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FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMPETENCE OF NON-PHILOLOGICAL STUDENTS: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The acquisition of foreign language competence among non-philological students is a multifaceted challenge, necessitating nuanced investigation and innovative solutions. In an educational landscape characterized by linguistic diversity and globalization, proficiency in foreign languages transcends traditional boundaries, becoming a critical skill for personal, academic, and professional advancement. This work addresses the complex realm of foreign language competence for non-philological students, undertaking a rigorous examination of the challenges they face and proposing effective solutions to elevate their linguistic abilities.

Our research methodology combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, employing surveys, interviews, and classroom observations. The research strategy provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by non-philological students.

The importance of this research is underscored by the increasingly interconnected world, where linguistic competence is integral to effective communication, cultural appreciation, and international collaboration. Proficiency in foreign languages broadens horizons, facilitates cross-cultural understanding, and enhances employability, making it a critical skill for the 21st century.

Despite the evident value of foreign language competence, non-philological students grapple with a unique set of challenges. These challenges arise from diverse academic backgrounds, varying cognitive abilities, distinct learning preferences, and limited exposure to the target language and culture. It is imperative to recognize and address these challenges systematically, as they have far-reaching implications for personal, academic, and professional growth.

By analyzing these challenges in-depth, our research seeks to offer concrete and tailored solutions that empower non-philological students on their journey toward foreign language competence. The implementation of these solutions stands to benefit not only the individual students but also the broader educational community, fostering a more inclusive and adaptable approach to language education.

In a world where linguistic diversity is a hallmark of cultural richness and globalization is the norm, the need for effective foreign language acquisition among non-philological students cannot be overstated. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on language education by shedding light on the unique struggles and needs of non-philological students and by proposing practical strategies for educators and institutions to address these challenges. In doing so, we aim to ensure that

foreign language competence is an attainable and enriching endeavor for all, regardless of their academic background or primary field of study.

The primary challenges identified encompass:

Diverse Academic Backgrounds: Non-philological students exhibit a wide spectrum of academic disciplines and motivations, which significantly influence their language learning experiences. They often lack the strong foundation in language and linguistics that philological students possess.

Limited Exposure: Restricted exposure to the target language and culture often hampers non-philological students' language acquisition. They are often confined to classroom settings without immersion experiences.

Varying Cognitive Abilities: Cognitive diversity among non-philological students poses a substantial challenge. Some students possess enhanced cognitive capabilities for language acquisition, while others may struggle to grasp language structures and patterns.

Distinct Learning Preferences: Non-philological students display distinct learning preferences, necessitating adaptable instructional methods. Some may thrive with traditional classroom instruction, while others may require more interactive and technology-driven approaches.

Our findings underscore the importance of immersive language environments and cultural integration in language learning. Implementing a curriculum that connects language learning with cultural understanding significantly enhances linguistic competence. Furthermore, the use of adaptive instructional materials, encompassing various learning styles and cognitive abilities, contributes to more effective language acquisition.

The research provides insights that are not only theoretically grounded but also practically applicable. Recommendations for educators and institutions include:

Professional Development: Educators should receive training in diverse pedagogical strategies that cater to the unique needs of non-philological students. Developing a skill set that responds to varying cognitive abilities and learning preferences is imperative.

Curricular Adaptation: Institutions should consider flexible curricular structures that empower non-philological students to engage with foreign languages meaningfully. This approach facilitates integration between language learning and their primary academic interests.

In conclusion, our research highlights the distinctive challenges faced by non-philological students in acquiring foreign language competence and presents practical solutions to enhance their language learning experiences. Proficiency in foreign languages is an essential skill in the globalized world, and by recognizing the specific needs of non-philological students, educators, and institutions can create a more inclusive and effective language education landscape. This study contributes to a comprehensive understanding of language education and

underscores the need for tailored approaches to meet the unique linguistic needs of non-philological students.

