

Social Media Applications as an International Tool for the Development of English-Language Communicative Competencies

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to determine the effectiveness of various international tools designed to develop students' English-language communicative competencies. Several scientific methods were used: observation, testing, experimental training etc. Statistical processing of the data obtained during pedagogical experiment was carried out, visualization with the use of graphic method is applied. The description and verbal recording of the results of the study confirm its effectiveness. During the research, experimental training was carried out with the use of social media applications for the development of foreign language communicative competence in second-year students of groups *G1*, *G2*. Observations and testing of students while developing foreign language communicative competence were carried out while writing e-mails and creating videos for TikTok in English. The educational platforms, programmes, Internet resources were also used in accordance with the goals and topics of training sessions. The practical results prove the advantages of certain social media applications in the acquisition of English-language components of communicative competences (CCC). *G1* students demonstrated a standard procedure for acquiring a linguistic, socio-cultural CCC with a “lag” of the regional geography component. In *G2* group, the higher levels of CCC were observed in most cases. Mostly positive markers of Communicative Competences were demonstrated at the medium (344.1 points, 69.8% of *G1* respondents) and a sufficient level (371.0 points, 75.8% of *G2* respondents). Promising “growth points” were identified. The directions concerning further developments of progressive methods are highlighted.

Keywords: communicative competencies, e-mail, media applications, mobile applications, TikTok

1. Introduction

The globalization of the economy determines the need for English-language communicative competencies in the labor market, without which employment opportunities are limited (Turski et al., 2021). International cooperation is being strengthened in all aspects of social life and education, and there is an involvement of educational institutions, leading researchers, and student youth in projects of international organizations and communities. Integration processes in the educational space require a good command of foreign languages. The world is becoming open, and this makes a significant adjustment in the search for international tools to diversify and deepen communicative language competences (Muzyka-Stefanchuk & Kovalko, 2016). The system of training in the process of modernization of existing teaching methods and the introduction of modern types of communication in the learning process acquires new features in the face of challenges (Pavlova et al., 2021; Samsin et al., 2021). Accordingly, one of the tasks of universities, regardless of specialization and training system, is to prepare specialists who can communicate in a foreign language in both professional situations and in everyday life (Nesterova et al., 2020).

Information and communication technologies are part of the educational environment and provide ample opportunities for learning foreign languages. Digital literacy skills in a foreign language environment are perceived as a development that “should be an integral part of training programmes” (Hauck & Kurek, 2017). They allow participants in the educational process to use the Internet resources daily and create their own Internet content (Tkachenko et al., 2021). According to UNESCO (2021), mobile technologies can significantly expand and improve learning opportunities in a variety of settings. During research with a view to pandemic trends, UNESCO identifies several advantages in the application of Internet technologies in learning: mobility, continuity of education, personalization of learning. Distance education largely provides the novelty of the learning process, which has been little studied, however, is of great interest to many scholars and educators. The realities of distance learning force the intensive use of international programmes and platforms in the development of English-language competencies. Interactive learning methods are an integral part of modern innovative technologies, which find practical implementation in social media applications.

Accordingly, modern generation Internet technologies include podcasts, blogs, wikis, social networks and other forms of organization and transfer of information (Akkara, Anumula & Mallampalli, 2020; Spivakovskyy et al., 2021). The research objectives include:

- 1) arrangement of educational Internet resources, platforms, messengers and social media applications, which are proposed to be included as an international tool in the linguistic learning environment by two methods;
- 2) comparison of the level of CCCs in two groups of second-year students studying a foreign language both in the traditional way (using the Internet, multimedia, mobile applications), and “non-traditional” — through systemic social media applications. This is useful in view of previous and recent research on TikTok, as well as other social networks such as Facebook, Twominute English YouTube channel, YouTube, WeChat and others;
- 3) identifying a certain correlation between social media applications, programmes, platforms, multimedia (Drops mobile application, BBC Learning English, Listen to English — Learn English, Funbrain, English Media Lab and others) and the level of the CCCs. They are often used in modern linguistic practice. It is necessary to identify their impact on the communicative English-language competencies being formed in this process. It is necessary to prove that the use and combination of different resources contribute to the student’s personal and professional development in the acquisition of special professional English-language competencies.

