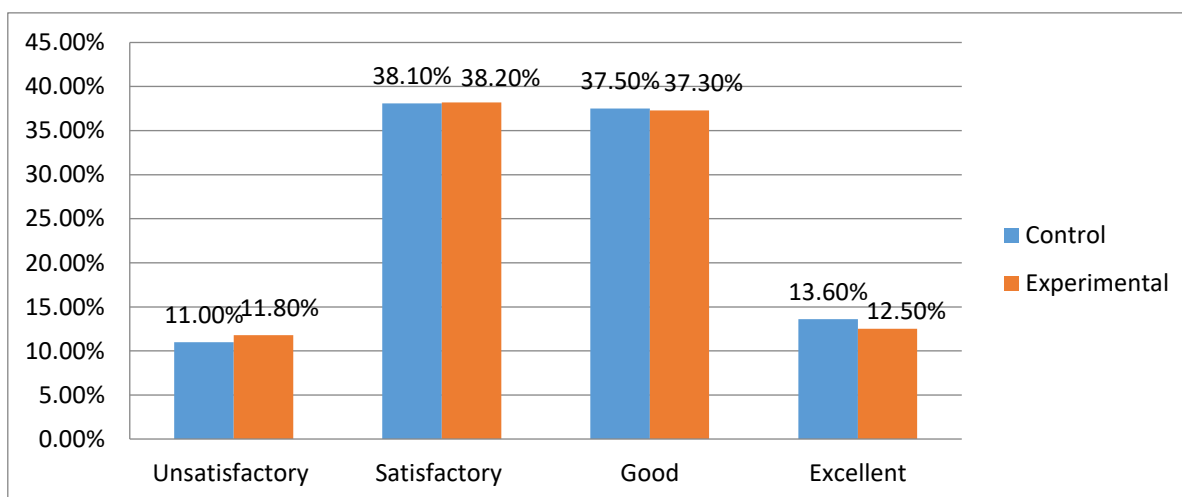


Fig.2: The chart for the level of language competence of foreign students on the Phonetic Skills criterion at the summative stage.

Source: composed by the authors based on the research results

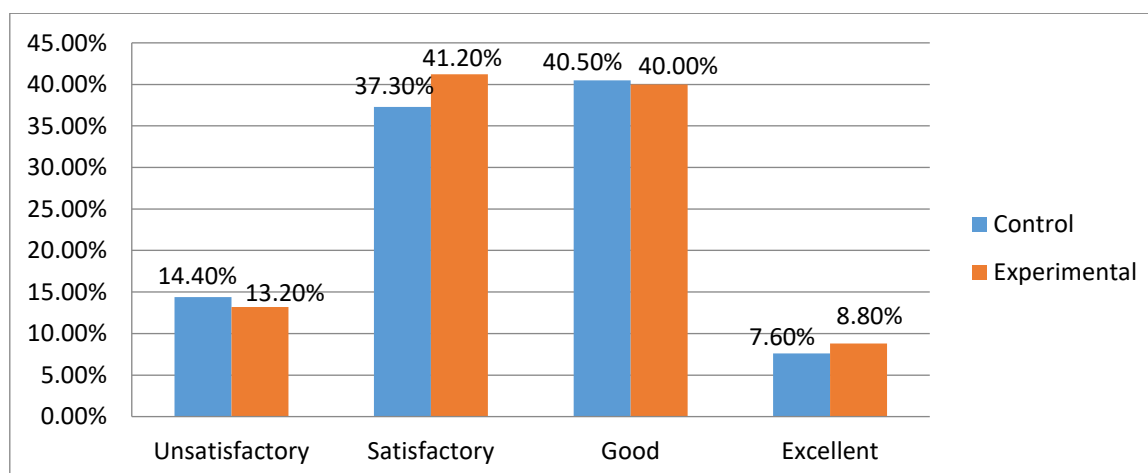


Fig.3: The chart for the level of language competence of foreign students on the Grammar Skills criterion at the summative stage.

