

# REAL RISKS AND BENEFITS OF USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING



## Abstract

Digital technologies have become an integral part of our lives in many areas, including education. Their active implementation is undergoing the process of trial by enthusiasts. Though, it is highly recommended for every educational institution, more often it is incorporated in terms of teaching a foreign language. The recent shift to artificial intelligence application has evoked the incentive to move further. This article examines the significant advantages and risks of using digital technologies and artificial intelligence tools in a foreign language teaching, as well as provides recommendations for organizing an effective and safe educational process by using them.



## Аннотация

## **РЕАЛЬНЫЕ РИСКИ И ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ ЦИФРОВЫХ ТЕХНОЛОГИЙ В ОБУЧЕНИИ ИНОСТРАННОМУ ЯЗЫКУ**

Сегодня цифровые технологии стали неотъемлемой частью нашей жизни во многих сферах, включая образование. В школах идет их активное внедрение, в том числе в рамках преподавания иностранного языка. Ставшие популярными инструменты искусственного интеллекта послужили стимулом данного исследования. В статье рассматриваются значимые преимущества и риски использования цифровых технологий на уроке иностранного языка, а также приводятся рекомендации по организации эффективного и безопасного образовательного процесса с их использованием.



## Keywords

**digital technologies, foreign language teaching, potential risks, challenges, digitalization, methods of teaching a foreign language, artificial intelligence (AI)**



## Ключевые слова

**цифровые технологии, преподавание иностранного языка, потенциальные риски, вызовы, цифровизация, методы преподавания иностранного языка, искусственный интеллект (ИИ)**

It is crucial to note that any educational process is based on a certain methodology. Currently, more and more computer technologies are being used in teaching in the educational sphere. As a result, there is a need for testing and making a list of truly effective methodological recommendations for the use of various digital technologies in addition to the traditional educational system [4]. Analyzing modern methodology of teaching English, the fundamental goal and basis is learning the language with the most effective result both in terms of language competencies and in terms of the comprehensive development of students as

individuals. The development of a modern digital educational environment, which today has huge opportunities to improve the quality of education, has become very relevant [1].

Modern scientific-methodological research makes it quite obvious that in the near future, with a more dynamic integration of AI into foreign language teaching, there will be a need to develop or clarify a new general didactic approach, which, in the opinion of prof. P. V. Sysoev, will qualitatively change the modern teaching methodology. 'It is possible that artificial intelligence will be transformed from a means of learning and will be perceived as a subject of the educational process in the triad 'learner – artificial intelligence – teacher' and further – in the pair 'artificial intelligence – student'. This pair of subjects will become a distinctive characteristic of personalized learning' [5, *перевод авторов*]. By all means the implementation of the 'learner – artificial intelligence' model will require a revision of traditional approaches and methods of learning and teaching for students to master the discipline in conditions of educational autonomy. 'The teacher will retain a number of important functions, including teaching the student to formulate the goals and objectives of learning and select adequate approaches, methods and means of teaching and control, to carry out self-assessment and reflection of their educational and cognitive activities. At the same time, the widespread introduction of new AI technologies and changes in traditional approaches and methods of teaching will be able to raise the learning process to a qualitatively new level in terms of the complexity of solving cognitive problems' [5, *перевод авторов*].

To single out in detail the advantages of using digital technologies in English lessons, the following aspects are highlighted:

- 1) ability to find and use a wide range of authentic information in English;
- 2) taking into account various channels of information perception;
- 3) increasing students' motivation factor and their active involvement in the learning process.

However, despite all the benefits of using digital technologies, there is a number of real risks of applying them, i.e. [3]:

- 1) The issues of privacy and security. It is important to understand that when using various digital applications that require user registration, it is imperative to consider the security factor of the personal data of students that they collect. Applications collect data during their use by students and it can be used for selfish purposes by attackers. Teachers need to use trusted sources when using digital technologies and resources and protect student data with antivirus programs and regular software updates.
- 2) The issues of using AI. It is very important to consider the correctness and rationality of using artificial intelligence (AI) in English lessons. Undoubtedly, it can be useful for automating the learning process, grading faster and providing feedback to students. However, with the use of AI, it is very important for teachers to control the learning process, such as using AI-based applications, monitor the content demonstrated for students' safety.
- 3) The lack of communication. With the active use of digital technologies, social and live communication with the teacher are lost, which can negatively affect the mental and moral state of students.
- 4) Quite a high load on the nervous system of children. When working with various digital devices, the load on the nervous system of children increases, which can negatively affect their mental state and health. These are risks generated by equipment and software.

- 5) The risks associated with sufficient digital competencies of teachers. Combining the use of digital technologies and traditional teaching methods, including the use of a textbook, workbooks and various printed materials, can be quite a challenge for a teacher and requires competence in using digital tools to achieve the maximum benefit from their use and not to harm the learning process. To mitigate this risk, it is necessary to train teachers, improve their qualifications and conduct various trainings
- 6) The risks of the inappropriate content. Content on the Internet may be inappropriate for children to see or may be created under political or ideological influence. Teachers need to strictly filter the material they are going to use in their lessons to avoid adverse consequences.

Today, taking into account all the listed negative aspects and risks of using digital technologies in teaching a foreign language, the main role is still assigned to the teacher. It is the teacher who is the central figure in teaching and the effectiveness or harm of using digital technologies in the lesson depends on him or her [2].

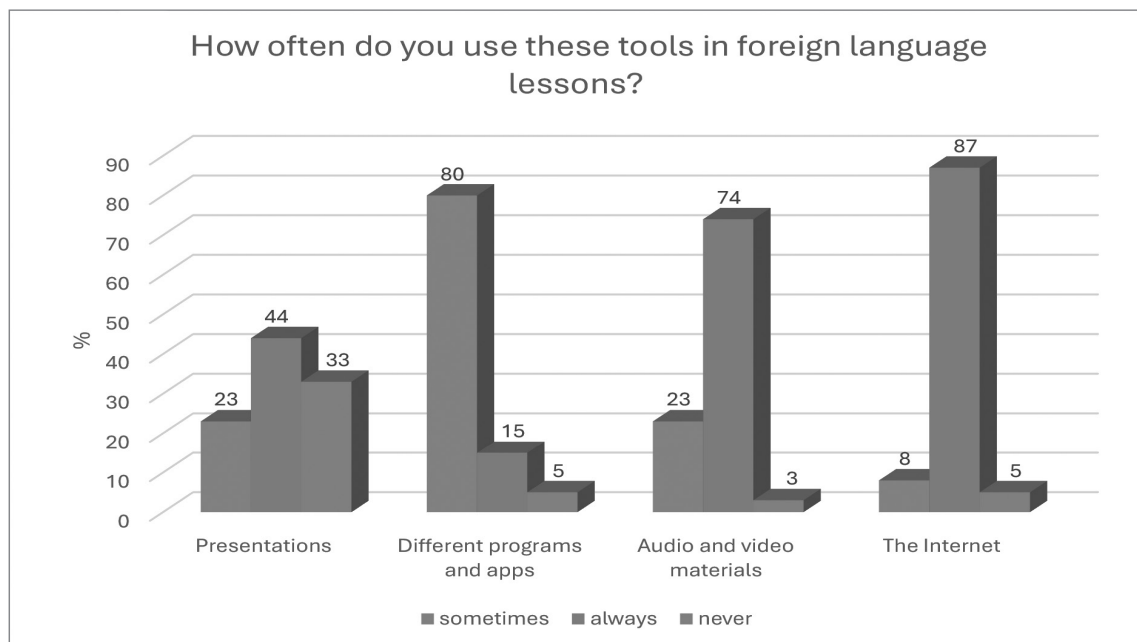
Clear understanding and taking into account all the positive and negative aspects of digital technologies use allows us to present some recommendations for reducing the risks presented by them. Our suggestions require:

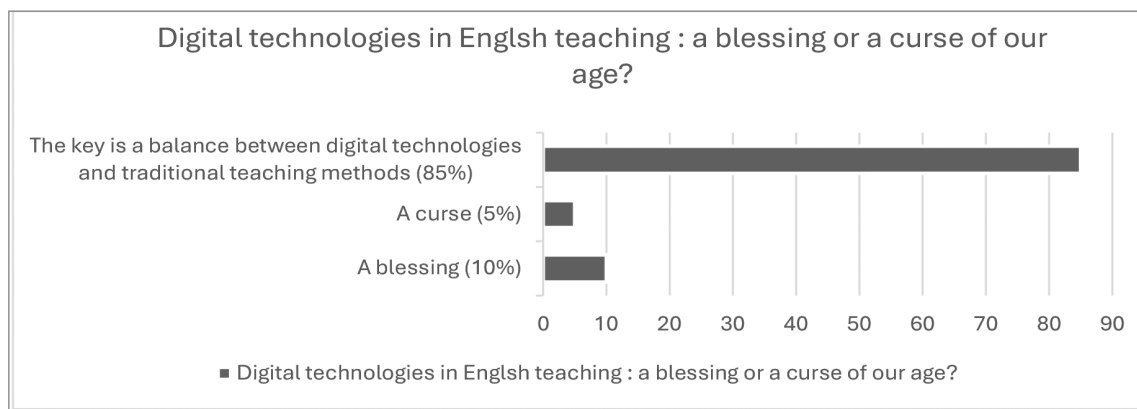
- Development of teachers' competences in the area of using digital technologies.
- Quality control. Checking the content for errors, adequacy and compliance with educational goals as well as considering the issues of safety.
- Keeping up balance between technology and traditional methods.
- Expanding educational environment. Teachers need to try to go beyond the classroom, go on various trips, museums, excursions to broaden students' horizons and interact with the outside world in real time.

**Fig. 1**

**The results of the questionnaire on the frequency of using digital technologies in English lessons (%)**

The current recommendations are based on the results of our survey when 20 teachers were proposed to answer a number of questions to define the range of most popular digital resources and their general attitude towards the use of digital technologies in the process of English teaching.



**Fig. 2**

**The results of the survey on identifying the attitude of teachers for the use of digital technologies in the process of ELT**

When using various digital technologies, there is a high risk of cyber attacks, which can lead to data leakage. Teachers are advised to use strong passwords, two-factor authentication, and other measures. Teachers must be sure that the digital resources used are safe for students, as the negative consequences of hacking by hackers can be very unfavorable.

The research survey contained a questionnaire that helped us to reveal what digital tools teachers most often use in their English lessons. The answers received also reflected the frequency of using certain digital technologies in class.

The bar-chart below presents our findings concerning the frequency of using digital tools in English lessons – the largest number of answers were given to the Internet and various online resources (Figure 1).

The results clearly support the argument that Internet security issues are extremely important and significant.

The answers to the key question whether digital technologies are considered a blessing or a curse are presented in the Figure 2.

Based on the survey results, most teachers agree that the balance between the use of digital technologies and traditional teaching methods is the key and most important aspect. Thus, it is very important for a modern teacher to maintain a balance between the use of digital technologies (including artificial intelligence) and distance learning methods that involve physical interaction of students in real time. Teachers are obliged to combine these methods (digital and real, traditional) so that students do not turn into so-called techno-zombies and finally forget how to interact and solve certain tasks in the real world, getting used only to digitalization technologies.

The use of technology in foreign language teaching has many potential benefits, but it also brings with it a number of challenges that must be addressed. As we have seen, these challenges include concerns around privacy, security, ethics and other. To ensure that technology is used in a responsible and ethical way, teachers and educators must prioritize the privacy and security of their students' data, as well as be aware of the ethical implications of using AI and digital technologies in language learning. Also, it is necessary to use classical teaching methods by using books, workbooks, methodological materials, various projects, organize discussion conversation clubs, go out to various public places, on excursions, go on trips.

In conclusion, the use of technology in foreign language teaching has many potential benefits, but it also brings with it a number of challenges that must be addressed. As it is seen, those challenges include concerns around privacy, security, ethics, etc. To ensure that technology is used in a responsible and ethical way, teachers and educators must prioritize the privacy and security of their students' data, as well as be aware of the ethical implications of using AI and digital technologies in language learning.



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