2. Literature Review

Methods of teaching foreign languages need to be diversified and updated, involving technologies and various social media applications to develop speech and communication skills of students on the basis of acquired competencies. Scientific research on the development of communicative English-language competencies of students shows their importance in modern linguistic scientific and pedagogical discussion. At the same time, we note the researchers’ opinions which differ in terms of the choice of certain interactive methods, tools and social media applications that are most effective (Haerazi, Utama & Hidayatullah, 2020). In particular, it is about igniting scientific interest in updating the interactive context of research, which carries elements of novelty (Sabat, 2020) through social media applications (Mitchuk et al., 2021).

An important aspect in the study of English, in particular communicative competence, is the ability to interact effectively in the educational linguistic process (Semigina et al., 2020). According to Leong and Ahmadi (2017) this is one of the key factors influencing the quality of communication in the acquisition of English speaking skills. Many interactive exercises represented on social media develop speech skills, perform an important function associated with the stimulation of speech (Vodianka et al., 2021). Accordingly, high-quality speech learning is impossible without interactivity (Lee & Drajeti, 2019). In the other context, communicative (language) competencies, “which allow a person to act using specific language tools” are determined (Webster-Deakin, 2019).

It is important to note that previous separate studies demonstrated the positive effects of using social media as a guide to acquire English speaking skills (Fahdin, 2020). However, few sources focus on the use of TikTok to master communication in English (Kaye, Chen & Zeng, 2020). According to the communicative competence theory proposed by Dell Hymes back in 1966 (Puimom, 2020), it is important for those who study English to immerse themselves in the context of its study. This will help to improve English speaking skills. However, the widespread COVID-19 pandemic has brought the challenges of acquiring English speaking competences that undergraduate students still face.

Facebook, Instagram, as well as WeChat and WhatsApp were the social networks most used by English teachers, as well as students and college staff (Arfiandhani, 2020; Zhao, 2019). However, since 2019, especially after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, a popular youth social network called TikTok has emerged. As you know, TikTok belongs to the international version of the so-called Chinese social media platform Douyin. As of April 2020, this application had more than two billion downloads. Accordingly, the Covid-19 pandemic has greatly contributed to its popularization (Poramathikulet al., 2020).

3. Methods and Materials

3.1 Research Procedure

The study was conducted in several stages.

The first stage of the research involved developing an algorithm that will facilitate the introduction of diagnostics of ways of developing different components of students' English-language communicative competencies. The advantages and disadvantages of the ESL academic programme to prepare students for the TOFEL and IELTS certifications, as well as EFL undergraduate students, were taken into account for this purpose. We will involve a sufficient number of respondents and get reliable scientific results and conclusions. It is expected that the analysis of ways to develop communicative competencies of students with the involvement of social media applications (TikTok, etc.), programmes, platforms and resources will contribute to the fulfilment of research objectives. The impact of various international instruments and social media applications on the process of acquiring English-language communicative competencies when learning foreign languages in different conditions (blended learning, distance learning) was evaluated, taking into account the standards of higher education.

At the second stage, we evaluated the ways of development of communicative professional competencies of students of higher educational institutions in two directions:

1) using the method of identifying communicative competencies based on the effects of students' use of social media applications as international tools (*G1*, *G2*);

2) as an analysis of students' self-reflection on their choice of individual programmes, platforms, resources, social media applications (results are presented in Appendix A (please, use <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kRaEVRYya7RP1DWFcimh460LLw7t4n7T/edit?usp=sharing&oid=113132809711332840432&rtfpof=true&sd=true>) and Appendix B (please, use <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HN-yeSrgJx9beR0PPhUwCvqvcECsil7d/edit?usp=sharing&oid=113132809711332840432&rtfpof=true&sd=true>)).

This allows to confirm or refute the assumptions about the relationship between the acquired level of communicative competencies and critical self-assessment of respondents' own achievements.

The next stage was to identify the need for the use of certain international tools that improve the level of the CCCs. We summarized the practical experience of using programmes, platforms, resources, messengers, social media applications, and found their correlation with the level of CCCs. We considered that the educational process took place in the context of a new educational strategy and digitalization.

