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#### ФУНКЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ ОБРАЗА СОВРЕМЕННОГО УЧИТЕЛЯ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА В СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЯХ

В данной статье исследуются функциональные характеристики образа современного преподавателя иностранного языка в социальной сети, которые он приобретает в ходе трансформации, перенося поле своей деятельности в цифровую плоскость и приобретая статус цифрового учителя. В работе определяются функции нового учителя (инфосоциальная, обучающая, этическая, культурно-развлекательная); отмечается отношение аудитории к преподавателю-блогеру в социальных сетях; выявляется специфика отдельных обучающих блогов

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*современного цифрового преподавателя иностранного языка (английского), влияющих на его образ перед аудиторией; приводится анализ методических особенностей обучающих блогов, образовательного материала и подачи контента. Образ нового педагога иностранного языка изучается в поле цифрового образовательного пространства, которое представлено обучающими блогами в социальной медиа ВКонтакте. Социальная сеть рассматривается сквозь призму лингводидактического потенциала для изучения иностранного языка (английского), а также представляется платформой для проявления значимых особенностей образа нового цифрового преподавателя. Функциональные характеристики образа учителя-блогера определяются вариантами самопрезентации, материалом блога, методическими особенностями, спецификой подачи контента. Отмечается применение и распространенность лексико-ориентированной концепции в обучении иностранным языкам наряду с использованием иммерсивного подхода, вызывающего особый интерес у аудитории. При исследовании способов подачи материала, определяется значимая роль визуального представления изучаемого материала для его успешного освоения. Эмоциональная и развлекательная составляющие при подаче контента преподавателем отмечаются как наиболее востребованные. Юмористический компонент образа цифрового преподавателя наряду с эмоционально насыщенной подачей положительно влияют на аудиторию, способствуя более эффективному усвоению материала.*

*Ключевые слова: образ учителя, цифровой педагог, цифровое образовательное пространство, иммерсивный метод, мобильные технологии в образовании, социальные сети, обучающие ресурсы, языковой блог, обучающий блог, юмор в обучении, учитель-блогер, эмоциональная подача контента*

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## **FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT FOREIGN LANGUAGE E-TEACHER PHENOMENON ON SOCIAL NETWORKS**

*The paper analyzes the functional features of the image of a current foreign language teacher on social networks which he/she acquires in course of transformation moving into the digital space and taking a status of e-teacher. In the paper such functions of a new teacher as infosocializing, teaching, ethic, cultural and entertaining are defined; the audience's attitude towards teaching bloggers on the social network is revealed through the learners' feedback; specific peculiarities of the particular teaching blogs held by the current foreign language e-teachers are studied which affects the learners' perception of a teacher's image; methodological aspects of the teaching blogs, content for foreign language learning as well as content presentation are analyzed. The image of the new teacher is viewed in terms of the digital educational environment which is represented by teaching blogs on social network VKontakte (vk.com). The social net is considered through the prism of linguistic and didactic potential for learning a foreign language (English herein), and it is seen as a platform for revealing the most significant features of a new e-teacher phenomenon. The functional performance of the e-teacher image is determined by self-representation options, blog content, didactic concepts as well as the ways of presenting the material for learning. Lexical-oriented conception is found to be more frequently applied alongside with using the immersive approach in foreign language teaching. The role of the content visual presentation by e-teacher is defined as crucial for successful accomplishment of learning targets. Emotional and entertaining elements of content presentation are characterized as the most essential. A humor component of the e-teacher image coupled with emotional presentation of the content positively affect the audience which facilitates more effective learning.*

*Key words: e-teacher, digital educational environment, immersive method, mobile technologies in ELT, social networks, English learning resources, teaching blog, humor as a teaching tool, blogging teacher, emotional presentation*

### **Introduction**

The comprehensive evolution of information and communication technologies has brought the emergence of new teaching and learning forms. All-embracing digitalization calls the shots penetrating all the areas of human activity including the educational environment and generates demand for a teacher in the digital space. (Alizade, 2019; Malyuga E.N & Petrosyan G.O., 2022; Novoseltseva, 2017; Drygina, 2018). The rapidly thriving trend towards distant and mobile learning, expansion of mobile technologies, increasing interest of the younger generation in the usage of instant messengers for various purposes (communication, information, education) and the formation of a new phenomenon called “digital teacher” determine the relevance of this study.

Digitalization is the trend which covers all areas of our society including education. It should be noted digital literacy is not a virtue obtained by a person on a whim; what is more relevant it is a system of knowledge, skills and instructions which are necessary for living in the digital space; their development is to be mindful and manageable which leads to accomplishing the main goal of digitalization, and that is improving the living standards (Демидова, 2020; Гришечко, 2021). The teaching community takes the significance and usefulness of technologies in the teaching process since they motivate students and intensely engage them into learning process, arise interest in learning among the audience and often save time in the learning process. In the field of education the usage of technologies provides an enormous competitive advantage. Teachers are not the teachers they used to be. Recently we have been observing a new type of the teacher who doesn't teach in the classroom anymore; this teacher is accompanied with a new privilege called technology; and he or she acquires a new status of a digital teacher (or e-teacher). In the changing world a current teacher should be IT-friendly, highly skilled in applying various educational tools: making educational quests, quizzes, visually advantageous presentations, loading the lesson content into cloud storages, being available and in the public eye on social media. A current teacher realizes what is really important for his/ her audience and in what way the content should be provided. He/ she pursues the purpose of presenting the information in such an effective and positive way that the learners get interested in the material to be learnt and become involved on their own so that they strive for doing the subject not only in class (online or

offline) but after it as well. A learner is supposed to consistently start taking a fancy for non-stop educating and self-evolving (Malyuga, 2019).

Still the skill of using the technologies is not enough for the reason that education is quite a subtle process by virtue of the fact that true learners are eager to trust their teacher without feeling false. A teacher is supposed to truly mind the subject which goes natural; it is a matter of utmost importance for him/ her to provoke the interest of the audience. This teacher is constantly seeking for new teaching methods and opportunities.

Currently there is no discipline without using technologies in both online and offline formats. Numerous scholars highlight the fact of technical immersion into the educational process due to the pandemic in 2020. (Danilova, 2020; Chorosova, 2020; Radina, 2021; Ragad, 2021) The demand for uninterrupted learning caused the immense, ubiquitous use of technologies for all subjects of study not only at schools but in the digital environment as well. Any teacher from yesterday has obtained a new task which includes refining the skill to work with accessible online platforms and web services and to be creative for effective integration of technical tools into the teaching process. For instance, the most “digital” educator D. Minets (awarded for the best practice in using state-of-the-art technologies in 2020 by the national projects) owns her own sticker pack – a series of emoji imaging herself – which she uses in her presentations. It is admitted such things attract young learners’ attention and arouse interest to both the teacher and subject. The teacher emphasizes the significant role of visualization as learners receive 90% of information by eye (Sakhno). Nevertheless, it is important to use different channels for communicating and technical tools which are provided by social networks. They move far beyond group chats and file exchange option. Except for calls, online translations, polls, learning training apps, there are a lot of tools for making quests, quizzes, polls, matching tasks which learners prefer to use while learning the subject; e-teachers believe that gamification also helps learners grasp and swallow the content.

Foreign language teachers are no exception when it comes to appearing the new type of the teacher. These teachers are noted to diligently use technologies and occur in the e-environment more frequently than their colleagues related to other fields. The purpose of

the paper is to identify, determine and provide a functional analysis of the peculiarities of a current foreign language teacher phenomenon operating in the educational and communicative e-space of social networks.