Source: composed by the authors based on the research results

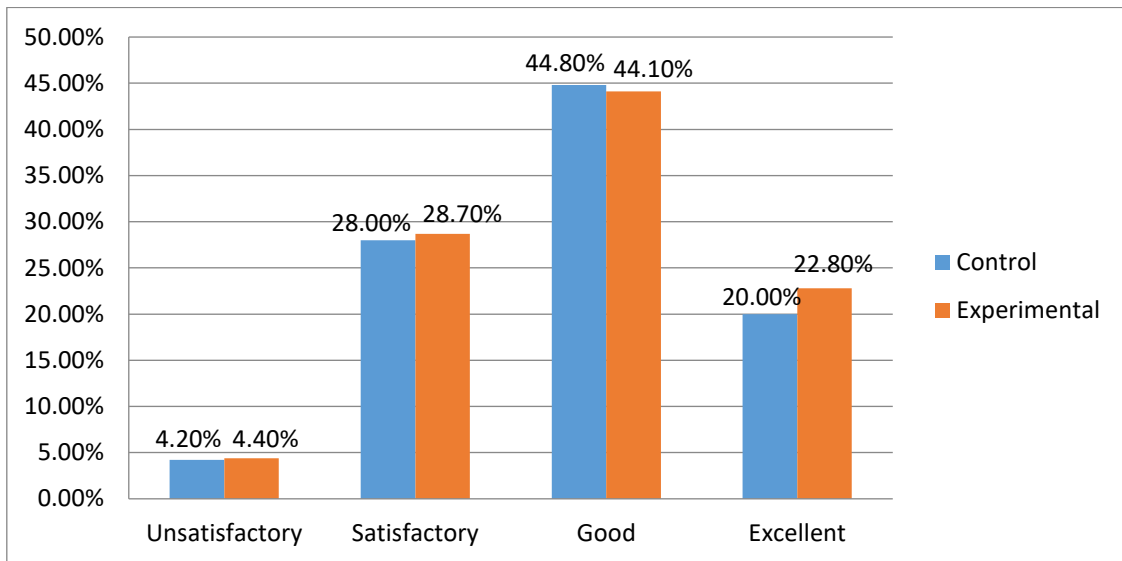


Fig.4: The chart for the level of language competence of foreign students on the Phonetic Skills criterion at the control stage.

Source: composed by the authors based on the research results

The results of the level of language competence on the Grammar Skills criterion are presented in Figure 5.

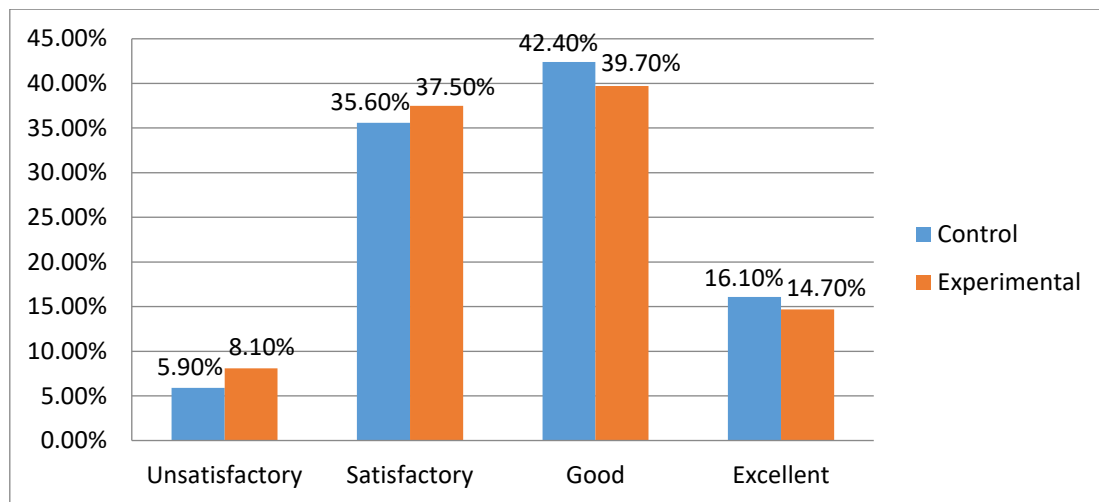


Fig.5: The chart for the level of language competence of foreign students on the Grammar Skills criterion at the control stage.

Source: composed by the authors based on the research results

The empirical values of the chi-square for the Phonetic Skills, Grammar Skills, Lexical Skills criteria are less than the critical value at the significance level of 0.05. The characteristics of the groups for the Phonetic Skills, Grammar Skills, Lexical Skills criteria at the control stage coincide with the significance level of 0.05. Visual analysis in Figures 3-4 also shows the same level of communicative competence of foreign students of the control and experimental groups.

A comparison of the results for the groups of foreign students obtained at the summative and control stages for the level of communicative competence for the Phonetic Skills, Grammar Skills, Lexical Skills criteria was additionally made in the course of research and experimental work through the chi-squared test. For the control group, the empirical values of the chi-square for the Phonetic Skills, Grammar Skills, Lexical Skills criteria are greater than the critical value for the significance level of 0.05. The use of chi-square allowed to state a significant difference in the levels of language competence of foreign students of the control group at the summative and control stages.

The chart for the level of language competence of foreign students of the control group on the Phonetic Skills criterion is presented in Figure 6.

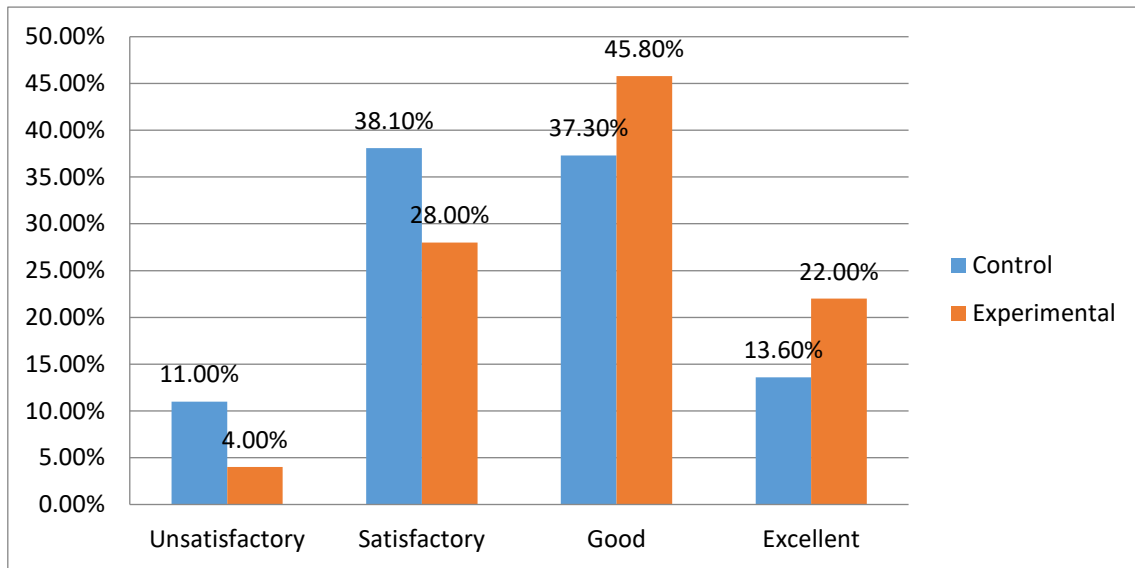


Fig.6: The chart for the level of communicative competence of foreign students of the control group on the Phonetic Skills criterion.

Source: composed by the authors based on the research results

The chart for the level of language competence of foreign students of the control group on the Grammar Skills criterion is presented in Figure 7.

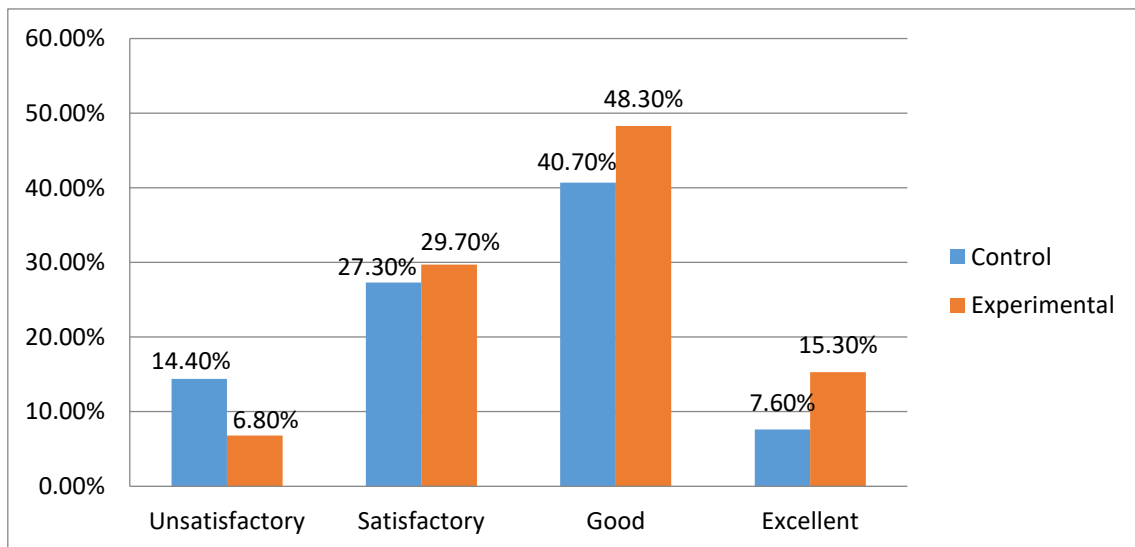


Fig.7: The chart for the level of communicative competence of foreign students of the control group on the Grammar Skills criterion.

Source: composed by the authors based on the research results

The chart for the level of language competence of foreign students of the control group on the Lexical Skills criterion is presented in Figure 8.

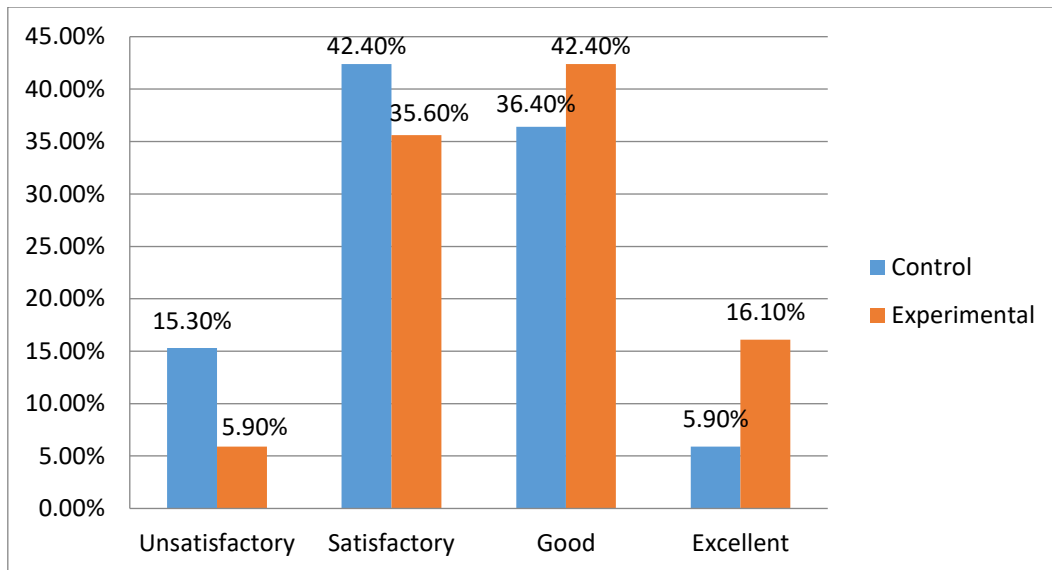


Fig.8: The chart for the level of communicative competence of foreign students of the control group on the Lexical Skills criterion.

Source: composed by the authors based on the research results

The charts in Figures 6-8 show a significantly higher level of language competence of foreign students of the control group at the control stage compared to the summative one. So, the effectiveness of the application of web quests in the study of Ukrainian as a foreign language by foreign students is experimentally confirmed, which do not only increase the level of general knowledge of the language by foreign students, but also help to successfully learn the professional Ukrainian language.

The study confirmed the hypothesis that the use of the web quest method in the study of Ukrainian as a foreign language at all stages of teaching foreign students is effective. The following features of web quests can be distinguished: interconnected use of information technology tools, which vary depending on the direction of training, methods of teaching the Ukrainian language, type of language activity and type of relevant exercises. In combination with the expanded training of Ukrainian language teachers in the field of informatization, it will increase the level of proficiency of foreign students in the professional Ukrainian language and the level of their preparation for externship in the Ukrainian language.