3.2 Theoretical Background and the Research Model

The diagnostic methodology developed by the authors is based on the theoretical effects of the use of international tools (including social media applications) in teaching the English-language communicative competence. The background model is the theory of communicative competence proposed by Liu, Lin and Wiley (2016) the four domains of which are grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. According to the model of communicative competence, the process of learning English requires communication in a foreign language to improve the learners' ability to use target foreign language properly in real communicative environment.

We defend this position in our study and try to test it on the example of two methods in *G1* group (with BBC Learning English, Listen to English resources) and in *G2* group (with Facebook, TikTok, YouTube applications). The scientific views of Taguchi (2018) on strategic management of foreign language learning and control are also considered and remain relevant. Three meta-strategies (meta-cognitive, meta-affective and meta-sociocultural/interactive) are proposed. They imply: 1) building and application of knowledge, 2) the creation of positive emotions and positions to be motivated, 3) in the management of contexts, interaction, and communication culture. This approach does not involve significant opposition to the previous one but is integrative and allows a systemic approach to fulfilling research objectives.

3.3 Diagnostic Model

A research algorithm developed in the author's diagnostic model was developed relying on the results of the insights-based analysis. We take into account, first of all, English-language communicative competencies acquired and used in social media applications, in particular, electronic correspondence. The e-mails, which can serve as a material for teaching students written business electronic communication, are classified according to various criteria: 1) the nature of relations between communicators (semi-official and official); 2) the communicative function in the text communication process: information letter, letter of request, letter of apology, letter of proposal, letter of complaint, letter of order); 3) on a functional basis (those that require a mandatory response and those that do not require a mandatory response). The given classification should be considered in the selection of letters that are used to develop students' foreign language communicative competence in business written electronic communication. Table 1 presents the components of communicative competencies that we identified, which are indispensable both in the educational process and in the daily life of students learn English.

Table 1. Components of Communicative Competencies in Written Electronic Communication in Social Media Applications (Facebook, TikTok and others)

Competences, components	Content of competence components
1) linguistic component;	1) knowledge and understanding of the subject area; provides spelling, lexical, stylistic, grammatical, syntactic skills and the ability to compare language phenomena in the native language and the language being studied, 2) covers the ability to identify and express the goals and intentions of communicators, plan the structure of written text; accurately and logically express opinions in the creation of the text
2) written component;	
3) socio-cultural component;	3) emotional intelligence; positive attitude, involves the ability to establish contact, enter into communication, maintain it; 4) covers special professional skills for each profile; use of reference material, interdisciplinary links
4) business component;	
5) regional geography component;	5) ability to apply English in practice; be able to understand the peculiarities of English office work; 6) involves the ability to communicate in writing, find the right phrases and constructions to express intonations; adhere to the norms of politeness in written communication
6) communicative component;	
7) self-learning component;	7) skills of using information and communication technologies; ability to independently develop new sources, technologies, programmes, resources; master new techniques of writing business letters; 8) the ability to improve independently; 9) speed of decision-making; ability to plan, use rational methods to achieve the goal, analyse difficulties, choose the right ways to complete tasks, think logically, predict; use different social media sources and applications
8) self-improvement;	
9) methodological component	10) skills of using information applications and communication technologies; communication at the appropriate level in both native and foreign languages; use of verbal and nonverbal support in a situation of interaction; skills of work with communicative strategies, social media applications, Internet resources, programmes, platforms
10) ICT competence	

Source: Authors

Table 2. Algorithm for Acquisition and Use of English-language Communicative Competencies by Respondents in the Practice of Creating Videos for Social Media Applications (on the example of TikTok)