Lately a number of publications have been devoted to the issues of the explicit professional image of a school foreign language teacher in an educational institution teaching online and offline outlining the importance of a teacher's proper behavior in the digital space (Nikolayeva & Izmagurova, 2017; Scherbakova, 2012). The teacher's professional competence is studied in accordance with wide application of electronic educational platforms and necessity of online interaction between teachers and students which leads to a new profессиogram of the teacher who works in the digital space. The new teacher needs to possess new competences under the conditions of digitalization, one of which is to create a natural learning environment (Deryabina & Dyakova, 2018).

Teachers effectively exploit successful communication with the audience as a model of their self-presentation in the e-space (Kompantseva, 2008). The ethic aspect of such communication is proposed to be considered in terms of definite set of rules in order to minimize negative consequences (Gutorova, 2019; Malkova, 2004; Kodeks etiki dlya informatsionnogo obschestva). The present-day researchers mention such a new phenomenon as "infosocialization" (Nikolayeva & Izmagurova, 2017; Zhilkin, 2007) Currently the young people mainly enter the society in the e-environment, so modern teachers have a task of utmost importance to become agents of this "infosocialization" for the young generation. It is highlighted that a new teacher must master information culture which is an integral part of the general human culture today. The point is that the image of the teacher undergoes significant qualitative transformation. Following the audience in the e-space, the current teacher is to be modified and become an e-teacher.

Nowadays the Internet resources are viewed as the most convenient ones, virtual environment allows to go beyond time and space limits providing the users with different opportunities of learning. In order to make the learning process interesting and entertaining, the consumers tend to apply the social media which they use not only for learning but for communicating and getting information as well. It is found to be convenient to exploit social nets for several purposes simultaneously. On

the social networks seeking learners may find a wide range of blogs held by foreign language e-teachers; the vast majority of those are blogging English teachers.

According to the report done by the company “Mediascope”, a leader of the media studies in Russian market, which conducted a complex research on studying the media consumption in April 2023, the most popular and promising Internet resource and social network has been VKontakte (<https://vk.com/>) monthly used by 79,5 mln Russian population; by 101,7 mln worldwide (Соколова, 2023). The social network is multifunctional and gives the blogging teachers opportunities to arrange such types of tasks which can be effective for teaching a foreign language. The social net VKontakte (hereinafter referred to as the VK) demonstrates various functions that the blogging teachers apply for mastering the learners’ foreign-language communicative competence (Plekhanova, 2020). This is the platform where the users (teachers and learners) can communicate in private and group chatrooms, interact in the comment boxes under the posts, put such content as text, pictures, photos, videos, record the shorts, broadcast live stream, form the groups, private and public. They may find the function of recording voice messages.

The researchers notice the fact that the VK can be used by school teachers at school, secondary or high, finding the network as an additional productive teaching tool (Plekhanova, 2020). Our focus is on blogging English language teachers who operates on the VK as a basic teaching platform and use it for ELT.

#### **Materials and methods**

The scope of activities for e-teachers represent their educational blogs on social networks. In the paper the English teachers’ blogs on the VKontakte platform serve as the material for the research. The platform demonstrates meaningful prospects for language education and holds a leading position among modern educational resources for both teachers and students. General descriptive, observational methods are used in the study for information analysis and synthesis, as well as the comparative analysis of teaching methodology.

#### **Analysis and Results**

A current teacher acts as a presenter of the educational content in the e-environment in his or her blog. For the teachers who operate their blogs on the VK platform the technical opportunities of using their accounts

are vast and enable the users to apply various ways of creating and presenting the content: making the bullet lists, applying a wide range of emoji and gifs, using various types of font, recording the audios, voice messages, keeping the videos, feedback with the students in the comment box, archiving the material in the feed etc.

The VK platform is a content provider and viewed as an illustrative and visual platform. The researchers, who argue that the inclusion of visual representation into the educational content is necessary in modern conditions of a competitive environment, outline the great importance of visual support for the material being studied. It is assumed that students perceive information more effectively and quickly through visual illustrations including a short text (Evagorou, Erdyranl & Mantyla, 2015; Lopes, Granada, Freitas & Loureiro, 2021; Munoz, 2017). When we deal with a picture, we swiftly grasp the image in our minds and at the same time a logical connection between the illustration and the text is revealed. Hence, the information received is better absorbed and remembered. Thanks to their clarity and compactness, the VK blogs have proven to be very productive for educational purposes, including learning foreign languages. A large number of accounts are subject to teaching English.

The blogs for learning English are operated by certified teachers. They include the following blogging areas and teachers' categories:

- teachers specializing in the lexical approach to teaching English in terms of communicative approach;
- teachers presenting the features of English grammar;
- teachers focused on the phonetic specifics of the English language;
- teachers who train listening and comprehension skills;
- communities of teachers providing methodology and other content for English teachers.

The teachers using a lexical approach to teaching English in their blogs are found to be the most amusing and captivating for students. Lexical-based blogging teachers present the material in a variety of ways. One of the widespread ways of presenting the content is a video in which the teacher introduces a lexical item and comments on it, and there is also a simultaneous or sequential analysis of the entire context and elaboration of the lexical item with translation (or without it) which follows the explanation of the video in the same or separate field. This is followed by the examples of the active vocabulary. The teacher invites students to share their examples, so feedback from students is expected



to appear in the comment box. This is how communicative approach is successfully implemented in the teaching blogs encouraging the students to express their communicative skills and applying the new vocabulary immediately.

The practitioners of the lexical approach offer another efficient way to help the students master their vocabulary which is presenting a video that shows a few seconds extract from an episode of a popular TV series or movie. This visualization allows students to review active phrases again and also helps students practise them more effectively. The teaching blogger often encourage the students to give feedback and welcome responses to a question containing an active phrase so that students can post feedback in the comment box and thus hone it again.

It is noteworthy that along with the educational content, bloggers frequently post the moments about their personal lives. This is due to the tendency of teaching bloggers to self-identification as well as their aspiration for earning loyalty among the audience in order to gain the trust of their subscribers and attract the new ones. With introducing a post about the personal life events into the feed, the teachers offer to practice the active vocabulary, for instance, using various testing methods to check the digestion of the new vocabulary, and they also welcome feedback with the students' examples using the target expressions in the comment box.

The current e-teachers are viewed as experts of immersive teaching, as one more preferred principle to present educational content in the digital space is using both realistic visual and auditive support in shot alongside with a genuine target subject to be learnt in English to enhance the memorization effect when learning the target vocabulary. For example, behind the text "dishwasher," the video shows a dishwasher working in the kitchen. The video containing the phrasal verbs "roll up" which means "to twist" shows the teacher rolling up a napkin. The video is accompanied by the sound of the rustling napkin, which also contributes to better comprehension and memorization of the target vocabulary. Neuroscientists note the point that it is better to relate information to something meaningful rather than repeat it again and again to make it stick, when trying to memorize it (Meltzer, 2017; Grischechko, 2023).

The immersive method of presenting the vocabulary creates a participation effect, and the visual aid of verbal (text) and non-verbal

(graphic and audio) elements allows students to more deeply comprehend and memorize the target vocabulary. The ratio of verbal and nonverbal components in such a video presentation creates an effective polycode structure for presenting information for students (Kuchina, 2017; Akopova, 2023).

The e-teachers today are characterized by having an emotional component while submitting the content in the digital space. It is primarily implemented through the video content in which the teachers actively and emotionally use sound and intonation when presenting the material, thereby creating emphasis and drawing attention to the content. In the speech of the teaching bloggers emotive words and expressions including slang are often used with the function of attracting attention when characterizing an event (cringe, amazing, hype, easy-peasy, besties, cool). Accompanying the content with the emotional submission the e-teachers administer a performing function: the more e-teachers are emotional, the better didactic result is produced. So, the current e-teacher should possess good emotional intelligence and exercise it for his/ her professional purposes for obtaining better didactic outcomes such as a better comprehension of the content among the audience.

The most motivational positive emotion is considered to be enjoyment (delight, pleasure). This emotion is specified by positive educational environment, friendly partners, interesting presentation of the content and a motivating teacher which is seen the most crucial (Dewaele, 2014). Enjoyment is one of the most typical positive emotions which e-learners experience while learning a foreign language. It fulfils a significant role for enhancing motivation and readiness of the students to learn a foreign language, positively effecting the productivity of e-learning. The relevance of enjoyment while learning a foreign language can be explained by B. Fredrickson's theory of improving and increasing influence in which positive emotions bring along the expansive way of thinking, enlarging set of thinking and behavioral patterns (Fredrikson, 2014; Malyuga, 2016). Heightened emotional intelligence is mentioned as a favorable factor considerably affecting the appearance of positive emotions in the learning process.

There is the other side of the psychological aspect, that is language anxiety (Rafikova, 2022). A lot of students learning a foreign language out of the language environment face particular linguistic issues as well as psychological barriers, especially when studying offline in the

traditional class (language barrier, native speech speed, informal language, psychological fear of making mistakes, of being misunderstood) (Kayavo, 2021). It requires new didactic solutions for gaining self-dependent language speaking experience, forming students' communicative competences. Using the social network didactic power is seen as a solution to this issue since self-learning provides the pleasant conditions for enhancing the efficiency of e-learner's intellectual activity. The e-students on the social network can obtain this independent foreign language learning and form their communicative competences through processing and mastering the educational resources provided by e-teachers on their own without any interference and control. Such individual self-driving learning helps the e-student absorb things quickly and flexibly due to no oversight which facilitates successful studying. Consequently, the e-teacher acquires the consulting function of a productive facilitator, moderator, resource-provider to learners by implicitly taking part in their e-learning. Having no tangible contact with a controller is vital as well as realizing by the e-learner he/she is the one who determines what content is to be mastered.

Communicative competence is to be developed though the positive social interaction which is delivered in the comment box for feedback under each post. Such interaction reduces anxiety level as the e-student doesn't have to face a language barrier having time to process the material given in the post. Besides, the learning e-environment doesn't put pressure on the e-student providing more effective learning and high-performance. Positive social interaction contributes to learner's self-confidence and motivation. In terms of learning on the social net responsibility for learning process is divided between a teacher and a student decreasing the psychological pressure for a learner.

In parallel with emotional component, humor has become widespread among the blogging teachers which can be found in teaching methodology including the tendency of using the humor content as an additional element of teaching for explaining the lexical and grammar aspects. The modern e-teacher is a master of performance and humor using the entertaining style of presenting the material in the feed, and humor is also used quite intensively in the content. Blogging teachers choose and create various non-typical ways of teaching the linguistic aspects such as vocabulary, grammar. Humor is a means of implementing those non-traditional types of foreign language learning.

The researchers mention that the unconventional forms of teaching are the technologies based on traditional classic lesson forms as well as unusual methods and structures when focusing on more effective accomplishment of teaching skills (Klikushina, 2020; Ershov & Sharapov, 2012). The teachers actively apply a pragmatical setting which if it is correctly phrased evokes achieving the desired effect influencing the target audience. Non-standard forms of giving lessons better attract the audience's attention, enhance their interest to the subject, and help them hone the material to be learnt (Fayazova, 2012). In terms of lexical approach the blogging teachers tend to use different forms of humor genres such as jokes, funny dialogues and short stories, funny pictures, tongue twisters. The role of humor is considered to be an unconventional method of learning. According to Vygotskiy, humor directly influences the psychological condition of the students provoking positive emotions (Vygotskiy, 2008). Positive effect enables to process the information more productively providing a more interesting, catchy form of presenting the content. Humor accomplishes a regulating function as it regulates relationships between the teacher and the audience, pleasantly affects the emotional state of the students directing their intentions in a positive way.

One of the most widespread tool for giving humor content is presenting a video which is polycoded since it educates, entertains, provides a positive emotional effect. This format is considered far from a usual type of obtaining information at an ordinary school lesson. It is found to be convenient as students (of any age) tend to often look through the social nets, so it makes it easier to use this type of foreign language learning. It is also meaningful to mention that this learning process can be done anytime and anywhere and under any circumstances which turns out to be suitable personally for the student.

