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VIRTUAL REALITY TECHNOLOGIES AS ICT TOOLS FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

The modern stage of educational development is characterized by the active digitalization of the learning process and the widespread integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) into foreign language learning systems. Globalization processes, the development of the digital society, and the spread of distance learning necessitate the search for new effective approaches to developing foreign language communicative competence. One of the most promising directions in modern language education is the use of Virtual Reality (VR) technologies, which create an interactive and immersive educational environment.

Virtual reality is a technology that allows users to interact with an artificially created digital environment in real time. In the context of foreign language teaching, VR provides the experience of complete immersion in the language environment, which significantly increases learning effectiveness [3, p. 394]. Through the use of VR, students can participate in simulated communicative situations, practice speaking, complete interactive tasks, and develop intercultural communication skills.

Recent research confirms the positive impact of VR technologies on language skill development and motivation to learn. According to researchers, immersive learning contributes to the activation of cognitive activity, the formation of sustained interest in language learning, and increased student engagement in the educational process [1, p. 174]. Virtual environments create conditions for modelling real-life communication situations, allowing students to apply their language knowledge in practical activities.

Modern applied linguistics pays particular attention to the development of communicative competence, which involves the ability to use language effectively according to the situation of communication. The use of VR technologies makes it possible to create digital scenarios of real communication, such as travelling, visiting shops, participating in discussions, and attending job interviews. Such interactive environments contribute to the development of dialogic speech, listening comprehension, pronunciation, and spontaneous communication skills.

An important advantage of VR technologies is the increase in students' motivation to learn. The immersive environment provides emotional engagement and encourages active participation in educational activities [4, p. 623]. Through interaction with the virtual environment, students have the opportunity to learn through experience and practice, which corresponds to modern communicative and activity-based approaches to foreign language teaching [5, p. 174].

In addition, VR technologies contribute to the personalization of learning. Students can work at their own pace, revise learning material, and adapt the educational process according to their individual needs. Virtual platforms also allow the integration of gamification elements, which positively influence the development of learners' autonomy and independence.

Along with the advantages, there are also certain challenges related to the use of VR in language education. Among the main problems are the high cost of equipment, technical limitations, the need for teachers' digital competence, and the insufficient number of high-quality educational VR resources. Some researchers also emphasize the possibility of sensory overload or difficulties in adapting to the virtual environment [2, p. 436].

Despite these challenges, the prospects for using VR in the system of foreign language learning are extremely broad. The development of digital platforms, distance learning, and artificial intelligence creates new opportunities for integrating VR into the modern educational environment. The use of immersive technologies contributes to creating more interactive, communicative, and practice-oriented learning.

Thus, virtual reality technologies are effective ICT tools for developing communicative competence in the process of second language learning. They provide interactivity, motivation, practical orientation, and bring learning closer to real communication situations. The implementation of VR technologies in language education corresponds to current trends in digitalization and opens new prospects for the development of applied linguistics.

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