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THE ROLE OF ONLINE PLATFORMS IN LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Summary: *The article analyzes the opportunities and advantages of interactive online platforms in learning foreign languages, their place and role in the formation of foreign language skills of future specialists in the system of higher education. As an evidential theoretical and methodological base the authors apply the data of their own sociological research, which makes it possible to provide certain recommendations of an applied nature in relation to the studied issue on the whole.*

Keywords: *digitalization of the educational process, globalization of the educational sphere, educational trends, interactive online platform for learning a foreign language, intercultural competence.*

The development of educational technologies in the study of foreign languages contributes to the emergence of various cognitive tools of online platforms, which are increasingly used by students in the educational process. In current conditions of globalization, virtual distance learning programs and online tutoring are becoming more and more popular among students. This led to the developing of many innovative applications and websites dedicated to learning foreign languages. Hence, this problem requires a detailed scientific examination, analysis of the main advantages and disadvantages of learning foreign languages in an online format, and research into means of its improvement in the national education system as a whole.

Nowadays mastering a foreign language is the key to the successful personal and professional development of an individual in the face of the challenges of globalization. The ability to communicate with other people in their own language can play a valuable part in forming relationships, building mutual understanding and trust, and developing the networks on which business opportunities depend. Language study can also indicate that an individual may have an international outlook and, for those who study to a higher level, evidence of the ability to work in diverse teams and with other cultures [1, 41]. Hence, in the context of the digitalization of the modern educational process, the problem of fast and effective mastering of a foreign language becomes particularly relevant, in particular, with the involvement of the potential and resource capabilities of innovative forms of

education, for example, modern online platforms.

It should be noted that modern researchers note the significant prospects and opportunities of online platforms in foreign language learning, as their convenient interface supports the use of authentic language and allows for meaningful interaction outside classroom learning. Today an illustrative example of the effectiveness of using online platforms is the functioning of the following information resources in the study of various foreign languages: the electronic platform for language learning and crowdsourced translation DuoLingo, the online platforms Drops, Campster, Lingualeo, Busuu, Memrise; Babbel; informational resources for learning English: BBC Learning English - a large department of the BBC and British Council LearnEnglish - the portal of the British Council; online course platforms in Ukraine and in the world: Prometheus, Edera, Udemy, Coursera, etc., and other interactive virtual platforms for learning English as a foreign language: Interactive textbook platform Notes, English ToGo, Lim English, Puzzle English, EnglishDom Class and many others.

In order to confirm the author's statements related to the definition of the role and place of online platforms in learning a foreign language, an exploratory sociological study was carried out, which was characterized by a small sample population [2, 29], and also aimed to clarify the tasks, object and subject, and hypotheses in relation to the researched issues. At the same time that made it possible to obtain operational sociological information which can be used to provide conclusions and recommendations of an applied nature.

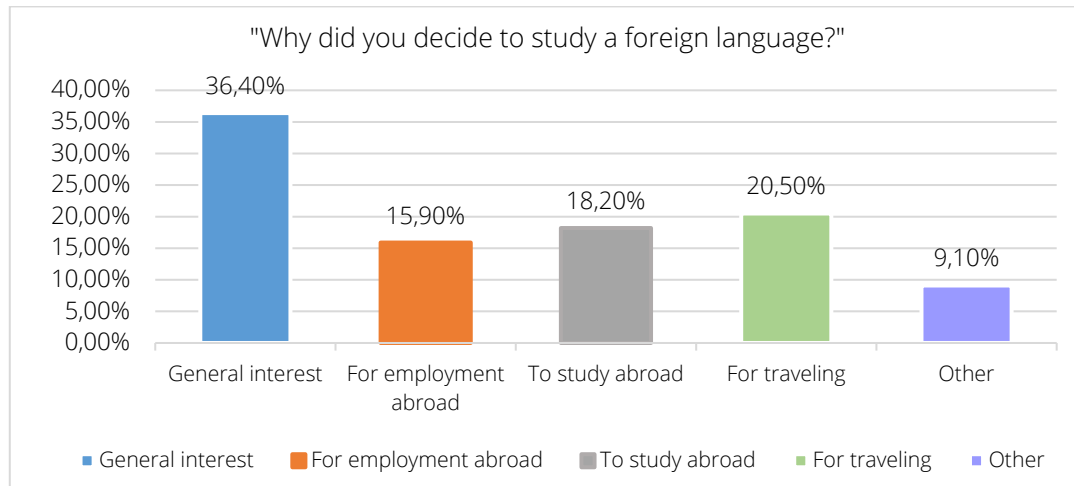
Thus, from September 5 to 18, 2022, a focus group survey was conducted using the interview method, a total of 50 respondents, students aged from 16 to 20, 25 girls, and 25 boys who were currently in the Netherlands, Rotterdam (forced migrants). The survey was conducted voluntarily, with closed questions, and based on the principle of confidentiality, private information was used in a generalized form.

The results of the survey can mainly be used as reflecting the trends of preferences in learning foreign languages of modern Ukrainian youth aged from 16 to 20.

The questionnaire contained questions related to the motives for learning a foreign language, the advantages of using online platforms, and the possibility of developing the necessary skills when learning a foreign language through the use of online platforms. The results of the survey were visually presented on the corresponding charts.

As evidenced by the data below the indicated diagram, the majority of respondents study a foreign language through «General interest» (36.4%), while the options «For traveling» were chosen by (20.5%) and «To study abroad» (18.2%) of respondents. A minority of respondents chose the options «For employment abroad» (15.9%) and «Other» (9.1%) (pic. 1.).

The survey data make it possible to affirm the desire of young people to expand their own worldview, the desire to maintain intercultural contacts with others and representatives of other cultures during travels, and the desire to get the education abroad (pic. 1).

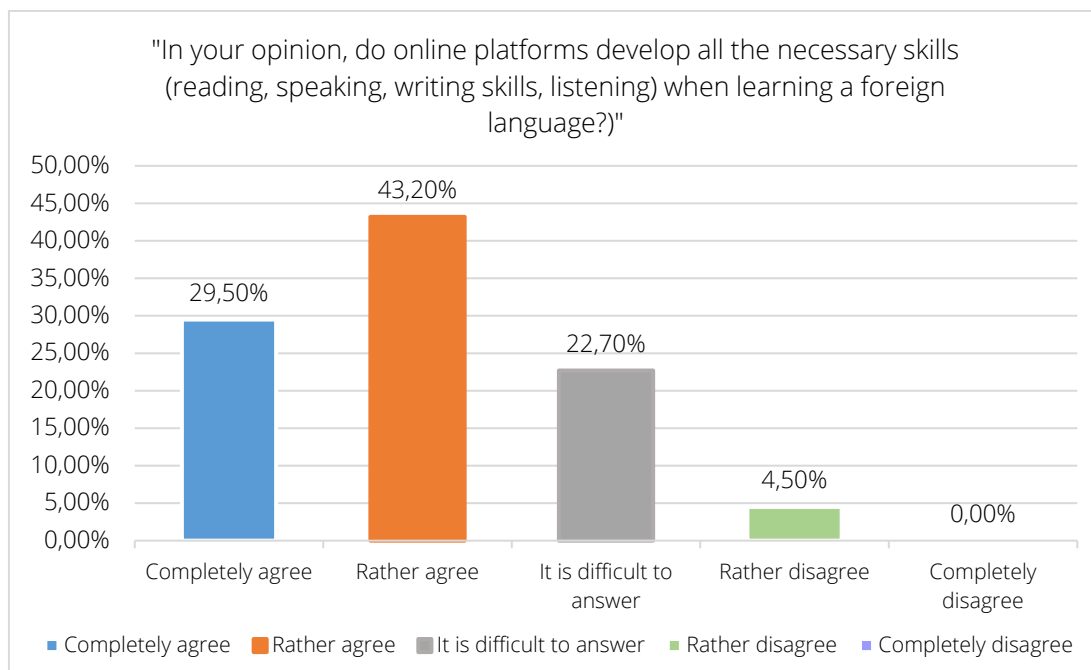


Pic 1. Motives for learning a foreign language among young people aged from 16 to 20

It should be noted that the diagram shown below illustrates the beliefs of respondents related to the development of skills necessary for learning a foreign language (reading, speaking, writing, listening) in the process of using online platforms.