Personal level	<p>1) Conceptual idea of the video creation process. Creating a sequence of self-recorded English videos. Search and collection of materials on the Internet.</p> <p>2) Shower of ideas (brainstorming) where student respondents determine the concept of short videos, video content and presentation methods. Respondents form an English script of their own short videos.</p> <p>3) Declamation (articulation), a fragment of action, where respondents express their own originality and speech competence in the process of exchanging thoughts and ideas. At this stage, respondents can improve the linguistic accuracy of the video and its attractiveness. This is a “rehearsal” before the start of the speech activity.</p>
Interpersonal level	<p>4) Observation and evaluation (monitoring) - a stage where respondents carefully monitor the quality of video before uploading to TikTok according to the evaluation table (Appendix C (please, use https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rmtmGdfo0w7pJyN9JD2LMQWdWMPxhcY3/edit?usp=sharing&oid=113132809711332840432&rtpof=true&sd=true)). Video control and verification after uploading.</p> <p>5) Critical assessment - at this stage, respondents should be as self-critical as possible. It is necessary and timely to agree with the assessment table and taking into account the thoughts and comments of teachers and colleagues. Ability to constantly improve own videos in accordance with existing requirements, opinions of colleagues and their own beliefs. This synergy of the process provides the expected best result.</p>
Synergetic level	<p>1. Situational English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=955rL_9ONHs. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=955rL_9ONHs.</p> <p>2. Public English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nP6uCKIXfII</p>

Source: Authors.

Fragments from the study presented in Tables 1, 2 are aimed at assessing the communicative English-speaking competencies of respondents using social media applications. The stages of the study are represented in Table 3. This is a diagnostic model that involves: 1) identifying the objective level of communicative competencies of respondents; 2) based on the results of assessment of each respondent, synthesizing information on the generalization of results in the groups (*G1*, *G2*) of the second-year students, which differ in the use of social media applications during training.

In the context of this study, it is important to obtain respondents' views on their own vision of the level of English-language communicative competencies (Appendix A (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kRaEVRyYa7RP1DWFcimb460LLw7t4n7T/edit?usp=sharing&oid=113132809711332840432&rtpof=true&sd=true>), Appendix B (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HN-yeSrgJx9beR0PPhUwCvqvcECsiI7d/edit?usp=sharing&oid=113132809711332840432&rtpof=true&sd=true>)). The answers to the questions about the use of certain social media applications in the educational process and in free time (Facebook, YouTube channel (Twominute English), YouTube, We Chat); programmes, platforms, other resources (Drops application, BBC Learning resources, Listen to English - Learn English, Funbrain, English Media Lab) are important. A questionnaire was developed and used as a self-reflection to clarify the results of the study; the structure of the questionnaire also included the answers of the respondents of both study groups (Appendix A (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kRaEVRyYa7RP1DWFcimb460LLw7t4n7T/edit?usp=sharing&oid=113132809711332840432&rtpof=true&sd=true>), B) and storytelling (creative story), which is not attached, but was evaluated.

Table 3. Methods of Assessing the Specifics of the Development of English-language Communicative Competencies in Respondents Using Platforms, Programmes, Social Media Applications

Context differentiation	Communicative competencies, components	Diagnostic procedure	Scores
1. Component composition of communicative competencies	Linguistic and written components	Academic performance (100 scores (ECTS average annual ranking) + Assignment to write an e-mail (Appendix D1 (please, use https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JaAZuos49mCZBSKB9DACOVY4Y7Xm4wq/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=113132809711332840432&rtpof=true&sd=true)) (Instructions according to Table 1.) (50 scores)	150
	Sociocultural and business components	Participation in youth movements, public activity, activity in social networks (+Storytelling)	100
	Methodological, self-learning and self-improvement components	Assignment with the use of BBC platforms: Learning English, Listen to English – Learn English, Funbrain, English Media Lab and others (Appendix D2 (please, use https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bSryuamxxr36ITjD3nKtipkZ8jA9EmsZ/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=113132809711332840432&rtpof=true&sd=true)) (https://www.vocabulary.com/lists/6377677)	100
	Regional geography and communicative components	Development of self-recorded TikTok videos in English (Instructions according to Table 2) 1. Situational English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=955rL_9ONHs . 2. Public English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nP6uCKIXfII	100
2. Determining the preferences in the choice of social media applications	How do you use social media applications in the development of English-language communicative competencies?	Question (Appendix A (please, use https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kRaEVRyYa7RP1DWFcimh460LLw7t4n7T/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=113132809711332840432&rtpof=true&sd=true) , Appendix B (please, use https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HN-yeSrgJx9beR0PPhUwCvqvcECsiI7d/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=113132809711332840432&rtpof=true&sd=true)) Test “Features of business correspondence in English” (Appendix E (please, use https://docs.google.com/document/d/1y9LifuHeP3vtFtFXvQzQerH00XNpNc5H/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=113132809711332840432&rtpof=true&sd=true))	50
Total score calculation	150+100+100+100+50=500 scores ≤ 300 – low level of communicative competencies 301-350 – medium level of communicative competencies 351-400 – sufficient level of communicative competencies 401-450 – fairly high level of communicative competencies 451-500 – high level of communicative competencies		

* Test assignments are identical for both groups of students.

Source: Authors.

3.4 Sample

Students and teachers of several educational institutions took part in the survey directly and on separate issues. In order to fulfil the research objectives, two groups of second-year students majoring in Journalism were involved. The total number of respondents is 67 people. The group of *G1* respondents included 34 second-year students; the group of *G2* respondents was 33 second-year students. Future journalists widely use a variety of media applications in everyday life and practice, this is required by the media nature of the chosen major. The ethics of the experiment is beyond doubt. The study was conducted in the second semester of the 2020/2021 academic year at: the Department of Social Communications, Private Higher Education Institution “Academician Stepan Demianchuk International University of Economics and Humanities”; the Department of Journalism and New Media, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Institute of Journalism; the Department of Theory and Practice of Journalism, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv.

3.5 Methods

We used both general and special methods to fulfil the research objectives and obtain objective results of the study. Among them, empirical, diagnostic, statistical, descriptive were the most useful. This is 1) experimental learning with the use of social media applications as international tools for the development of foreign language communicative competence in second-year students; 2) observation and testing of students in the process of development of foreign language communicative competence while writing e-mails and creating videos for TikTok in English; use of educational platforms, programmes, Internet resources; 3) statistical processing of data obtained in the course of pedagogical experiment; graphic method; 4) descriptive context — description and recording of the results of the study.

4. Results

4.1 The Results of Diagnostics of the Use of New Programmes, Platforms, Internet Resources in the Development of Communicative Competencies of *G1* Group Respondents

The application of the developed diagnostic methodology to *G1* group respondents (standard training system with selective use of the Drops mobile application, BBC Learning English, Listen to English – Learn English, Funbrain, English Media Lab, messengers and other resources) provided certain averages that reflect the levels of communicative competencies developed in the course of standard training (Table 4).

Table 4. The Results of the Application of Diagnostic Methods to Identify the Level of Communicative Competencies of Respondents in the Standard Training System (*G1* group)

Item No.	Communicative competencies	Scores	%
1. Components of communicative competencies of respondents			
1.	Linguistic and written components	112.7	75.1%
2.	Sociocultural and business components	66.5	66.5%
3.	Methodical, self-learning and self-improvement components	73.7	73.7%
4.	Regional geography and communicative components	48.5	48.5%
2. Determining the preferences in the choice of social media applications			
5.	How do you use socio-media applications in the development of English-language communicative competencies?	42.7	85.4%
Total		344.1	69.8%
Verbal assessment (communicative competencies)		Medium level of CCs	

The method revealed generally positive result. Verbal assessment reflects the medium level, which may have prospects for growth to a sufficient level. The greatest weakness in the structure of the respondents' communicative competences was found in the regional geography and communication components, which is explained by a certain “unwillingness” of respondents to show mature activity in using English in social networks and social media applications. The level of interest in the possibility of using social media applications was lower than expected.

Language theory provides for a long process and hard work to move into language practice. However, the “growth point” is the growing interest in involving various social media applications in the educational process.

Table 5. Distribution of Respondents by Levels of Communicative Competences (*G1* group)

Item No.	Levels of communicative competencies	Score range	Distribution of respondents	% to the number of respondents in the group
1.	Low	≤ 300	4	11.8%
2.	Medium	301-350	18	52.2%
3.	Sufficient	351-400	7	21.3%
4.	Fairly high	401-450	4	11.8%
5.	High	451-500	1	2.9%
	Total	500	34	100

As a result of the distribution, the presented results show that most respondents fell into the range of “low and medium” scores. This is 22 people, which is 64.0% of the total number of respondents in the group. In our opinion, the “growth points” should be the communicative competencies of the regional geography, communication and information-communication components. We partially represent the self-reflection model (Appendix A (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kRaEVRyYa7RP1DWFcmh460LLw7t4n7T/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=113132809711332840432&rtpof=true&sd=true>)) to fully understand the peculiarities of the development of English-language communicative competencies in respondents.

4.2 Results of Diagnostics of the Use of Social Media Applications in the Development of English-Language Communicative Competencies of *G2* Group Respondents

The application of the developed diagnostic methodology to *G2* group respondents (training with the use of international tools of social media applications Facebook, TikTok, Twominute English YouTube channel, YouTube, We Chat) ensured obtaining certain averages that reflect the level of communicative competencies (Table 6).

Table 6. The Results of Diagnostics to Identify the Level of Communicative Competencies of Respondents in Non-Conventional Training System, with Intensified Use of Social Media Applications (*G2* group)

Item No.	Communicative competencies	Scores	%
1. Components of communicative competencies of respondents			
1.	Linguistic and written components	115.8	76.0%
2.	Sociocultural and business components	53.5	53.5%
3.	Methodical, self-learning and self-improvement components	74.5	74.5%
4.	Regional geography and communicative components	79.2	79.2%
2. Determining the preferences in the choice of social media applications			
5.	How do you use socio-media applications in the development of English-language communicative competencies?	48.0	96.0%
Total		371.0	75.8%
Verbal assessment (communicative competencies)		Sufficient level of CCs	

The results for the method show a generally positive result. Evaluative judgment reflects a sufficient level, which is much better than medium. This increases the growth prospects to a high level. The greatest “strength” in the structure of the respondents’ communicative competencies studied was found for Components 3 and 4, which is related to the maximum concentration of respondents’ attention on social media applications (e-mails, posts, video technology for TikTok, etc.). Weakness was found in the socio-cultural and business components, which is explained by a certain “unwillingness” of respondents to show mature activity in social movements and events. At the same time, the high rate of use of English in social networks and social media applications outlines good prospects for Group 2

respondents. Involvement of various social media applications in the educational process demonstrates the advantages of this technique in acquiring English-language communicative competencies.

Table 7. Distribution of Respondents by Levels of Communicative Competencies (*G2 group*)

Item No.	Levels of communicative competencies	Score range	Distribution of respondents	% to the number of respondents in the group
1.	Low	≤ 300	3	9.1%
2.	Medium	301-350	10	30.3%
3.	Sufficient	351-400	14	42.4%
4.	Fairly high	401-450	4	12.2%
5.	High	451-500	2	6.0%
	Total	500	33	100

Calculations (Table 7) show that because of the distribution the majority of respondents fell into the “high” score range. In particular, 13 people showed low and medium levels of English-language communicative competencies, which is 39.4% of the total number of respondents in the group. In our opinion, English-language communicative competencies, mainly of the 1st, 3rd, 4th groups of components, were the “growth points”, which confirms the positive experience of social media applications. We partially represent the self-reflection model (Appendix B (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HN-yeSrgJx9beR0PPhUwCvqvcECsiI7d/edit?usp=sharing&oid=113132809711332840432&rtfpof=true&sd=true>)) to fully understand the peculiarities of the development of English-language communicative competencies in respondents.

4.3 Comparison of the Results of Diagnosing the Level of English-Language Communicative Competencies of Respondents through the Selected Methods for Both Groups of Respondents (*G1 Group, G2 Group*)

To understand the objectivity of the studied aspects and the results obtained by both groups of respondents, we compare them with each other according to the chosen diagnostic method (Table 8).

Table 8. Representative Comparison of the Results of Representation of Respondents of *G1 Group, G2 Group* According to Certain Levels of Communicative Competencies

Item No.	Level of communicative competencies	% in Group <i>G1</i> of respondents	% in Group <i>G2</i> of respondents	Statistical divide
1.	Low ≤ 300	11.8%	9.1%	-2.7%
2.	Medium 301-350	52.2%	30.3%	-21.9%
3.	Sufficient 351-400	21.3%	42.4%	+21.1%
4.	Fairly high 401-450	11.8%	12.2%	+0.4%
5.	High 451-500	2.9%	6.0%	+3.1%
		100%	100%	

The result of comparative characteristics for both groups of respondents allowed to confidently recognize significantly higher indicators in terms of the level of certain English-language communicative competencies in *G2* group. Statistical divides indicate a marked increase in the level of English-speaking CCCs, depending on its score in *G2* group. