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Conference on Land Economy and Rural Studies Essentials**UNIVERSITY ENGLISH TEACHER PERSONALITY IN THE  
CONTEXT OF DIGITALIZATION**

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**Abstract**

The article discusses the education conditions changing due to the digitalization and gives the definition of digital competence. The purpose of the article is to determine the level of digital competence of a modern foreign language teacher at a university and to consider this competence in educational process. It is argued that a teacher should be extremely flexible and have “digital” competence for effective teaching. We highlight the areas of teacher activity that require digital competence (scientific and curricular activities). We study the level of digital competence of foreign language teachers at the university and propose pedagogical options for using digital technologies both in education and in scientific research of a modern teacher. This describes the skills of the allocated levels (basic, high, advanced). The article highlights possible digital services for using in writing research papers, study guides and creating content, as well as for classroom work and for conducting distance learning. It is noted that the using of digital services in some cases helps the teacher to reduce the time for the revision process, increases students' motivation and consequently achieves better learning outcomes.

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*Keywords:* Digital competence, digital services in education, digitalization, level of digital competence, teacher personality



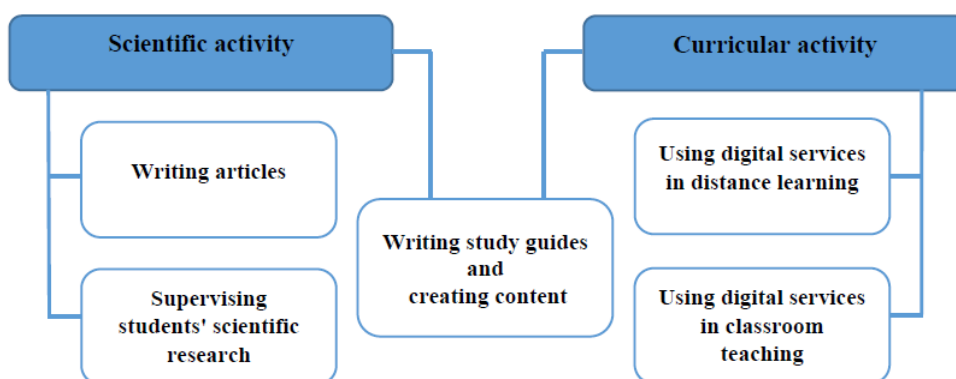
## 1. Introduction

Modern education places high demands on the personality of a teacher. Digitalization implies the implementation of modern digital technologies in various spheres of life, including education. In this regard, today the “digital” competence of a teacher, which is defined as the ability to use digital technologies in education, is becoming of great importance. Digital technologies are a discrete system that is based on methods of encoding and transmitting information data, which allow solving various problems in relatively short periods of time (“Digital Technologies”, 2021).

## 2. Problem Statement

It should be noted that the level of digitalization among the teachers is not the same; therefore, researchers are discussing the “digital divide”, primarily focusing on inequality in access to digital technologies, such as the Internet, in different countries. According to Sklyar and Kudryavtseva (2019), “today more than 60% of the world's population does not have access to the Internet...”, “and about 80% of the population has mobile phones” (p. 108). Furthermore, the authors point out that in developing countries, the highest returns on education come from employees with higher education employed in fields that require the active use of ICTs (Sklyar & Kudryavtseva, 2019). Popov and Didkovskaya (2020) talk about digital competence of different generations and define digital competence as the ability to understand and use various kinds of information via a computer. Moreover, they divide digital competence into communicative competence, information competence, consumer and technical competence.

In our article, we define digital competence of a foreign language teacher as the ability to extract, analyse and use information from the Internet and effectively apply ICT in teaching a foreign language. Such an integrated approach to the definition makes two main areas of teacher activity relevant – scientific research and curricular areas (Figure 01).



**Figure 1.** Areas of teacher activity requiring digital competence

### 3. Research Questions

The main research question is how willing the modern foreign language teachers are to change under constant uncertainty, how quickly they are willing to do so, and what tools and resources they use in their work under the general digitalization of society.