As can be seen from the diagram, 29.5% of respondents chose the option «Completely agree», «Rather agree» - 43.2% of respondents, the option «It is difficult to answer» was chosen by 22.7% of respondents, «Rather disagree» - 4.5 %, and the option «Completely disagree» was not chosen by the respondents at all (pic. 2).

Hence, the justified use of online platforms in pedagogical conditions, in particular, as an additional source for mastering foreign language skills: reading, speaking, writing, and listening, can increase students' motivation for their acquisition and development in general.

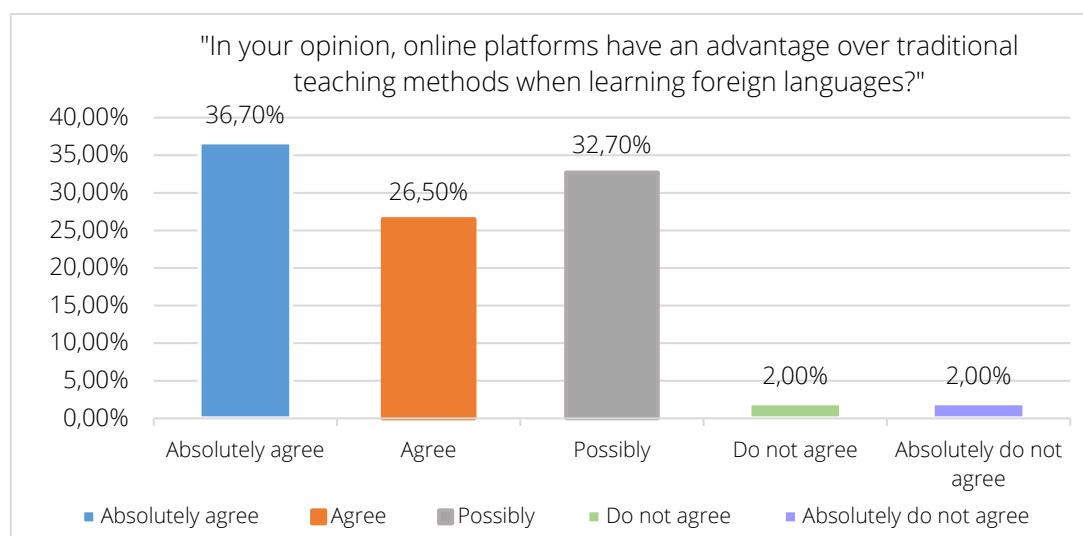


Pic 2. Providing online platforms with basic skills in learning foreign languages

It should also be emphasized that the questions to the target focus group are also related to determining the advantages of online platforms over traditional teaching methods in the process of learning foreign languages.

Thus, the diagram below reflects the respondents' attitude to online platforms as an alternative to traditional teaching methods in the process of learning foreign languages.

Therefore, the vast majority of respondents chose the options «Absolutely agree» (36.7%), that online platforms have advantages over traditional teaching methods in learning foreign languages, and «Possibly» (32.7%), the option «Agree» was chosen by 26.5% of respondents, and the options «Do not agree» and «Absolutely do not agree» are only 4% of survey participants (pic. 3).



Pic 3. The advantage of online platforms over traditional teaching methods when learning foreign languages

The respondents' answers testify to the understanding and recognition of the advantages of online platforms for learning a foreign language in today's youth. It becomes obvious that the development of innovative technologies significantly changes methods and access to education in general. In the field of foreign language learning this has led to the development of mobile applications and interactive software that give choices to a whole group of people who previously could not access foreign language learning in general.

Conclusions. Based on the results of conducting the exploratory sociological research, it can be concluded that modern youth is mainly focused on the usage of online platforms in learning foreign languages. This is due, on the one hand, to their beliefs about the possibility of providing online platforms with basic skills in learning foreign languages: writing, listening, speaking, and reading. On the other hand, it is due to the views of young people about the advantages of online platforms over traditional teaching methods in learning foreign languages in the context of the challenges of globalization. This allows us to assert the need to use the innovative potential of online platforms in learning a foreign language together with traditional methods to increase the efficiency and activate the educational activities of students as a whole.

The prospects of further author's scientific developments will be aimed at an in-depth study of the motives of students' choice of interactive online platforms, the study of their advantages and disadvantages in providing basic skills in learning foreign languages, the implementation of a comparative analysis of the features and capabilities of various online platforms for the effective mastery of foreign languages.

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