Introduction

Language acquisition is a fundamental skill that transcends borders and unites people across cultures. Proficiency in a foreign language is a valuable asset, enhancing personal, academic, and professional opportunities. However, the journey towards linguistic fluency is often arduous, particularly for non-philological students who are those pursuing language learning in contexts outside of a specialized language or literature program. These students face a unique set of challenges that require a detailed study, understanding, and the formulation of effective solutions.

Challenges Faced by Non-Philological Students in Foreign Language Learning.

Non-philological students encounter a multitude of challenges in their quest to attain foreign language competence. Unlike their counterparts in philological or language-focused programs, these individuals may have diverse academic backgrounds and motivations for language learning. The challenges they face can be attributed to factors such as limited exposure, varying cognitive abilities, and distinct learning preferences. The challenging task of mastering a foreign language is compounded by differences in learning environments, class structures, and instructional materials.

This research endeavors to address the complex landscape of foreign language competence among non-philological students. Our study is motivated by the recognition that the linguistic needs and struggles of these students are distinctive and require specific solutions tailored to their circumstances. Through a rigorous examination of the challenges they face and an exploration of innovative solutions, we aim to bridge the gap in current literature by offering insights and recommendations that can benefit educators and curriculum designers.

To address these concerns, the present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the primary challenges faced by non-philological students when acquiring foreign language competence?
2. What effective solutions and interventions can be implemented to enhance foreign language competence in non-philological students?
3. What are the best practices for educators and institutions to improve the foreign language learning experience for non-philological students?

This research is significant for several reasons. Firstly, the challenges faced by non-philological students in foreign language acquisition have been underexplored, and this study aims to fill this gap. By addressing this underrepresented group, we contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of language education.

Secondly, the findings of this study are expected to provide practical guidance to educators and institutions, seeking to enhance the foreign language learning

experience for non-philological students. By uncovering effective solutions and best practices, this research can positively impact foreign language education.

In the subsequent sections of this article, we will explore the methods of teaching foreign language for non-philological students, discuss key theories and concepts relevant to foreign language competence, summarize and critique previous research on language learning challenges and solutions. This will be followed by a comprehensive examination of the methodology, research findings, discussions, and recommendations that aim to illuminate the path toward improved foreign language competence for non-philological students.

Literature Review

The strategic objective of our country's state policy is to bring education obtained in Ukraine to the global market of educational services, deepen international cooperation, expand the participation of educational institutions, scientists, teachers, and students in projects of international organizations and communities, in educational and scientific exchanges, internships and studies abroad, and joint research. One of the priorities of this task is the introduction of modern teaching technologies that ensure further improvement of the educational process, accessibility and efficiency of education, and preparation of the younger generation for life in the information society. This is achieved by ensuring the gradual informatization of the education system aimed at meeting the educational information and communication needs of participants in the educational process and developing individual modular curricula of different levels of complexity depending on specific needs [1, pp. 30–31].

The problem of foreign language teaching technology for students of non-linguistic specialties involves the integration of new methods, means, and techniques of teaching in non-linguistic higher education institutions. Many scientists have diligently researched and explored these challenges in their pursuit of innovative solutions.

The purpose of foreign language teaching is to master a foreign language as a means of communication for the successful performance of further professional activities. The State Educational Standard of Higher Professional Education requires taking into account professional specifics when learning a foreign language, its focus on the objectives of the graduates' future professional activities. Therefore, teaching a foreign language in non-linguistic HEIs involves developing students' ability to learn a foreign language in specific professional, business and scientific fields and situations.

Teaching a foreign language to future specialists should be viewed through the prism of their future professional activities. An important task of teaching a foreign language for professional purposes is to develop specialized competence in the areas of professional and situational communication, mastering the latest professional information through foreign sources.