### 4. Purpose of the Study

A foreign language teacher must clearly understand the changes in language as well as constantly improve the level of teaching and keep up with the times and trends in an intercultural aspect of linguistics. The purpose of this study is to determine the level of digital competence of a modern foreign language teacher at a university and to consider this competence in the educational process.

### 5. Research Methods

The main research method was the interviewing. In addition, the methods of description, observation and analysis were used. To study digital competence, the authors of the article proposed levels of digital competence of a modern foreign language teacher (Table 01), considering that in pedagogical theory the level of competence above 70% of the maximum value is sufficient (Avilkina, 2020). The research toolkit was posted on the social network Viber. We proposed questions aiming to determine the level of digital competence of a modern foreign language teacher.

**Table 1.** Description of the digital competence levels of a modern foreign language teacher

Level	Level description / Knowledge, skills, abilities
Basic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ability to work with text editors, spreadsheets, e-mail and browsers;</li><li>• ability to work with electronic documentation;</li><li>• basic media literacy, basic knowledge of ethics and norms of communication in the digital environment</li><li>• skills of the basic level;</li><li>• willingness for distance learning and self-education using ICT;</li></ul>
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ability to use computer and multimedia technologies in teaching a foreign language to future specialists;</li><li>• ability to use ready-made didactic materials from digital services</li><li>• ability to search, analyse, create and manage information in the digital environment;</li></ul>
Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ability to use cloud storage;</li><li>• ability to create various types of didactic materials using digital services, websites;</li><li>• ability to create and teach training courses and master classes using ICT</li></ul>

Thus, the levels of digital competence provide for the ability to use ICT and the Internet in scientific research (teacher's actual research activity and academic advising) and in classes (online and offline).

## 6. Findings

There is no doubt that the whole of teacher personality's mental qualities (values, motivation, abilities, etc.) influences goals, objectives, means and methods of pedagogical activity and pedagogical communication being chosen by a teacher. Difficulties caused by rapidly changing education priorities, which are connected with the social requirements for a modern specialist and the development of modern technologies, make highly qualified professionals transform themselves very quickly to fit in dramatically changing environment. Therefore, in the new millennium, a teacher is also a coach and a facilitator. As coaches, they have a new outlook on education, aiming at freely taking non-standard approaches, help to form a responsible personality, interact with colleagues, provide new opportunities for the development of students' emotional intelligence and, extremely importantly, stimulate interest in learning. Moreover, the coaching methodology in education enriches the role of teacher.

Pedagogical facilitation imposes a number of requirements on both teaching process and teacher personality, especially on the ability to build relationships with students. Many university teachers write about this in their works (Gural et al., 2019). As a facilitator, a teacher gets an opportunity to use methods and techniques that contribute to the creative assimilation of the necessary information, form the ability to reason and to look for new facets of problems in the already known material (Gasparovich & Duyar, 2020). In an educational process, a teacher advances together with their students.

Scientific research is an integral part of the professional competence of a higher school teacher, since growth and further self-development are impossible without constant scientific inquiry. A higher school teacher should view personal and professional development as an ongoing process. One of the best ways to do this is by participating in webinars, online conferences and teacher forums, allowing teachers to both exchange knowledge and experience and learn from colleagues. Participating in conferences and writing articles enable teachers to share experience and master their skills. There are some services that come to the aid of teachers, such as the Antiplagiat system providing a mean to conveniently and quickly check the authenticity of a text and get a detailed report on citations and borrowed passages. The world-renowned provider of scientific, technical and medical information products and services, Elsevier, in addition to publishing magazines and books, offers online solutions such as ScienceDirect, Scopus, Mendeley and others, which help to increase the productivity of scientists and educators' activities. The international scientometric databases Web of Science, SpringerLink and Google Scholar (a free search engine that allows searching for full texts of various multidisciplinary scientific publications) provide more opportunities for information exchange in accordance with teachers' professional interests. All these information resources help to both carry out teachers' scientific research and properly advise on students' research, supervising student conferences, publishing articles and writing theses. Scientific research enables future specialists to creatively use the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired at university, to master the methodology of scientific inquiry and to gain research experience.