So, this complex approach allows the audience to more effectively memorize lexis, be encouraged to master it in the feedback box, activate creativity of a student. Humor context is seen as a productive way to learn colloquial language, idioms, fixed phrases, phrasal verbs, polysemantic vocabulary, synonyms, opposites, slang collocations.

The target vocabulary is outplayed in the clips in which the blogger participates as a presenter or an actor/ actress. Maria Batkhan, a blogging English teacher, often uses English slang (for instance, cringe, disa, crush, hype, trash, easy-peasy, hater, besties, scam) for the purpose of

attracting the attention of the audience, especially youth, and increasing confidence for the blogger. In her blog both humor and emotional components deliver a particular psychological effect: the information submitted is viewed as more entertaining and causes an emotional response which makes it more noticeable and effective for memorizing the target vocabulary. It should be mentioned the above-stated teaching blog has the most numerous audience among the rest of the English teaching blogs on the VK platform which have been analyzed for this research.

One of the valuable features that a modern teacher needs to possess is charisma or personal charm of the teacher. The teachers tend to develop their “personal brand” to be recognizable. For this they use their own features that are peculiar for their work, for instance, like the abovementioned teaching blogger who is credited with presenting the educational content in the entertaining manner. Effectiveness of learning directly depends on the teacher personality. In order to provoke genuine interest in the subject among learners so that they want to master it and immerse into it, it becomes a matter of trust for their instructor. E-environment is a space where current generations spend their time for various purposes such as learning, getting information, entertaining, communicating. As for learning objective, for the digital audience trusting and respecting their instructor is one of the most significant things. Trust can be caused only in case an e-teacher holds his or her ‘digital portfolio’ and properly orientates online which is relevant for both points of learning effectiveness and authority of the teacher.

Thus, the e-teacher primarily combines the immersive approach alongside with lexical and communicative as well as emotional and humor concepts since presenting the language content to learners is considered to be most interesting and productive for those who are into learning a foreign language.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion the following findings of the research may be stated:

1. A current teacher undergoes certain transformations being converted into e-teacher in the social network space. The e-environment provides numerous opportunities and an enormous potential for the e-teacher involving the resources for more effective teaching and helping the learners deepen their comprehension of particular learning experiences in insightful and engaging ways. The new digital teacher

today fulfils infosocializing, ethic, cultural, entertaining, teaching functions. The e-teachers operate on social networks for self-presenting and submitting the content for learning a foreign language.

2. The image of an emotional, amusing teaching blogger having a sense of humor is favourably accepted by the students which is proved by a number of followers, views and feedback in the comment box from the audience. The users of the social networks show their positive attitude towards VKontakte social networking service as a learning platform since it is found to be one of the most effective educational content provider with a relevant visual support function.

3. One of the advantageous peculiarities of the current digital teacher is an immersive approach while teaching a foreign language in the e-space. The teaching bloggers holding a lexical focus in learning process present the cutting-edge words, chunks and collocations in various contexts; a performance from the blogger as a presenter (or an actor) outplaying the target vocabulary in real life in the shorts is seen as the most striking tactic.

4. One of the outstanding features of the digital teacher is his/ her self-presentation in the blog through harnessing his/ her personal life stories with integrating and mastering the target vocabulary.

5. The blogging teachers tend to vary the types of the content presentation since diversification is considered to be most effective for capturing the learners' attention and urges better mastering the material. A humor component of the teacher's image alongside with the emotionally loaded presentation of the content positively impacts the audience and is found most prominent and helps the learners grasp the lexis more effectively.

It follows that the most successful image of an e-teacher in the digital space involves the aforementioned components. This is a flexible specialist, always ready for trend transformations and self-evolution, able to facilitate learners' outcomes and meet the current audience's demand.

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