# CHALLENGES OF USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AMONG PRE-SERVICE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN UZBEKISTAN

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**Abstract:** This article investigates the prevailing challenges encountered by pre-service English language teachers in integrating digital technologies into their prospective teaching practices. The research was conducted among third-year undergraduate students enrolled in English Philology programs at Namangan State University, Fergana State University, and Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages. Findings indicate that while these students possess elementary knowledge of common digital tools such as Google Classroom and Moodle, they lack confidence, pedagogical understanding, and strategic competence necessary for effective classroom technology use. Moreover, the study highlights broader systemic problems, including unreliable internet access in certain regions of Uzbekistan and the widespread unfamiliarity of both teachers and students with basic computer terminology and digital operational language. Practical recommendations for improving digital literacy and reducing these barriers are offered in light of the study's outcomes.

**Keywords:** Digital competence, ICT in education, pre-service teachers, foreign language teaching, Uzbekistan, digital literacy, technological barriers.

# RAQAMLI TEXNOLOGIYALARNI BO'LAJAK CHET TIL O'QITUVCHILARI TOMONIDAN QO'LLASHDAGI MUAMMOLAR

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**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu maqolada O'zbekistonning Namangan Davlat Universiteti, Farg'ona Davlat Universiteti hamda Andijon Davlat Chet Tillar Instituti ingliz filologiyasi yo'nalishi 4-bosqich bakalavriat talabalari o'rtasida olib borilgan tadqiqot natijalari asosida kelajakdagi chet til o'qituvchilarining ta'lim jarayonida raqamli texnologiyalarni joriy etishda duch kelayotgan asosiy muammolari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, talabalar Google Classroom va Moodle kabi asosiy raqamli platformalar bilan boshlang'ich darajada tanish bo'lsalar-da, ularni samarali pedagogik maqsadlarda qo'llash, o'qitish strategiyalarini ishlab chiqish va ularga moslashtirish bo'yicha yetarlicha bilim va ishonchga ega emaslar. Bundan tashqari, tadqiqot natijalari O'zbekistonning ayrim hududlarida internet tarmog'ining ishonchsizligi va past tezligi kabi infratuzilmaviy muammolarni ham ochib berdi. Shuningdek, o'qituvchilar va talabalar orasida kompyuter terminologiyasi va raqamli tilning asosiy tushunchalarini yetarli bilmaslik keng tarqalganligi ham aniqlangan. Maqolada raqamli savodxonlikni oshirish va mavjud to'siqlarni kamaytirish bo'yicha amaliy tavsiyalar ham berilgan.

**Kalit so'zlar:** raqamli kompetensiya, ta'limda AKT, bo'lajak o'qituvchilar, chet tilini o'qitish, O'zbekiston, raqamli savodxonlik, texnologik to'siqlar.

# ПРОБЛЕМЫ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ ЦИФРОВЫХ ТЕХНОЛОГИЙ БУДУЩИМИ ПРЕПОДАВАТЕЛЯМИ ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ

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**Аннотация:** В статье рассматриваются актуальные проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются будущие преподаватели английского языка при интеграции цифровых технологий в образовательный процесс. Исследование проведено среди студентов третьего курса бакалавриата факультетов английской филологии Наманганского государственного университета, Ферганского государственного университета и Андижанского государственного института иностранных языков. Результаты показывают, что, несмотря на элементарные знания основных цифровых инструментов, таких как Google Classroom и Moodle, студенты испытывают недостаток уверенности, педагогических навыков и стратегической компетентности, необходимых для эффективного применения технологий на практике. Кроме того, выявлены системные проблемы: ненадежный доступ к интернету в ряде регионов Узбекистана и низкий уровень владения как преподавателями, так и студентами базовыми компьютерными терминами и операционным языком цифровых систем. В статье представлены практические рекомендации по повышению уровня цифровой грамотности и устранению обозначенных барьеров.

**Ключевые слова:** цифровая компетентность, ИКТ в образовании, будущие преподаватели, обучение иностранным языкам, Узбекистан, цифровая грамотность, технологические барьеры.

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid digitization of educational processes worldwide has placed unprecedented demands on teachers, including those involved in foreign language instruction. As stated by Christine Redecker (2017), digital competence represents an indispensable component of the modern educator's professional skillset, encompassing not only technical proficiency but also critical thinking, creativity, and pedagogical adaptability. This requirement is particularly relevant for foreign language teachers, for whom the use of digital tools can greatly enhance learners' exposure to authentic linguistic and cultural materials.

In Uzbekistan, where English has become a national priority in light of globalization and internationalization efforts, the capacity of future teachers to employ digital technologies meaningfully in classroom practice is a matter of both educational and economic importance. Despite these national ambitions, current observations suggest that many pre-service teachers remain inadequately prepared to implement digital tools for language instruction in pedagogically appropriate ways.

