Original Contribution

PRESENTATION AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN THE ACADEMIC PREPARATION OF STUDENTS OF PEDAGOGY

A. Koleva*, D. Branekova, Hr. Zafirov

Faculty of Education, Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

ABSTRACT

The renewal of the educational system and the realization of innovative approaches are aimed at the formation of creative people, who develop, communicate and grow in the conditions of many dimensions and changing societies simultaneously adapting to a constantly changing and challenging environment. Integrating various communication channels into network spaces implies development of skills and competences not currently prioritized in the education system. ICT technologies, in combination with modern educational strategies, form a new tool for the realization of various learning objectives as well as effective means and methods of training adequate to the natural course of "digitalization" of the society as knowledge of digital technologies has become compulsory rather than optional. The universal nature of digital technologies facilitates the acquisition of other key competences related to different areas of knowledge, such as the acquisition of native or foreign languages. The goal of this study is to develop and introduce a practical model of forming presentation and communication skills based on ICT integration and language education of students who will become pedagogues.

Key words: ICT, communication skills, digital competences, educational strategies, digital technologies

INTRODUCTION

Today's students with a pedagogical profile will educate a generation that is expected to generate innovations as a basis for improving the quality of life. Future teachers should be trained to be close to the modern generation of pupils born and living in a high-tech environment and their perception of the outside world, as well as their expectations from the educational process are under the influence of the digital technologies.

Digital competence, because of its universal nature, allows the acquisition of other key competences in different areas of knowledge. Digital competence is an integrative quality related to skills in the context of real-life problems, and in activities connected with search, collection, recognition, decomposition and grouping of the information and the creation of a product that has a personal meaning for the students. In the process of working in a digital environment, information literacy is formed, which is defined by UNESCO as developing the critical skills for

---

*Correspondence to: *Antonina Koleva Tsenkova, Trakia University – Faculty of Education, 9 Armejska Str., 6010 Stara Zagora, Bulgaria, e-mail: atsenkova55@abv.bg, GSM +359898332354*

expression, research, communication, understanding of the flow of ideas in the rapidly changing technological environment. For learners, what is important is not just the passing of facts and knowledge, but the formulation of important for the society competences. Emphasis is placed on the need to acquire competencies to understand, evaluate and use information in different formats provided by ICT. It is also crucial that one is able to evaluate and interpret information. According to Gillester, what matters is not the presentation of digital literacy simply as a "handbook on how to navigate the Internet", but the understanding that thanks to it one acquires basic thinking skills and key competencies without which he cannot find orientation and solve tasks in an interactive environment. The digitally literate person is "multidimensional and interactive", he or she is able to integrate various information sources (1), thus indicating a broader understanding of digital literacy, which implies the unifying of different types of literacy based on computer/information competencies, focusing on information literacy and knowledge-gathering skills, along with a set of perceptions and attitudes (2). Digital literacy begins with the whole set of specific

skills and competences necessary for the search, detection, evaluation and processing of information in an electronic form.

The innovative digital technologies, combined with state-of-the-art educational strategies, are introducing new models for learning and understanding of the learning content on the part of the students. The combination of linguistic and digital competence provides opportunities for presenting their own materials based on concentrated language knowledge and meaningful statements with the support of digital content in the learning environment. Students can creatively interpret the learning process by presenting it electronically and presenting it to an audience. In this process, they are guided by basic principles, such as consistency, rhythm, dynamics of the material presented and processing the received information, as well as giving their own vision with their own linguistic means. As a result of such an activity of recognizing, decomposing and grouping the information, a product is created that has a personal meaning for the students.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH
Development and approbation of a model for the integration of information technology in the education and language learning in the academic training of students at the Faculty of Education at Trakia University, Stara Zagora. The developed model is based on some basic constructs of these learning disciplines, interpreted for the purpose of the research in a theoretical and methodological aspect. Key concepts are taught, tied to specific ideas for interactive activities in academic settings, to form presentation and communication skills in students - future pedagogues**.**

RESEARCH METHODS
Comparative theoretical analysis, polling, observation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
1. Objectives and content aspects of training in "ICT in Education and Working in a Digital Environment"
The main objective of the course (as well as of other IT courses studied in the various specialties at the Faculty of Education) is the implementation of the theoretical and practical application of the students for the use of ICT in a pedagogical context in their future realization as teachers. The emphasis in the practical part of the course is related to mastering of modern technological means for preparation and presentation of didactic materials in different educational disciplines.

When studying the students' attitudes towards the content constructs of the course, the "Computer Presentation" module is among the most preferred ones, which is explicable by the nature of this technology and by the rich opportunities for application in the training (The study was conducted with the students from the courses of Preschool and Primary School Education and Primary School Education with a Foreign Language – 1st year and Special Pedagogy – years 1 and 2 in the last two academic years of the students' studying. These students study ICT in Education and Work in Multimedia Environment, Information Technologies, High-Technology aids for children with SEN and E-accessibility and Internet Dependence).

To the question "*What is the computer presentation that is used as a method and as a learning tool for your ICT training in digital environments?*", the most common answers are:
Computer presentation:
- Allows combining different learning methods - lecture, discussion, demonstration, modelling.
- Creates a new educational environment that changes pedagogical interaction in the educational process.
- Allows the learning content to be restructured.
- Can be used in school for different types of lessons.

To the question "*Why do you need knowledge and skills to create and use computer presentations?*", the most common answers are:
- To prepare references, assignments, projects, etc. in various teaching subjects in my education at the Faculty of Education
- For participation in conferences and seminars, in defence of course and diploma projects and others
- For my scientific and methodological training as a future teacher
- To develop didactic materials for the purpose of teaching different subjects

It is noteworthy that the answers of the students of year 1 correspond directly to their personal development and training, while the students of the 2nd year include answers related to their future teaching practice. The study will be completed after continuing in the practical training of the students in the 3rd and 4th year. Preliminary studies have highlighted the two-sided role of computer presentations in the academic education of students: as an object and as a technology for updating and

optimizing the lesson in their future teaching practice.

1.1. The computer presentation as an educational technology

The computer presentation is an information technology for presenting ideas in an interesting and understandable way to the audience. The presentation contains systematized information on a given problem and its duration is much shorter than the time it takes to prepare and create it. The computer presentation combines various information technologies - computer word processing, spread sheet, computer graphics, work in an Internet environment, etc. It acts as an integrative module and at the same time provides opportunities for creating elements of an interactive learning environment in two main aspects:

a) *Presentations as an information resource: (3)*
- In the form of materials for new knowledge - the attention of the audience is easier to maintain because the material is visual and presented in an attractive and accessible form; the material is structured on topics and subtopics; key concepts have been separated; hypertext elements can be implemented, making the presentation flexible and consistent with the audience level
- In the format of lectures and discussions
- In the form of instruction materials, references, notes

б) Presentation as a means of creating interactivity:
- Allows combining different learning methods - lecture, discussion, demonstration, group work.
- Serves to prepare training materials for the students' future teacher practice, containing static and dynamic slides for solving problem situations and case studies, discussions, group work, etc.
- Finds application in the presentation and defence of students' projects, didactic materials and diploma projects in the process of their academic preparation.

From their information technology education in the secondary school, as well as from independent training, students have basic skills to work with presentations, create and use them in their training. These basic skills are most often limited to:
- Skills for creating and editing text objects
- Skills for inserting images in graphics slides - from embedded graphic collections and as image files

1.2. Interactive features of the computer presentation

The concept of "interactivity" is related to the "technology – user" interaction. A technology is interactive if it has mechanisms and strategies for interacting with the user. The computer presentation is an information technology that fully complies with this requirement. On the other hand, each lesson is a presentation to the students and by using the possibilities of interactive technologies the teacher can organize the lesson in an attractive and interesting way (4).

In the model described below, some of the Power Point's capabilities are used which can be applied to solve a variety of didactic tasks, break the dull linear pattern, activate learners and remove them from the role of passive viewers: creating content with links, hyperlinks to the cross-section of the presentation, similar to the Hypertext technology, active buttons to start certain actions, hint switches, narration text, built-in pointers, etc. (5).

Presentation skills, including combining verbal communication and skilful use of Power Point's interactive and multimedia capabilities by future teachers, enable problem situations to be created, knowledge updates, lecture and discussion, oral testing, modelling of imaging processes, etc.

Presentation skills, as well as the technological skills for creating presentations, are closely related to working with a text, search and systematization skills - skills that are formed in the courses of the language preparation of students.

2. Text and the interpretation of the text in the language preparation of the students

The presentation as a product intended for a particular audience provides visual aids and compressed text that contains the basic, top-level information. The text in its entirety and, in particular, in the presentation, is seen as a specific speech activity, it is an action aimed at solving a specific communicative task. The connection of the sentences as a basic characteristic of the text is the bearer of its meaning and a complex combination of several factors: the logic of the text, communicativeness, the specific organization of the language means, the meaning of the text.

Another key feature of the text is its integrity. It finds expression in the construction of the text itself. Typically, the text is considered to be a complex unit that consists of two or more components. In the linguistic organization of the text, the difficulty lies in the fact that the individual components constituting the text's completeness may not be so simple but complex. Integrity provides a meaningful structure and an adequate understanding of the text. Each subsequent phrase in the text is based on a linguistic and communicative plan of the preceding one.

One of the conditions for effective perception of the meaning of the text is another characteristic – its informativeness. It is related to the "interest" factor, the motivation of the message for the

learners. If the text brings interesting and meaningful information, they talk about the issues raised in the text. This process involves the stimulation of the student speech activity. This activity is possible if all the marked features of the text act in a single complex (6).

In line with the main features of the text and the components of its meaningful structure, the current question of understanding the text is examined. Understanding in a broad sense - this is establishing essential relationships or relationships between the subjects of the reality through the supply of knowledge. Studying the processes of understanding the text shows that often the previous knowledge is insufficient to understand the new one. Therefore, realizing and experiencing that something is not understood, performs a regulating function and leads to a more careful attitude towards the perceiving phenomenon, to its re-thinking. In the process of rationalizing the text, active actions are performed to transform the meaning of the text structure. The dynamics of the text reflection process is a transition from an expanded mental action to a clear division of the hidden question and to finding a response. This is the mechanism of forming mature forms of understanding the text. The penetration of the main content, the main idea of the text, takes place at certain levels, depending on the depth of text penetration:

- The first level is characterized by clarification of what the text is about. This is the most general perception.
- For the second level, the understanding of what is said in the text is characteristic. Here are the meaningful connections between the main plans of discovery of thought.
- The third level of understanding implies awareness of how, by what means is the revelation of the content of the text achieved.

- At the fourth level, the basic idea of the text is understood, regardless of whether it is formulated or given in the subtext (6).

When solving the communicative tasks in the process of understanding of the text, the basic information needs to be accurately understood and it is necessary to understand not only the actual content of the text but also an evaluation of the information received to be made.

Texts with a clear composition-semantic structure, with a logical conditionality of the structural parts, facilitate the understanding, as well as those with a clear structure and strict logic of the compositional exhibition; with thematic unity and completeness. The text serves as an incentive for presentation and interpretation of the information contained therein. This directs students to correct interpretation / interpretation of the text. In the process of interpretation, the text is a meaningful base that gives thought and interest to students. In this way, they outline the meaningful links between the elements of the text and separate the meaningful supports. This allows them to follow the sequence and the logic of the thematic line.

The purpose of the digital presentation from a linguistic point of view is that the information contained in the text is adequately perceived by the person for whom it is intended. This implies an interpretation of audience-friendly information. Presented in this way, the presentation "identifies" a certain position from which the reported information is perceived. Thus, the meaningful orientations are presented when presenting texts from different areas of knowledge. This is the base of the presented model of integration of ICT training and language learning in line with the purpose of the study (**Figure 1 and Table 1**). It is based on information cores, realized products and formed presentation and communication skills.
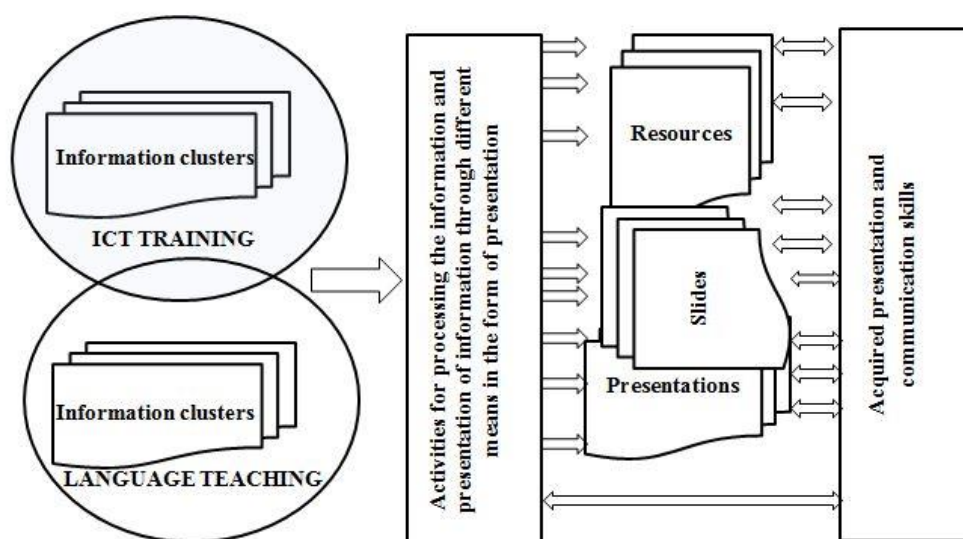

Figure 1. A model for integration of ICT training and language teaching

Table 1. *A model for Presentation and Communication Skills*

	Information cluster	Basic activities	Realized products	Skills acquired
ICT in learning and working in a digital environment	*Purpose and structure of the computer presentation:* - introduction; - main part; - conclusion.	*Planning the structure of the presentation* *Search and providing of the resources* - from the Internet; - created through different appications.	*Conceptual design* *Bibliography of* site and portal addresses *Collected and thematically systematized files.*	– analysis and assessment of the need for presentation; – search and systematization of the information; – arranging and managing disk space.
	Basic objects in the slides: - text - graphic images; - tables; - diagrams; - graphics of the kind SmartArt; - multi-media – audio and video.	*Creating slides* - observing some critical rules*:* *Creating a text* - short and clear headlines, keywords, large font, larger line spacing*;* *Inserting graphic objects* - text-friendly, of good resolution	*Slides for the introductory part:* - Home Page - slide content*;* *Slides for the main part* *Slides for the closing part:* - a summary slide; - a slide with messages, recommendations, thanks.	– choosing an adequate slide structure; – combining text and non-text objects; – editing, formatting and positioning of the text; – dimensioning and positioning of non-text objects.
	Design of the slides	*Choice of a design which is appropriate to the topic*	*Galleries* with ready-made design templates from specialized sites *Author Templates*	– search, systematization and storage of design resources; – creating a Master Slide.
	Dynamic slides and interactivity	*Setting effects and animations* *Creating content, hyperlinks, active buttons, and others.*	*Animated slides* *A presentation of a branched structure and management*	– Selection and use of interactive tools for computer presentations applications
Language teaching	*Language, speech, communication*	*Pre-text work when creating a presentation text:* - orientation in the facts bearing the main information and its separation from the secondary information; - definition of supporting words; - emphasis on the strong positions of the text - topic, main paragraphs, end of the text.	*Bibliography of* site and portal addresses on a certain topic *Files* of thematically systematized information.	- grouping of information; – Establishing meaningful links between the parts of the text
	The text as a means of communication	*Ongoing work when creating a presentation text:* - dividing the text in meaningful parts and establishing the relations between them; - defining in any meaningful part of the main and specific information; - establishing the ratios between the reported facts in order to balance them.	*Slides with a text* that meets the requirements for a good presentation *Slides with keywords* with converted links *Interactive slides* with hints	– selection of appropriate linguistic means; – linking the individual parts of the text.
	The text – a product and a tool of communication	- structuring of the text in order to achieve logic, connectivity and informativeness; - evaluation of the received information as reflected in the text; - establishing the relevance of text to the audience	*Slides with notes* for the presenter *Presentation text* adequate to the content of each slide	– presentation of the meaningful structure of the text through adequate verbal means; – defining and maintaining the main idea of the text in the presentation process

CONCLUSIONS

Education strategy in the described model is based on digital and linguistic training of the students throughout their entire university course and is heavily dependent on their will to utilize various means and formats of presenting information on a given topic in higher education and their future work as teachers alike. The listed in this study strategic and technological solution for integration of language acquisition and presentation skills do not exhaust all possible solutions to the problem. The model of integration of the students' language and digital competences outline future tendencies for their beneficial co-functioning. Such an approach to educational strategies will enable new solutions to form, develop and perfect presentation skills to emerge and integrate into contemporary educational systems.

REFERENCES

1. Gilster, P. (1997). *Digital Literacy*, New York: Wiley.
2. Henriksen, C. (2011). *Media and ICT in a Learning Perspective,* Accessed 24 November 2011, Retrieved from http://www.dpu.dk/en/research/ researchprogrammes mediaandict/
3. Branekova, D. (2010). Training materials on qualification forms in information technologies. publ. Trakia University, Stara Zagora, ISBN 978-954-9443-35-6, 2010, p. 112.
4. Branekova D. (2010). Methodical Solutions for Using the Interactive Opportunities of Computer Presentation in the Lesson. In: Electronic Edition of XI-th National Pedagogical Forum "The Bulgarian School in the Context of European Educational Priorities". ISBN 978-954-691-068-4, 2010.
5. Branekova D., E. Adalieva, V. Starcheva (2014). Creating and integrating documents with MS OFFICE 2010, Multimedia textbook. ISDN 978-954-338-107-4, Trakia University, St. Zagora.
6. Tsenkova, A. (2010). Intercultural Communication and Foreign Language Methodology, publ. Trakia University, Stara Zagora.