DISCUSSIONS

The study confirmed the hypothesis that the use of the web quest method in the study of Ukrainian as a foreign language is effective at all stages of teaching foreign students. The following features of web quests can be distinguished: interconnected use of information technology tools, which vary depending on the direction of training, methods of teaching the Ukrainian language, type of language activity and type of relevant exercises. In combination with the expanded training of Ukrainian language teachers in the field of informatization, it will increase the level of proficiency of foreign students in the professional Ukrainian language and the level of their preparation for externship in the Ukrainian language.

The results of the research showed that various electronic resources and publications are effectively used in teaching Ukrainian to foreign students as part of traditional informatization. Terry and Hayfield (2021) note the importance of using a variety of electronic resources in teaching foreign language. At the same time, pedagogy is developing rapidly, the system of teaching foreign students the native language of the host country is improving. It should be noted that there is a huge amount of modern information and simulation resources that can be used in teaching specialized subjects to foreign students. However, Wang (2021) notes in his study that such resources are insufficient to study professional vocabulary.

It should be noted that traditional electronic educational resources in Ukrainian as a foreign language are not directly focused on preparation for externship. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the existing system of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language, which will be aimed not only at mastering the professional language, but also at preparing for communication in the language during externship. The importance of developing both professional communicative and domestic speech competencies in foreign students is noted in the study of Shcherba (2021). Given the fact that every foreign student during his/her studies in higher educational institutions annually undergo externship in Ukrainian institutions, language preparation of students for the externship is an important task and problem that can and should be solved through the systemic use of

information technology. Pearlstein (2020) also noted the need to prepare students to work in the environment of the native language of the host country.

It is established that there are different teaching methods in the methodology of Ukrainian as a foreign language. There is no optimal method, so it would be rational to combine them depending on the learning objectives. The analysis of technologies and means of informatization used in education of foreign students is carried out. Virtual and simulation technologies increase the professional level of students. Sa'aleek (2018) noted the importance of virtualization of education. However, Gürgil et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of full-time education in the development of communicative competencies by foreign students.

In the practice of teaching Ukrainian to foreign students, the main aspect is the language of the major, the degree of proficiency of which determines the improvement of professional training of future specialists. Learning the "classical" Ukrainian language, which students use in everyday life to communicate with classmates, teachers, friends, is not enough, as students of HEIs need language training for classes in a particular specialization and to undergo externship in Ukraine. Teaching Ukrainian to foreign students should be based on the future profession, which is possible through the use of information technology. Fomenko (2021) note the importance of the development of communicative competencies of foreign students at the everyday and professional levels. It was found that there are almost no educational electronic resources for teaching Ukrainian to foreign students, especially professional Ukrainian, there is only the opportunity of taking courses of Ukrainian as a foreign language at various HEIs. Hodik and Ivanenko (2021) cover this problem in their study.

All the conclusions made earlier indicate the need to improve the existing approach to informatization of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language, taking into account the specifics of the development of communicative professional competencies. Students must prepare for externships in Ukrainian institutions in the process of learning Ukrainian as a foreign language. It is necessary to provide a systemic informatization of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language in HEIs. Therefore, it requires improving the existing system of teaching Ukrainian in HEIs, which will be aimed not only at mastering the language, but also at preparing for communication in the professional sphere. Therefore, it is necessary to systemically use the tools of web quests in teaching professional communication in Ukrainian to foreign students to prepare them for externship.

CONCLUSIONS

This study is topical due to the need to improve the methodology of studying the Ukrainian language as a foreign language. The use of the web quest method is proposed for this purpose. The need for systemic interconnected use of web-quests is substantiated based on the analysis of existing educational electronic publications and resources on the Ukrainian language. The need for integration of the means of informatization of language training used directly in the courses of Ukrainian as a foreign language in teaching foreign students is proved, as well as the importance of taking into account the specifics of communication skills in such training. The web quest method is proven to be appropriate provided the informatization of the system of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language to prepare foreign students for externships in the institutions of the host country. The high efficiency of using the web quest method in the acquisition of various communicative competencies by foreign students is noted.

So, the web quest method proved to be effective both in the study of basic vocabulary and professional vocabulary. Prospects for further research can be aimed at improving the described techniques and means of informatization of teaching Ukrainian to foreign students when preparing them for externship in the first year, second year and so on, as well as to build a variety of approaches to similar informatization, taking into account the specifics of training students of different majors. The results of the research can be useful for teachers of higher educational institutions who are engaged in teaching foreign students. The described experience can be successfully implemented in the process of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language to students of different fields of study.

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