Compounding this issue is the infrastructural limitation of digital connectivity across various regions of Uzbekistan. As reported during the study, students from rural and some semi-urban areas frequently experience slow, unreliable, or entirely unavailable internet services, which severely restricts their ability to access cloud-based educational platforms, digital libraries, and real-time communication tools. Furthermore, both students and some university faculty members admitted during interviews that they often lack a sufficient understanding of basic computer terminology such as "file format," "hyperlink," or "browser settings." This digital illiteracy leads

to confusion and inefficiency when interacting with educational software or troubleshooting technical problems, thereby reducing the effectiveness of ICT integration in language learning.

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-methods design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were collected during the 2023/2024 academic year from third-year English Philology students at Namangan State University, Fergana State University, and Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages.

A self-assessment questionnaire adapted from the European DigCompEdu Framework (Christine Redecker, 2017) served as the primary quantitative instrument. It allowed respondents to rate their competence in various aspects of digital technology usage for teaching purposes, including digital resource selection, online learner engagement, and digital assessment techniques.

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with fifteen students who volunteered to share their experiences, perceptions, and concerns regarding digital technology usage in education. Additionally, microteaching classroom observations were conducted to examine how future teachers attempted to integrate ICT tools into simulated lesson scenarios.

Descriptive statistics summarized the questionnaire results, while thematic analysis identified common trends and obstacles revealed in interviews and classroom performances.

## RESULTS

Analysis revealed that a considerable proportion of students possessed only rudimentary digital skills. As emphasized by Greg Kessler and Philip Hubbard (2017), mere technical exposure to digital devices is insufficient; what matters is the ability to purposefully incorporate these tools into the learning process. In line with this observation, respondents admitted their tendency to use ICT platforms such as Google Classroom merely for uploading assignments or reading announcements, without exploring interactive features that could support language skill development.

One critical difficulty was the inability to relate digital technology to communicative language teaching objectives. Several interviewees from Fergana State University and Andijan State Institute expressed uncertainty about using tools like Padlet or Kahoot for speaking or listening practice. One participant confessed: ***"I can create a quiz in Kahoot, but I don't know how to use it to make my students speak more English in class."***

Internet access problems further complicate technology integration efforts. Students from rural districts reported that in their home regions especially in mountainous areas of **Namangan** and **Fergana** provinces stable internet connectivity remains unavailable or too slow for effective use of cloud-based services or video streaming platforms such as YouTube. During microteaching sessions, several students hesitated to implement online resources due to fears of connection failure.

Another prominent finding was the general unfamiliarity with basic computer language and digital operational terms. Both students and some teaching staff were reported to be confused by standard software instructions or error messages, which significantly hindered confidence in handling digital tools. This confirms Glenn Stockwell's (2022) assertion that the lack of fundamental digital literacy remains a hidden but critical barrier to successful technology integration in language education.

Despite these obstacles, isolated examples of creative use were observed. Some students successfully employed interactive platforms such as Edmodo and Quizlet for vocabulary building

and formative assessment, demonstrating that when technological access and understanding were sufficient, digital tools could be used to enhance learner engagement.

### DISCUSSION

The challenges revealed in this study closely correspond to international findings regarding technology use in teacher education. According to Greg Kessler and Philip Hubbard (2017), one of the persistent shortcomings in teacher preparation programs globally is the failure to bridge the gap between technical tool familiarity and pedagogical application. This is especially evident in the Uzbek context, where teacher education curricula tend to prioritize theoretical linguistics and literature courses over practical digital pedagogy modules.

As Christine Redecker (2017) emphasizes, digital competence involves more than operational skills; it requires educators to critically evaluate and appropriately select technological solutions based on instructional objectives. In the present study, this reflective aspect of digital competence was notably underdeveloped among participants.

Moreover, infrastructural deficiencies including unreliable internet service in provincial areas exacerbate existing problems. As noted by the European Commission (2022), equal access to ICT infrastructure is a prerequisite for developing digital teaching skills. In Uzbekistan, this remains an unresolved issue, particularly outside major urban centers like Tashkent.

Lastly, as Glenn Stockwell (2022) argues, psychological readiness and confidence are as vital as technical proficiency in shaping teachers' willingness to adopt digital tools. Technophobia, uncertainty regarding technical language, and a fear of technical failure were clearly evident among study participants, suggesting the need for targeted training to overcome these cognitive barriers.

### CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that pre-service English language teachers in Uzbekistan face a complex array of challenges related to digital technology integration. These include not only insufficient knowledge of pedagogical applications for digital tools but also infrastructural obstacles such as limited or unstable internet access in certain regions. Additionally, both students and some faculty members exhibit inadequate familiarity with the operational language of computers, leading to misunderstandings and a lack of confidence in using technology for educational purposes.

To address these challenges, teacher education programs must undergo significant reform. This includes embedding dedicated courses on digital pedagogy into the curriculum, investing in modern technological infrastructure, and offering continuous professional development workshops that focus on the functional, pedagogical, and linguistic aspects of digital tool usage. Furthermore, fostering positive attitudes towards technology among future teachers is critical for ensuring that ICT is perceived not as an intimidating requirement but as an opportunity to create interactive, learner-centered educational environments.

In conclusion, developing comprehensive digital competence among future foreign language teachers in Uzbekistan is not merely a technical matter but a strategic educational priority that will influence the effectiveness and modernization of language teaching in the years ahead.

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