Writing study guides and creating learning content refer both to scientific research and curricular activities of higher school teachers, since it is impossible to create a study guide or high quality content without considering the latest trends in science and methodology, and much more, without taking into account new ICT, software and digital services.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged all areas of activity, including education. Educational institutions of different levels had to switch to online technologies in a limited time. Teachers at Togliatti State University (TSU) were no exception, but most of them managed to painlessly switch to distance learning due to several factors.

Firstly, TSU is a flagship university and has been engaged in the digitalization of education for many years. The university uses the Mirapolis webinar platform and the Rosdistant system (federal educational project), and the teachers are involved in creating content for distance courses. Teaching classes in the Mirapolis system, working in a personal area on Rosdistant, checking assignments in the Antiplagiat system and creating their own pages on the Internet are some of the tasks that are now easily performed by the teachers. 16% of the 28 teachers at the Department of Theory and Practice of Translation are constantly working on creating various content.

Secondly, every year the teachers advance their skills through further training and take various courses. Having analysed the data on the further training of the teachers at the Department of Theory and Practice of Translation over the past three years, the authors concluded that all the teachers completed from two to five courses on the digitalization of education and scientific research. Furthermore, 21% of the teachers at the Department were awarded a grant for teaching master classes in the use of digital tools and services in education at several universities, such as Bashkir State University, Lipetsk State Pedagogical University and Voronezh State Pedagogical University, in 2019 and 2020. Slightly fewer teachers (18%) conduct regular training seminars for the teaching staff of the Institute for the Humanities and Pedagogy at the university.

Thirdly, offline education technology is a symbiosis of traditional and innovative methods, including the ones using ICT.

Thus, distance learning became one of the factors that contributed to the digitalization of education.

Togliatti State University successfully cooperates with PJSC AVTOVAZ in various fields. In 2017, TSU and PJSC AVTOVAZ signed an agreement on the targeted training for engineering students to work for the car manufacturer in the future. The targeted training programme for the office of the executive vice president of engineering is aimed at strengthening the human resources of the car manufacturer as well as at better training of automotive specialists and enhancing automotive specialties prestige. Programme participants are TSU third year students (a bachelor's degree programme), fourth year students (a specialist degree programme), fifth year students (a master's degree programme) (Popova, 2019, para. 1). The programme includes 120 hours of Conversational Technical English as well as Professional English course, where a presentation is used as one of the main learning methods. All the teachers participating in this program, i.e. 100%, use such services as Google Presentation and Screencast-o-Matic, which have proven to be multifunctional, convenient, demanded by employers tools for simultaneous presentation demonstration and recording of the speech. Senior students are motivated to improve their English as this qualifies them for a higher salary.