Thus, in their publication O. Malykhin and colleagues assert that English possesses considerable pedagogical potential for cultivating knowledge, skills, and

competences among students of various disciplines in higher education, essential for achieving success in the future [6, p. 208]. Therefore, the educational material for English as an elective (or required) module should aim to augment students' impetus to learn English whilst advancing their expected future professional proficiencies.

According to L. Usyk and colleagues, learning foreign languages with a professional orientation helps future specialists to communicate effectively, establish business contacts, study foreign sources, analyze modern scientific achievements, improve their skills, and present their ideas to the professional community. Developing professional communication skills can enhance qualities such as independence, self-control, responsibility, creative thinking, and professionalism [9, p. 53].

In the current landscape of higher education, M. Vyshnevskaya believes that there are several effective methods and approaches to foreign language teaching, and the communicative approach is one of the most effective. This approach emphasizes the cultivation of students' communication proficiencies, empowering them to utilize a foreign language in authentic scenarios. The approach can concentrate on refining skills in business negotiations, presentation preparation, and the composition of professional correspondences [11, p. 11].

S. Dvoryanchikova and colleagues assert that communication competence guarantees mutual understanding between individuals from different cultures, even with average proficiency in a foreign language, due to enhanced knowledge and experience. This is facilitated by adherence to the rules and norms of business communication and behavior adopted within the target culture. This skill is a component of the future interpreter's comprehensive social and professional skills, allowing them to proficiently perform their professional obligations [2, p. 58].

K. Kugai believes that the methods used to teach foreign languages should be carefully designed to meet the cognitive profiles and domain-specific linguistic needs of students. Innovative approaches, such as contextualized language learning, gamification, task-based language teaching, content and language-integrated learning, cross-cultural communication training, and language learning support tools can foster linguistic proficiency while aligning with computer science pursuits. By employing these techniques, teachers can enable students to communicate and partner effectively across linguistic and cultural borders, laying the foundation for prosperous incorporation into the international context of contemporary technology [4, pp. 97–98].

By reviewing existing literature, we aim to build a solid foundation for our study, demonstrating the need for a focused examination of foreign language competence in non-philological students and setting the stage for our research findings and recommendations.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches, to provide a comprehensive understanding of

the foreign language competence of non-philological students. This methodological choice is motivated by the complex and multifaceted nature of the research questions, as well as the need to capture a range of perspectives and experiences. Utilizing mixed methods enables us to survey the findings and gain a more holistic view of the subject matter.

The quantitative aspect of the study involves the administration of structured surveys to a large sample of non-philological students across diverse educational institutions. This approach allows for the collection of standardized data that can be analyzed statistically, providing valuable insights into the prevalence and distribution of specific challenges.

In addition, qualitative methods are employed, including in-depth interviews and observations, to delve into the experiences, perceptions, and contexts of a subset of participants. These qualitative data enrich the study by offering a deeper exploration of individual experiences and contextual nuances.

Surveys. A structured questionnaire is designed and distributed among non-philological students from various academic institutions. This survey includes questions that aim to identify the challenges faced during language learning, the strategies employed, and the perceptions of their language learning experiences. The survey also collects demographic data to understand the sample's characteristics, such as age, gender, academic major, and prior language learning experience.

Interviews. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a purposefully selected subset of survey participants. These interviews provide a platform for participants to elaborate on their experiences, discuss their individual challenges, and offer insights into their language learning journey. Open-ended questions are utilized to encourage participants to express their thoughts and feelings freely.

Observations. Classroom observations are conducted in selected language learning environments to gain an understanding of the learning processes, teaching methodologies, and interactions between non-philological students and instructors. These observations are supplemented by notes and reflections to capture the context and dynamics of language classes.

The participants in this study are non-philological undergraduate students from a diverse range of academic disciplines. The sample is drawn from Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design that ensures a broad representation of non-philological students. To maintain the diversity and richness of the sample, participants are selected from different specialties. They are taught by different teachers with varying teaching approaches, language programs, and cultural backgrounds.

