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Foreign Language Teachers' Competency in Using Information and Communication Technologies

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Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of foreign language teachers' ICT competency development. The authors (a) state the importance of the problem; (b) define the term "ICT competency" of foreign language teachers; (c) suggest components and content of ICT competency of foreign language teachers; (d) describe a study, which aimed to develop foreign language teachers' ICT competency during a short-term online professional development course.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Importance

The rapid development and spread of Internet technologies in Russia has been reflected in state education policy. The informatization of education has become one of the priorities in the modernization of the Russian educational system, and is aimed at developing a methodology, technologies, methods and organizational forms of education to improve the educational system's control mechanisms in today's informational society (Robert, 2010; Sysoyev, 2012, 2013). Over the past 10 years a few Federal programs, which aimed to provide every secondary school and university student with Internet access, were implemented in Russia. However, the lack of secondary school

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teachers' competence to use the entire didactic potential of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) hinders the process of informatization of education in general, and the intensification of teaching specific subjects in particular.

Foreign language learning is one of the required subjects in all curricula (secondary school, for a bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees). One of the main goals of foreign language teaching in secondary and higher education is to develop students' foreign language communicative competence in all its manifold components (linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, sociocultural, strategic), needed for students to communicate in social and professional areas. That is why the use of ICT in foreign language learning will be focused on the development of verbal skills (reading, speaking, writing, listening), language skills (vocabulary, phonetics, grammar) and the development of socio-cultural and intercultural competences. In this context, the ICT competence of foreign language teachers is the ability to use the entire arsenal of ICT in learning foreign language aspects and kinds of verbal activity (Sysoyev & Evstigneev, 2010, 2011, 2014).

1.2. Definitions

The key concept in this paper is the term "competency in using information and communication technologies", which is defined as *a construct consisting of theoretical knowledge of modern information and communication technologies and practical skills to create and use Web-based educational resources, Web 2.0 social networks and other ICT in the process of the development of students' language and verbal skills in learning language and culture of the target country* (Evstigneev, 2011, 2012; Sysoyev & Evstigneev, 2014).

2. Foreign Language Teachers' ICT competency

In recent years there are a number of studies in which scholars revealed the methodological potential of Internet educational resources, social services and online services of the new generation of Web 2.0 in the development of language skills and verbal abilities of students to develop their intercultural and foreign language communicative competences (Markova, 2011; Solomatina, 2011; Sysoyev, 2010, 2012, 2013; Sysoyev & Evstigneev, 2010; Sysoyev, Evstigneeva & Evstigneev, 2014; Sysoyev & Kokoreva, 2013;). Taking into account the results of these studies, foreign language teachers' ICT competency includes the knowledge and ability to do the following:

- provide students with the basics of information security during Internet project implementation;
- search and select Internet resources in a foreign language for academic purposes;
- evaluate information obtained from the Internet for teaching purposes;
- create five types of author's educational Internet resources (in a foreign language and about L2 culture) (Hotlist, Multimedia Scrapbook, Subject Sampler, Treasure Hunt, WebQuest) and use them in the educational process;
- use the types of synchronous and asynchronous Internet communication in learning a foreign language and culture of the target language (e-mail, web forum, chat, ICQ, Skype, etc.);
- use Web 2.0 technologies in learning a foreign language and L2 culture (blogs, wikis, podcasts, bookmarks, etc.);
- use corpora and concordances in the development of grammatical and lexical skills of speech;
- use reference and information resources of the Internet to develop verbal skills and the formation of socio-cultural and intercultural competences;
- use online tests to monitor students' performance and self-control;
- organize interaction between the participants of the educational process by ICT.

The specific use of these components of foreign language teacher's ICT competency lies in knowledge and ability to form certain language skills and develop students' verbal skills on the basis of a certain technology. In particular, the ability to use blogs in teaching can be a universal skill, which is a part of specialists' ICT competency in various disciplines. However, the ability to develop specific writing skills based on a particular type of blogs is already a hallmark of foreign language teachers' ICT competency. It should be noted that ICT competency is not static, but a dynamic construct that is in constant progress under the influence of technical progress and the development of methods of foreign language teaching. Components of a foreign language teacher's ICT competency proposed in this

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