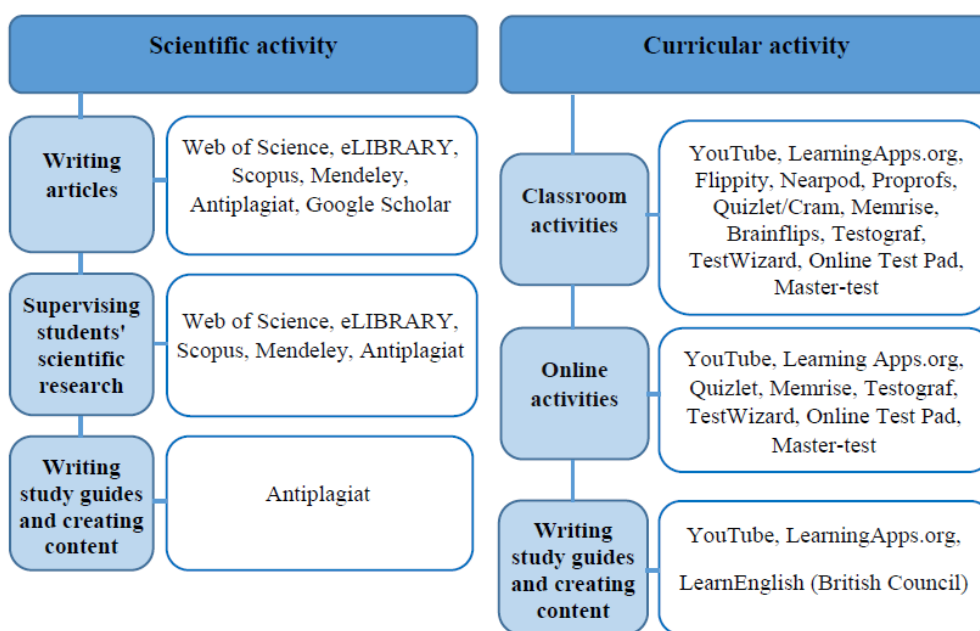
Project activity at the university is a compulsory discipline for students of all bachelor's degree and specialist degree programmes. Every year 26% of the teachers at the Department supervise foreign language projects. According to the survey, while working on projects, students actively use YouTube,

Podcasts, Google App, Screencast-o-Matic, Nearpod and Zoom, which helps to develop professional competencies, convert ideas into a reality, learn to plan and work as a team, start business projects and cooperate with city enterprises.

We interviewed the teachers to identify the tools they use. According to the survey, 100% of the teachers listed Web of Science, eLIBRARY, Scopus, Mendeley, Antiplagiat and Google Scholar when answering the question “What services and tools do you use in your scientific research?”. When asked “What services do you find suitable and use when creating content and study guides?”, 46% named YouTube, LearningApps.org and LearnEnglish (on the British Council’s website); 21% mentioned such services as Google App, and 33%, in addition to those already named, added Quizlet and Quizizz.

When inquired “What services do you use in your teaching activities (in online and offline education)?”, 12% answered that they rarely use such services. These are mainly teachers aged 60 and over. They prefer a traditional approach. Over half (53%) spoke about YouTube, LearningApps.org, Google App, Coursera, Screencast-O-Matic, and Zoom as optional and Mirapolis as compulsory for online classes. Over a third of the respondents singled out the video conferencing services Discord and Zoom. A few people named Flippity, Nearpod, Proprofs. Moreover, half of the teachers pointed to flashcard services (Quizlet, Cram, Memrise, Brainflips), quiz-based games services (Quizizz, Kahoot!) and test services (Testograf, TestWizard, Online Test Pad, Master-Test).

The services used by the teachers in their professional activities are shown in Figure 02:



**Figure 2.** Digital services used by the teachers in their professional activities

One of the urgent tasks today is to resolve difficulties in working with digital services. Quite a few teachers are reluctant to use digital services in teaching, but not in scientific activities.

Modern teachers should be curious and proactive in acquiring new skills and knowledge, i.e. be flexible and adaptable, ready to learn to use new technologies and find different ways to improve teaching

and learning (Kirillova et al., 2019). Modern students are familiar with the latest tools for creating blogs, infographics. Many students enjoy using social networking sites for group discussions and announcements. Therefore, using social media in the classroom is one of the modern means of increasing motivation for learning a foreign language.

The authors of the article also actively use digital services in teaching, especially game didactic activities and quiz services. However, teaching practice shows that the purpose of using digital services depends on the group of students being trained. In this regard, we can outline three different purposes:

1) to increase interest in learning through a form of communication and receiving information that is familiar to modern youth (most services have mobile applications); mostly these are quiz-based tasks created using such services as LearningApps.org, Kahoot!, Flipity, ProProfs;

2) to help students to systematically hone a skill by developing a system of exercises from simple to complex (using any of the services for creating didactic activities);

3) to differentiate between levels of training (a teacher prepares several versions of the same exercise, offering different levels of complexity).