The survey sample includes a total of 200 non-philological students, while interviews are conducted with 20 purposefully selected participants to ensure a comprehensive exploration of experiences and challenges. Classroom observations are carried out in 7 different specialties, each with distinct language programs, covering a wide range of teaching and learning contexts.

The quantitative data collected through surveys are analyzed using statistical software, allowing for the computation of descriptive statistics, correlations, and inferential statistics, where appropriate. This analysis will provide insights into the prevalence and patterns of challenges faced by non-philological students.

Qualitative data from interviews and observations are subjected to thematic analysis. The data is systematically coded to identify recurrent themes, patterns, and significant findings. This approach allows for the extraction of meaningful insights from the qualitative data and the development of a nuanced understanding of non-philological students' language learning experiences.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods will facilitate a comprehensive examination of foreign language competence challenges and solutions among non-philological students. This mixed-methods approach aims to provide a well-rounded perspective on the research questions and objectives of this study.

Findings

The findings of our research provide valuable insights into the foreign language competence of non-philological students, highlighting the challenges they face and the potential solutions that can address these challenges. We have structured this section using subsections to address different aspects of foreign language competence based on our research findings.

Language Proficiency Levels Among Non-Philological Students

Our survey data revealed that non-philological students exhibit a wide range of language proficiency levels in the foreign languages they are learning. In general, these students tend to fall within the intermediate range, with a mean proficiency level of B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). However, the distribution is not uniform, with some students achieving higher levels while others struggle to reach even the basic levels of language competence. This variability underscores the importance of understanding individual differences and tailoring instruction to address these varying needs.

Common Challenges in Language Learning

The survey data identified several recurring challenges faced by non-philological students in their language acquisition:

- ✓ **Limited Exposure.** A significant percentage of non-philological students reported limited exposure to the target language outside the classroom, hindering their language development.
- ✓ **Vocabulary Acquisition.** Vocabulary retention and acquisition were noted as persistent difficulties, often affecting listening and reading comprehension.
- ✓ **Grammatical Complexity.** Many students found complex grammar rules to be a stumbling block, particularly in languages with intricate structures.
- ✓ **Speaking Anxiety.** A substantial proportion of respondents experienced anxiety when it came to speaking in the target language, which hindered oral communication skills.

✓ **Motivation and Self-Efficacy.** Motivation levels varied among students, impacting their commitment to language learning. Some students reported low self-efficacy, affecting their belief in their ability to succeed in language learning.

Effective Language Learning Strategies

In interviews, we identified a range of strategies employed by successful non-philological language learners:

✓ **Use of Technology.** Many students reported using language learning apps and online resources to supplement their in-class learning.

✓ **Language Exchange Programs.** Engaging in language exchange programs, either in person or virtually, was a commonly mentioned strategy for improving language skills.

✓ **Structured Study Plans.** Successful learners often followed structured study plans, setting aside dedicated time for language practice and self-assessment.

✓ **Instructor Support.** Positive relationships with language instructors and regular feedback were reported as instrumental in motivating students to persist in their language mastering.

Variability in Learning Environments

The classroom observations revealed considerable variability in learning environments. Some language classes emphasized communicative and task-based language learning, fostering student interaction and engagement. In contrast, other classes were more traditional, focusing on grammar and rote memorization.

Individual Differences and Language Learning

Our findings indicate that individual differences, including motivation, learning styles, and prior language learning experiences, significantly influence the language learning process among non-philological students. These individual factors can either facilitate or hinder progress, reinforcing the need for personalized approaches to address language learning challenges.

The research findings shed light on the diverse landscape of foreign language competence among non-philological students. The data demonstrates that while these students exhibit varying levels of language proficiency, they share common challenges, such as limited exposure and vocabulary retention difficulties. However, effective strategies, motivation, and personalized approaches can significantly enhance their language learning experience and outcomes. Understanding the individual differences among non-philological students is paramount for educators and institutions to offer tailored support and solutions to meet their specific needs.

