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**EL PAPEL DE LAS TECNOLOGÍAS
DIGITALES EN EL DESARROLLO DE LA
COMPETENCIA COMUNICATIVA EN LA
ENSEÑANZA DEL ESPAÑOL COMO
SEGUNDA LENGUA EXTRANJERA A
ESTUDIANTES DE GRADO EN ECONOMÍA Y
FINANZAS.**

**THE ROLE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN DEVELOPING
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN TEACHING SPANISH
AS A SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO BACHELOR'S
STUDENTS IN ECONOMICS AND FINANCE**

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El papel de las tecnologías digitales en el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa en la enseñanza del español como segunda lengua extranjera a estudiantes de grado en economía y finanzas.

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RESUMEN

Esta investigación busca justificar la relevancia del uso de las tecnologías digitales en el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes de licenciatura en el área de Economía y Finanzas que cursan el español como segunda lengua extranjera. Las condiciones educativas contemporáneas en un mundo multicultural presentan nuevos desafíos que requieren un cambio en el enfoque de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras. El estudio presenta los resultados de una investigación sobre el nivel de integración de las tecnologías digitales en el proceso de enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras y su efectividad en el desarrollo de diversas destrezas y habilidades vinculadas al fortalecimiento de la competencia comunicativa. Uno de los principales objetivos de las universidades modernas es formar estudiantes altamente motivados, preparados para desenvolverse en entornos económicos en constante cambio. La investigación también identifica los factores motivacionales más efectivos para el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: tecnologías digitales; competencia comunicativa; lengua española; personalidad multilingüe; motivación; enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras; integración de tecnologías digitales; competencia digital.

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The role of digital technologies in developing communicative competence in teaching spanish as a second foreign language to bachelor's students in economics and finance

ABSTRACT

This research attempts to justify the relevance of using digital technologies in developing communicative competence among bachelor's students in the field of economics and finance who are studying Spanish as a second foreign language. The contemporary conditions of education in a multicultural world present new challenges that require a shift in the approach to teaching foreign languages. The study presents the results of an investigation into the level of integration of digital technologies in the foreign language teaching process and their effectiveness in developing various skills and abilities within the scope of communicative competence development. One of the main objectives of modern universities is to cultivate highly motivated students ready to work in constantly changing economic conditions. The research identifies the most effective motivational factors for learning a foreign language.

Keywords: digital technologies; communicative competence; spanish language; multilingual personality; motivation; foreign language teaching; integration of digital technologies; digital competence.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to justify the relevance of the use of digital technologies in the foreign language teaching process, particularly in the development of communicative competence. This study focuses on the use of these technologies in the teaching of the discipline ‘Second Foreign Language’, especially in non-linguistic universities. The importance of this research is based on the concept of cultivating a multilingual personality, a key approach in contemporary language policy in education. Communicative competence is a fundamental concept in language teaching. Canale and Swain (1980) propose four components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. These components are essential for developing effective communication in a foreign language.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) defines competences as ‘the total of knowledge, skills and individual characteristics which enable a person to perform actions. In the context of language teaching, these competences translate into the ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations.

The integration of digital technologies in foreign language teaching has proven to be a valuable tool for the development of communicative competence. According to Chapelle and Sauro (2017), digital technologies offer unique opportunities for language practice in authentic and meaningful contexts. These technologies allow learners to interact with native speakers, access authentic materials and practise the language autonomously.

The communicative approach to language teaching, as Richards (2006) points out, emphasises the importance of meaningful and realistic interaction in the learning process. Digital technologies can facilitate this kind of interaction by providing virtual environments where learners can communicate in the target language in an authentic way. In the context of teaching a second foreign language, particularly Spanish, to undergraduate students in the fields of economics and finance, digital technologies can play a crucial role. Gómez López et al. (2019) suggest that the use of digital platforms and online resources can help overcome time and resource constraints in the traditional classroom. The novelty of this research lies in determining the necessary level of integration of digital technologies in the second



foreign language teaching process. This is particularly relevant given the goal of achieving CEFR B1-B2 levels in a limited number of instructional hours.

Warschauer and Healey (1998) identify three phases in the integration of technology in language teaching: behaviourist, communicative and integrative. The integrative phase, which is the most advanced, involves the complete integration of technology into the learning process. This research seeks to determine the extent to which this integration is necessary and effective in the specific context of teaching Spanish as a second foreign language in Russian universities. The shift in focus in foreign language teaching towards a more communicative and learner-centred model is a global trend. Kumaravadivelu (2006) argues that this shift is necessary to prepare students for the communicative demands of the globalised world. Digital technologies can facilitate this shift by providing tools that enable greater learner autonomy and more authentic language practice.

Communicative competence, as defined by Hymes (1972), involves not only knowledge of grammatical rules, but also the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts. Digital technologies can help develop this competence by exposing learners to a variety of authentic communicative situations. Bachman (1990) proposes a model of communicative competence that includes organisational and pragmatic competences. Digital technologies can support the development of both competences by providing opportunities for structured practice and communication in real contexts.

In the specific context of teaching Spanish as a second foreign language, Martín Peris et al. (2008) emphasise the importance of an action-oriented approach, where students learn the language through meaningful tasks. Digital technologies can facilitate the implementation of this approach by providing tools for the creation and performance of authentic communicative tasks.

The integration of digital technologies in language teaching is not without its challenges. Hubbard (2009) points out that teacher training in the effective use of these technologies is crucial to their successful implementation. This research will also address the need for teacher training in the use of digital technologies for language teaching. The use of digital technologies in language teaching also raises questions about the assessment of communicative competence. Chapelle and Douglas (2006) argue that technology-based assessments can provide more valid and reliable measures of communicative competence. This research will explore how digital technologies can be used not only



for teaching, but also for effective assessment of communicative competence. Motivation is another crucial factor in language learning. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) suggest that digital technologies can increase learners' motivation by providing more interactive and personalised learning experiences. This research will examine how digital technologies can be used to increase students' motivation and engagement in learning Spanish as a second foreign language. Finally, it is important to consider the role of digital technologies in the development of learning autonomy. Benson (2011) argues that learning autonomy is crucial for long-term success in language learning. Digital technologies can provide tools and resources that enable learners to take greater control of their own learning.

This research seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of how digital technologies can be effectively integrated into the teaching of Spanish as a second foreign language to develop students' communicative competence. By addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by these technologies, this study aims to contribute to the field of language teaching and provide practical guidance for educators and institutions.

METHODOLOGY

Currently, there is a significant diversity of approaches and teaching methodologies for foreign languages. In our view, one of the reasons for such diversity is the development of the new knowledge-based economy. This term was first coined by Austrian-American economist Fritz Machlup (1962). In his work "Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States," Machlup noted that as early as 1958, the contribution of the knowledge economy sector to the US GDP was about 29%. Machlup included the following five groups in this sector:

1. Education (44.1%)
2. Scientific research and development (8.1%)
3. Mass media (radio, television, telephone, etc.) (28.1%)
4. Information technology (6.5%)
5. Information services (13.2%).

Machlup primarily defined knowledge as the sum of scientific and everyday knowledge. Later, he referred to knowledge as a process of production and dissemination. According to Machlup's concept, information only becomes knowledge when it is "communicated and used." Therefore, it can be argued



that knowledge production is a source of economic growth and competitiveness for any state. However, the transmission and use of knowledge in modern conditions are impossible without mastering the primary tool, namely, "language," both native and foreign.

In this regard, we would like to pay special attention to the issue of teaching a foreign language in the context of the contemporary development of a multicultural world. Currently, the Council of Europe's approach to foreign language learning is defined by the concepts of multilingualism and intercultural communication. This means not just learning one or more foreign languages but also the creation of a language environment where learners can demonstrate all their linguistic knowledge and skills. The aim of the educational process is to develop communicative competence based on all the knowledge and language experience, where languages are interconnected and interact. The preparation of a specialist proficient in one or more foreign languages in higher professional education "should contribute to the development of abilities in graduates that will enable them to use a foreign language as a means of communication in a dialogue of cultures and as a means of scientific-technical (professional) communication." (Kobzeva, 2011)

Thus, the concept of "communicative competence" takes center stage. The term "competence" is multifaceted and encompasses a broader range of meanings than traditional "knowledge," "ability," or "skill" due to its inclusion of motivational, social, and behavioral aspects. According to Khutorsky (2015), "competence is a set of qualities necessary for their use in a specific field." The presence of competence is expressed in the ability to use knowledge and skills effectively in solving specific problems across a wide range based on practical experience. If we examine the definition of competence with reference to relevant sources, competence means:

- A set of abilities and qualities of an individual necessary for successful work, described in behavioral terminology.
- Specific character and abilities that internally determine the effectiveness of a person's actions.
- A description of a person that is formed by knowledge, skills, and forms of behavior necessary for their activities.

Therefore, competence, depending on the specialist's training, explains the defined social norm required for high-quality and productive work in a specific field. According to the Organization for Economic



Cooperation and Development (OECD), competence is more than just knowledge and skills; it is the ability to mobilize psychosocial resources and meet complex demands in specific situations. (OECD, 2006) For example, the ability to communicate effectively is a competence that is based on an individual's language proficiency, practical skills in using technology and information for communication with people.

In studying the ideas of linguistic competence, Hymes (1972) introduced the term "communicative competence," thus linking linguistic competence with its application in various communication situations. Therefore, the ability of an individual to behave adequately and effectively in a specific communication situation is communicative competence. When examining the concept of foreign language communicative competence, Hymes (1972) divided it into the following components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discursive, and strategic.

The authors of this research consider it appropriate to add another component to communicative competence, namely, "digital competence." According to the European Parliament, "digital competence is the confident and critical use of technology for work, leisure, and communication." (European Parliament, 2006)

Thus, foreign language instruction is becoming increasingly practical and is characterized by the integration of digital technologies into traditional teaching methodologies. As mentioned earlier, modern society is evolving within the context of a new type of economy, the knowledge economy, which inevitably leads to the development of digital competence. New technologies, social networks, and global digitalization have changed our approaches in both the business world and the educational environment, where learning requires a new kind of teacher prepared for new challenges. As we know, the modern digital generation, growing up surrounded by electronic devices such as computers, video games, digital music players, tablets, webcams, digital television, mobile phones, the internet, email, and text messages, requires different learning conditions from those of the past century.

Casado and Bermejo (2000) define modern youth as people "whose culture, psychology, and values are influenced by information technologies" Key characteristics of the digital generation in the educational environment are immediacy of actions, multitasking, and a gamified aspect. These characteristics explain why modern learners are no longer satisfied with traditional forms of education, such as lectures,



lengthy theoretical presentations, or conventional teaching methods. In other words, they are no longer willing to take on a passive role in the classroom. Given the aforementioned goals and tasks in foreign language instruction, there is a need for a shift in teaching approaches. The digital environment has now become an integral part of our lives, and consequently, the use of digital technologies in foreign language teaching has become one of the components of the educational process.

In our view, the inclusion of digital technologies in the process of teaching a foreign language is appropriate regardless of the chosen methodology. It can be a fundamental (traditional) method, a socio-linguistic approach, or a communicative approach. The key question that arises is how to most effectively utilize modern digital technologies. The authors of this research applied the ideas expressed to the use of information technologies in foreign language teaching. Specifically (Puentedura, 2009):

1. Substitution: At this stage, computer technology is used as a "substitute" for previously performed actions. For example, using a computer instead of a typewriter or a word processor for typing. There are no functional changes in the teaching and learning process at this stage, and the teacher remains the central figure.

2. Augmentation: At this stage, computers and various digital resources serve as tools for solving specific tasks. Examples of tasks at this stage could include various tests (lexical, grammatical, cultural) developed by the teacher using platforms such as Edmodo, Google Forms, and others. At this stage, there may already be some changes in the educational process, as students receive instant feedback, leading them to take a more active role in learning. The focus of learning shifts slightly towards the learner.

3. Modification: At this stage, students perform tasks using digital technologies. For example, writing an essay with self-created graphics or links as supporting materials, followed by presenting the results to other teachers, colleagues, or a wider audience. Or the essay may need to be published in a blog with the possibility of further comments by other learners or any internet user. At this stage, digital technologies are used to transform and redesign tasks. The motivation of students increases primarily due to the presence of a real audience and the quick feedback from the teacher and other students.

4. Redefinition: At this stage, digital technologies become a tool for setting new educational tasks that were previously impossible. For example, creating a digital story instead of a traditional essay using a



full range of multimedia tools, with subsequent publication on the World Wide Web. Another example could be a team assignment to create an advertisement for a specific product or service. Within the team, students divide tasks and functions to create a unified final product. Students consult external sources for information and task completion. At this stage, digital technologies exist as a means of education in which the learner is at the center.

According to Ruben Puentedura, all four levels of digital technology integration in the teaching process are effective, but the first two contribute to the efficiency of the lesson, while the last two transform the learning process itself and promote the development of new qualities in the learner. In other words, the higher the level, the deeper we immerse ourselves in technology.

However, the use of digital technologies should not be an end in itself. According to Puentedura, the key is thoughtfulness and awareness of HOW, WHY, and WHAT. These are the three main questions that a teacher must answer before integrating digital technologies into the teaching process. Regarding foreign languages, especially for the development of communicative competence, we believe it is appropriate to use all four stages of digital technology integration depending on the following factors:

- The type of language activity being addressed (speaking, listening, writing, reading).
- The required level of language proficiency (including professional tasks).
- The basic methodology used for teaching a foreign language.

Within the framework of communicative competence, students need to develop skills and abilities such as phonetic and phonological skills, dialogical and monological speech abilities, grammatical skills, written and oral communication skills, and lexical skills. The authors conducted research on the effectiveness of various digital technologies in teaching Spanish as a second foreign language to students at the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation and students at the National Research University "Higher School of Economics." Below are examples of the most successfully used digital technologies by the authors, along with a description of several tasks and the skills and abilities they develop. To develop phonetic and phonological skills and abilities, we use web resources that allow for speech-to-text transcription. As part of self-study, the learner can record a short speech segment and then review the accuracy of the pronunciation by comparing it to the original text. These tools can be available on PCs, mobile apps, and online services. Examples of such resources include speechpad.ru,



dictation.io, and others. Another task for practicing phonetic and phonological skills is to use web resources that allow students to record their own voice. After making an audio recording of a text or dialogue provided by the teacher, the learner must share it with other students in their group, for example, on an online board like Padlet, with the option to listen to and comment on each other's work online. Additionally, resources for creating comics like WittyComics and ToonDoo have proven to be effective. This task combines independent work with the need to vocalize comics in pairs during the lesson. When forming and developing grammatical skills, educational platforms that allow teachers to create grammar tests with various question formats are most effective. These formats can include true-false questions, multiple-choice tests, fill-in-the-blank tests, and matching tests. Some resources allow attaching links or files with necessary comments to each question/answer. These comments can serve as hints for completing the task or explanations of the grammatical material, at the discretion of the teacher. Examples of such resources include Edmodo and Google Forms. It is noteworthy that such resources enable online discussion of contentious or more challenging aspects among students and between the teacher and students. Special attention should be paid to the possibilities of checking and assessing provided by these resources. In most cases, students see their results instantly and have the opportunity to discuss them with the teacher. This establishes an effective feedback loop of "student-teacher-student," allowing students to independently analyze their mistakes, discuss them with the teacher and other students. The quicker the teacher's response, the better the learning outcome. Additionally, the teacher can conduct analytical work on the nature of errors, view the frequency of errors, track statistics by groups, and make appropriate adjustments to the educational process, allocating more time to address specific issues within each group. In other words, a learner-centered learning technology is in place. This approach aligns with modern goals in foreign language instruction. When forming lexical skills as part of developing communicative competence among students at non-linguistic universities who are studying a second foreign language from scratch, special attention is paid to the study of professional vocabulary right from the beginning of the course. In this area, ICT (Information and Communication Technology) that allows the creation of lexical tests with elements of gamification (e.g., Quizlet), crossword puzzles (e.g., Puzzle Crossword), and other tools prove to be most effective. It is important to note that the specific nature of universities that teach students a foreign language as an auxiliary tool



in their main professional activity involves studying professional vocabulary in a foreign language, especially a second foreign language, closely intertwined with the study of this professional vocabulary in their native language or first foreign language. In this regard, creating crosswords using professional terminology is useful for both learning the foreign language and gaining a deeper understanding of the term's semantic content. By providing a definition of the term, the student repeatedly comprehends its meaning. Similarly effective are tasks involving the creation of word clouds on specific topics and the compilation of glossaries in the professional field using wikis or other resources.

All of the above-mentioned tasks, in addition to forming and developing phonetic-phonological, grammatical, and lexical competence, also contribute to the development of other professional and systemic competencies. For example, they help develop the ability to use digital technology tools for professional activities, the ability to find, understand, and convey new information when working with reference materials in the studied language, teamwork skills, as well as the skill of independent remote work, the ability to select and use materials for self-study based on one's capabilities, and more. In addition to the skills and abilities discussed above, an integral part of communicative competence is speech activity itself. There are four types of speech activities: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and reading are receptive, while speaking and writing are productive forms of speech activity. For students majoring in economics who are studying a second foreign language, the development of analytical reading skills is necessary and highly effective. As an example, the following type of task can be provided: the teacher places a text on a shared resource like Google Drive. The subject matter of the text should as closely as possible match the topics that students are studying in their main field of study. Then, students are offered to use the "suggesting" function to comment on and discuss highlighted terms and phrases. They should provide their Russian equivalents using online dictionaries. If the text contains numerical, statistical, or other data, students can be asked to create a graph based on the material they have read. As a result, students are able to find, understand, and convey new information, effectively use reference materials in the studied language, identify the main idea, recognize key words, use linguistic intuition, and establish text hierarchy.

Resources for visualizing chronological events using timelines, geolocation, photos, videos, and graphs are interesting. For example, based on a text they have read about the history of a company, students can



be asked to create an interactive story with a timeline, geolocation, photos, and other tools. This type of task allows students to comprehend the content of the text, make conclusions based on the facts presented in the text, evaluate and interpret the facts. Students can also be tasked with creating a questionnaire based on the text they have read using a resource like SurveyMonkey, publish the link on a Padlet board, and invite other students in the group to answer the questions.

When forming writing skills and abilities, the teacher's task is to teach the student to create language constructs in accordance with the grammatical, lexical, syntactic, and orthographic norms of the studied language; use techniques of language compression, logical sequence, and coherence; and use clichés and fixed formulas for various forms of written communication. For students in economics universities studying a second foreign language, one of the most relevant forms of written communication is business correspondence. This research has identified the effectiveness of resources that allow composing text templates, such as IEW Writing Tools Lite, as well as resources for creating resumes and infographics.

Writing is closely related to listening. Modern digital technologies offer a wide range of resources for forming and developing the ability to listen to and recognize foreign speech: viewing and listening to news reports, podcasts, resources that translate written texts into audio files, and many more. Additionally, there are numerous resources in foreign languages with audio or video materials and accompanying tasks in the form of various types of tests. Applied to the Spanish language, these resources include websites like practicaespanol.com and profedelee.com. Speaking is a productive form of speech activity through which oral verbal communication is carried out, and it is an integral part of developing the communicative competence of a student learning a foreign language. The goal of teaching this form of speech is to develop skills and abilities that will allow future specialists in economics and finance to effectively use their knowledge for oral communication both in everyday life and in their professional field. The most effective method of teaching this form of speech activity is a communicative situation. Modern digital technologies are one of the most effective ways to implement this method. For example, educational platforms like Rosetta Stone offer tasks for creating interactive dialogues. In this case, the learner uses a microphone to orally construct a dialogue by answering questions that appear on the screen. The program then evaluates the adequacy and correctness of the answers. The theme of the dialogue is determined by the teacher. This research has also identified the



effectiveness of tasks such as creating video resumes, which require reviewing the results with other students in the group. To practice both dialogic and monologic speech, tasks related to describing graphs, infographics, creating business cases, and quests are effective.

In the course of this research, a survey of students was conducted to identify the motivational reasons for learning a foreign language. The most effective motivations for students were the ability to use the language, especially a second language, in their professional field, quick feedback, and an awareness of their own progress. In our view, the integration of digital technologies into the process of teaching a foreign language contributes to the development of these motivations.

DISCUSSION

The present study reaffirms the relevance of digital technologies as key tools in the development of communicative competence, particularly in foreign language teaching. As Canale and Swain (1980) point out, communicative competence requires the integration of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discursive and strategic skills. In this context, digital technologies make it possible to significantly enrich each of these aspects by offering more dynamic and personalised learning environments (Chapelle and Sauro, 2017).

In particular, the integrative approach described by Warschauer and Healey (1998) is essential for transforming the teaching of Spanish as a second foreign language. This approach not only optimises digital resources to complement traditional teaching, but also redefines the educational process by placing the learner at the centre of his or her own learning. This model responds to the growing need to prepare students for a globalised world, as argued by Kumaravadivelu (2006).

A salient finding of this research is the ability of digital technologies to motivate learners, a key consideration in language acquisition (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011). Tools such as Quizlet and Rosetta Stone have been shown to be effective not only in practising vocabulary and grammar, but also in fostering meaningful interaction and learner autonomy (Benson, 2011). In addition, activities such as creating interactive stories or completing group tasks on digital platforms allow learners to develop pragmatic and organisational skills, as suggested by Bachman (1990). However, the implementation of these technologies is not without challenges. Hubbard (2009) highlights that teacher training is essential to ensure effective use of digital tools. In this sense, the research also underlines the need to invest in



teacher training to optimise the impact of these technologies on the teaching of Spanish in university contexts.

The assessment of communicative competence remains a complex but promising area thanks to technological tools. Chapelle and Douglas (2006) suggest that technology-based assessments can provide more valid and reliable measures, opening up new possibilities for measuring students' progress in a realistic and practical communicative framework.

The integration of digital technologies not only responds to the current demands of language learning, but also enhances learners' ability to interact effectively in authentic contexts. This research lays the groundwork for future studies exploring how to maximise the potential of these tools, especially in non-language disciplines where resources and time are limited.

CONCLUSION

Modern principles of education, namely continuity, openness, network relationships, individualization, and personalization, allow for the construction of the process of learning foreign languages according to the basic principles of the modern knowledge-based economy model. Digital technologies play a crucial role in this process. For effective integration of digital technologies into the process of teaching a foreign language with the aim of developing communicative competence in students, it is necessary to form, develop, and improve "digital competence" both for teachers and students. There are four stages (levels) of integrating digital technologies into the process of teaching a foreign language: substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition (according to the terminology introduced by Ruben Puentedura). All four stages of integration are effective, but the first two contribute to the efficiency of the lesson, while the latter two transform the learning process itself, promoting the development of new qualities in the learner. In other words, the higher the level, the deeper the immersion in technology.

This research has shown that the integration of digital technologies into the process of teaching a second foreign language to students in non-language universities is effective for developing phonetic, lexical, grammatical skills, as well as skills and abilities in written and oral communication. The goal of mastering a second foreign language in most universities is to achieve a level of proficiency in the foreign (Spanish) language corresponding to levels B1-B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The number of hours allocated in the curriculum for



mastering this discipline and achieving the above-mentioned level of proficiency in a foreign language is limited in most Russian universities. Thus, the teacher and the student face the task of reaching the declared level of proficiency in a foreign language "from scratch" with limited hours. Taking into account this circumstance, the authors of this research consider the use of digital technologies for homework and independent study of various language aspects to be the most effective, provided there is rapid feedback from the teacher.

The use of digital technologies during practical classes is most effective for developing oral communication skills. The integration of digital technologies into the process of teaching a foreign language contributes to increased motivation for language learning among students. However, a significant drawback of integrating digital technologies into the educational process is the labor-intensive process of creating, updating, and maintaining tasks, methods, and resources. This research has shown that the integration of digital technologies for developing communicative competence in teaching a second foreign language (Spanish) to bachelor's students in the field of economics and finance has more advantages than disadvantages.

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