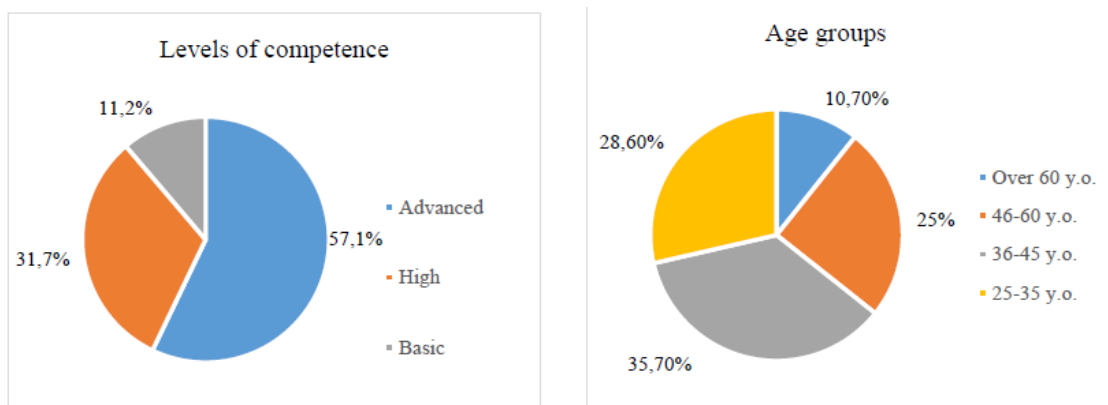
The first two purposes are clear enough, so we will focus on the last one to demonstrate how tasks can vary. For example, when talking about the structure of a car and its parts with students of the Institute of Mechanical Engineering, you can first work with the terms (weaker students can do a matching pairs task and match the terms in a foreign language to the terms in their native language, and stronger students can make a glossary using any of the flashcard services on their own). Then, to fill in the gaps in a text, the weaker students can be offered a set of words to choose from, and the stronger students can fill in the gaps without any aid. The authors provide some examples of various digital services / resources they used with students majoring in different subjects apart from linguistics at [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pYCxXCGWhdFbs-1Ut9vOm0lIXElp\\_Brn?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pYCxXCGWhdFbs-1Ut9vOm0lIXElp_Brn?usp=sharing)

Moreover, an individual approach to each student is necessary because in addition to following the overall goal of getting a particular profession, students differ in personality, their own goals and needs, etc. Allowing future professionals to choose on their own helps to increase their intrinsic motivation. Students conduct their research, compare information from different sources, give feedback, express their own ideas, turn to experts, create and defend final projects.

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, the period of the COVID-19 pandemic caused the temporary replacement of full-time education by distance learning in a mixed form, as there emerged the need to educate full-time students using e-learning forms. In this regard, the digital competence of teachers has improved, followed by a forced elimination of psychological and emotional difficulties when working with digital devices. Teachers have drawn on all the knowledge they once acquired in professional development courses, as well as self-education, to successfully meet the challenges of distance learning by developing courses designed to master the material online. The results of the analysis showed that 11.2% of the teachers have basic level of digital competence, 57.1% have high level, and 31.7 have advanced level. The teacher constantly has to quickly navigate the new conditions imposed by time and social change, clearly aware of the dependence of learning on modern social processes. The most numerous age group of respondents

is the Department teachers aged between 36 and 45 (35.7%), then come the teachers aged between 25 and 35 (28.6%), the teachers aged between 46 and 60 (25%) and the teachers aged 60 and over (10.7%). Figure 03 illustrates the study results of the digital technologies use by university teachers and the age groups of the respondents. These charts show the correlation between the levels of digital competence and the age aspect, which is also evident from the respondent answers.



**Figure 3.** Use of digital technologies by TSU foreign language teachers

The use of digital services in learning helps the teacher to reduce time for the verification process, to achieve different learning objectives, to implement a differentiated approach to education process, to increase student motivation. However, like any other innovation, digital technologies have their disadvantages for both students and teachers, so this study needs to continue to get a more complete overview.

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