Problems Faced by Non-Philological Students

The challenges encountered by non-philological students in their pursuit of foreign language competence are multifaceted and impact various aspects of their language acquisition. Let us consider the following examples.

Case Study 1: Olena's Struggle with Immersion.

Olena, an undergraduate student majoring in economics, embarked on a study abroad program in England with the aspiration of improving her English language skills. However, she soon found herself overwhelmed by the immersive language environment. Despite her rigorous preparation, Olena felt anxious and out of her depth in everyday conversations, which included regional accents and colloquial expressions she had not encountered in her textbooks. She struggled to adapt to the accelerated pace of language use in real-life situations.

This case exemplifies one of the primary challenges faced by non-philological students: limited exposure to the target language outside of formal classroom settings. The discrepancy between the controlled environment of the classroom and the linguistic complexities of the real world can hinder their language learning progress.

Case Study 2: Kyril's Vocabulary Dilemma.

Kyril, an undergraduate student in engineering, was enrolled in English language course. He diligently attended classes, participated in language labs, and practiced at home using language learning apps. However, his struggle with vocabulary retention persisted. Kyril frequently encountered unfamiliar words while reading English texts, leading to frustration and decreased reading comprehension.

This case illustrates a common challenge among non-philological students: vocabulary acquisition and retention. The sheer volume of new words and characters in some languages can be overwhelming, often impeding progress in reading and listening comprehension.

Case Study 3: Maria's Attempt to Learn German.

Maria, a non-philological student majoring in design, chose to learn German. She faced substantial challenges with the language's complex grammatical structure, including cases, declensions, and word order. Despite dedicated study and attending additional grammar workshops, Maria often felt that her grammatical errors hindered her ability to express herself accurately.

Maria's case highlights the difficulties non-philological students encounter with languages known for their intricate grammatical systems. Learning and applying such complex rules can be a challenging task for students coming from diverse academic backgrounds.

Case Study 4: Oleksii's Fear of Speaking.

Oleksii, an undergraduate student majoring in business administration, enrolled in a French language course. Despite having a strong understanding of grammar and vocabulary, he experienced significant anxiety when it came to speaking in French. He was reluctant to participate in oral exercises and speaking assessments, often opting to remain silent in class.

Oleksii's case underscores the issue of speaking anxiety, a common challenge that non-philological students face. The fear of making mistakes and being judged can be paralyzing, inhibiting their oral communication skills and confidence in the target language.

Case Study 5: Oksana's Waning Motivation.

Oksana, an undergraduate student majoring in information technology, initially exhibited high motivation for learning German. She was excited about the language and culture, actively participating in language clubs and cultural events. However, over time, her motivation waned, and she began to doubt her ability to reach a high level of competence in German.

Oksana's case highlights the dynamic nature of motivation and self-efficacy. Maintaining enthusiasm and confidence can be challenging for non-philological students, and these fluctuations can affect their language learning journey.

These real-life case studies and examples provide a glimpse into the myriad challenges faced by non-philological students in their pursuit of foreign language competence. The difficulties presented in these cases are not isolated incidents but representative of the broader issues that these students encounter. In the following section, we explore potential solutions and interventions that can address these challenges and enhance the foreign language competence of non-philological students.

Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate the multifaceted landscape of foreign language competence among non-philological students. These students exhibit a range of language proficiency levels, commonly falling within the intermediate range. Challenges in language learning are prevalent, with limited exposure, vocabulary acquisition difficulties, and grammatical complexity as prominent hurdles. Speaking anxiety and fluctuations in motivation are additional challenges that significantly impact their language acquisition. Effective language learning strategies, including the use of technology, language exchange programs, and structured study plans, are integral to overcoming these challenges.

The implications of this research extend to educators and institutions involved in language education. First, the identification of specific challenges faced by non-philological students highlights the need for tailored instructional approaches. Language programs should incorporate strategies that address vocabulary acquisition, grammatical complexity, and speaking anxiety. Instructors play a vital role in nurturing motivation and self-efficacy among students.

Moreover, understanding the diverse needs and proficiency levels among non-philological students is paramount. Differentiated instruction and support mechanisms can better accommodate the individual differences observed in language learning. Institutions should consider enhancing immersive language opportunities and offering language exchange programs to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world language use.

Our findings align with previous research indicating that non-philological students often deal with vocabulary retention, grammatical complexity, and speaking anxiety. However, our study adds nuance by providing real-life case studies and examples that illustrate the practical manifestations of these challenges. Moreover, the emphasis on individual differences and motivation in this research further

contributes to the broader understanding of language learning among non-philological students.

Conclusion

The work explores the foreign language competence of non-philological students, dealing with challenges and potential solutions. Our findings highlight the variability in language proficiency, the common challenges faced, and the effective strategies employed by these students. The study's significance lies in its contribution to understanding the unique experiences of non-philological students and the provision of insights for improving foreign language education. The case studies and examples provided add depth to the understanding of these challenges.

It is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. First, the research design, while mixed-methods, relies on self-report data, which may be subject to recall bias and social desirability bias. Additionally, the sample, though diverse, may not fully represent all non-philological students. More extensive studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of foreign language competence challenges and solutions in this context.

Recommendations

Practical Recommendations for Educators

1. **Personalized Instruction.** Educators should implement personalized instruction strategies that recognize the diverse proficiency levels and individual differences among non-philological students. Tailoring instruction to the specific needs of students can help address challenges more effectively.

2. **Immersion Opportunities.** Institutions should explore opportunities for immersive language experiences both within and outside the classroom. Creating environments that expose non-philological students to the target language can significantly enhance their language competence.

3. **Structured Vocabulary and Grammar Support.** Language programs should consider offering structured support for vocabulary and grammar acquisition. This may include dedicated vocabulary-building exercises, targeted grammar workshops, and opportunities for meaningful language use.

4. **Motivational Support.** Encouraging and sustaining student motivation is crucial. Instructors should adopt strategies that foster intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, such as setting realistic language learning goals and celebrating incremental successes.

5. **Language Exchange Programs.** Institutions should establish or support language exchange programs that provide students with opportunities to interact with native speakers and use the language in authentic contexts. These programs can bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world language use.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. **Long-term Studies.** Future research should consider conducting long-term studies to track the language learning journeys of non-philological students over an extended period. Long-term data can provide deeper insights into the evolution of language proficiency and the factors affecting this progression.

2. Cross-Cultural Comparative Studies. Comparative research that includes non-philological students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds can help identify culture-specific challenges and solutions. Understanding the cultural dimension of language learning is essential for a comprehensive view.

3. Technology in Language Learning. The impact of technology on language learning among non-philological students is an area for exploration. Research can investigate the effectiveness of language learning apps, online resources, and virtual classrooms in addressing language competence challenges.

4. Teacher Training and Development. Research focusing on the training and development of language teachers can provide insights into their role in helping non-philological students overcome challenges. Investigating the impact of a teacher support on student outcomes is a valuable avenue.

5. Motivation and Self-Efficacy Studies. Further research on the dynamics of motivation and self-efficacy in language learning is essential. Understanding the factors that influence motivation and how self-efficacy can be developed will contribute to improved language education strategies.

6. Comprehensive Comparative Studies. Comparative studies that explore the experiences of non-philological students with different languages, from widely studied languages like English and German to less commonly taught languages, can offer a comprehensive view of language competence challenges and solutions.

In conclusion, the recommendations offered here are designed to support educators and institutions in enhancing foreign language education for non-philological students. The suggested avenues for future research seek to further our understanding of the unique challenges and potential solutions in this field, ultimately contributing to more effective language education for a diverse and dynamic student population.

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