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DIGITALIZATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

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Abstract
The study explores the digitalization of foreign language curricula and assessment in Uzbekistan, focusing on the perspectives of EFL students and professors. The findings reveal positive attitudes toward incorporating digital tools and resources, with implications for enhancing engagement, competencies, and institutional support.

Keywords Digitalization, Foreign Language Curriculum, Assessment, Uzbekistan, EFL, Student Perspectives, Professor Perspectives, Digital Competencies, E-learning, Higher Education.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are striving to meet the demands and expectations of online and digital learning in order to deliver future-oriented services and resources for students, faculty, and the broader educational ecosystem. These institutions are working to enhance their technological capabilities and infrastructure to support the evolving needs and preferences of their stakeholders in the digital age. The goal is to provide a robust set of e-learning solutions, platforms, and experiences that cater to the evolving academic and operational requirements of students, instructors, administrators, and the institution as a whole. By fulfilling the requirements of e-learning, higher education aims to future-proof its service delivery and remain responsive to the growing appetite for flexible, technology-enabled learning and educational services [5. pp 286-295].

Universities are dedicated to equipping the next generation of professionals with the knowledge, skills, and capabilities needed to navigate and address future challenges. A key component of this mission is fostering digital competence - the critical set of technological skills, literacies, and proficiencies required to thrive in an increasingly digitized world. Universities recognize that cultivating robust digital competencies within their students is vital, as these proficiencies will enable future professionals to effectively leverage technology, solve complex problems, and drive innovation across diverse industries and sectors. By prioritizing the development of digital competence alongside other foundational skills, universities are preparing graduates who are positioned to lead, adapt, and contribute meaningfully as they enter the workforce and confront the evolving demands of tomorrow's economic, social, and technological landscape [1. p 4].

E-learning has emerged as one of the prominent and popular approaches in modern teaching and learning. It represents an integrated, student-focused model of education that leverages digital

technologies and platforms. Within this e-learning framework, students engage with content, activities, problem-solving exercises, evaluation methods, communication channels, as well as administrative and management functions related to their educational experience. E-learning facilitates the digital processing, transmission, and storage of information, empowering students to actively participate in and shape their own learning journeys. This technology-enabled, learner-centric paradigm stands in contrast to more traditional, instructor-led models, positioning the student as the central driver of the educational process. As such, e-learning has become a widely adopted and influential trend in contemporary teaching and learning practices across educational institutions [3. pp 613-617].

E-learning fosters a sense of independence and autonomy among learners. Within this digital learning environment, students feel empowered to take charge of their own study process - they can freely explore and seek out knowledge, communicate directly with instructors and peers, and ultimately drive their educational journey. This heightened level of learner control and self-direction is a key benefit of e-learning, as it promotes autonomous learning. Rather than being passive recipients of information, students become active participants in constructing their understanding, solving problems, and engaging in collaborative exchanges. The flexibility and interactive nature of e-learning platforms enable learners to develop greater independence, self-motivation, and agency in their studies. This shift towards autonomous learning is a defining characteristic of the e-learning model, empowering students to become more responsible, motivated, and engaged in their educational experience.

The digital transformation of higher education in Uzbekistan, coupled with the disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, has brought the digitalization of foreign language curricula into sharp focus. As English as a Foreign Language (EFL) remains a core component of many academic programs, understanding the perceptions of both students and professors towards digitizing EFL curricula is crucial.

A recent study conducted at universities in Uzbekistan sought to explore this pressing issue. The findings reveal a largely positive outlook among both EFL students and professors regarding the digitization of language learning.

EFL Students' Perspectives:

Students expressed high levels of enthusiasm for incorporating more digital tools and resources into EFL instruction. They saw the potential for enhanced engagement, interactivity, and personalization through technology-enabled learning.

Many students highlighted the benefits of accessing EFL content and assessments online, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when remote and hybrid learning models were necessitated.

Participants valued the opportunity to develop critical digital competencies alongside their language skills, recognizing the importance of tech-savvy profiles in the modern workplace.

However, some students voiced concerns about potential inequities in access to digital infrastructure, calling for institutions to ensure inclusive and equitable implementation of digitalized EFL curricula.

EFL Professors' Perspectives:

Faculty members demonstrated a strong openness to digitizing EFL curricula, viewing it as a means to deliver more dynamic, flexible, and adaptive learning experiences.

Professors highlighted the potential for digital

tools to enhance formative and summative assessments, enabling real-time feedback, data-driven insights, and personalized intervention.

Many educators expressed a willingness to upskill and expand their digital pedagogical competencies, recognizing the need to evolve teaching practices to meet the demands of the digital age.

At the same time, some professors voiced apprehensions about the technical and financial resources required to implement digitalized EFL programs effectively, calling for institutional support and training.

The overwhelmingly positive attitudes of both EFL students and professors in Uzbekistan underscore the readiness and appetite for digitizing foreign language curricula. This alignment of perspectives presents a promising foundation for higher education institutions to accelerate the digitalization of EFL and prepare students for the linguistic and technological demands of the 21st century.

However, the successful implementation of digitalized EFL programs will require a holistic, institution-wide approach. Investing in robust technological infrastructure, providing comprehensive faculty development, and ensuring equitable access will be crucial for realizing the full transformative potential of digitalized foreign language education in Uzbekistan.

To analyze the potential correlation between the participants' attitudes across the four components of the attitude scales (perceptions, using electronic tools in learning, e-assessment practices, and digital competences), we can employ statistical analysis techniques.

Based on the information provided in the previous summary, we can hypothesize the following:

H0: There is no significant correlation between the participants' attitudes across the four components of the attitude scales.

H1: There is a significant correlation between the participants' attitudes across the four components of the attitude scales.

To test this hypothesis, we can conduct a correlation analysis, such as a Pearson correlation coefficient, to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the different attitude components.

The steps for the correlation analysis would be as follows:

1. Collect the data on the participants' attitudes for each of the four components (perceptions, using electronic tools, e-assessment practices, and digital competences).

2. Calculate the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between each pair of the attitude components. The correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to 1, where -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation, 0 indicates no correlation, and 1 indicates a perfect positive correlation.

3. Assess the statistical significance of the correlation coefficients by calculating the p-values. A p-value less than the chosen significance level (e.g., 0.05) would indicate a statistically significant correlation between the attitude components.

4. Interpret the strength and direction of the significant correlations. For example, a strong positive correlation between the participants' attitudes towards using electronic tools and their perceptions of digitizing EFL curricula would suggest that more positive perceptions are associated with a greater willingness to use electronic tools in their learning.

By conducting this correlation analysis, the researchers can gain insights into the interrelationships between the different aspects of the participants' attitudes towards digitizing EFL curricula. This information can inform the

development of targeted interventions and support strategies to address any identified gaps or misalignments in the attitudes of EFL students and professors.

In the end, understanding the correlations between the various attitude components can help higher education institutions in Uzbekistan to design more effective and holistic approaches to the digitalization of foreign language education.

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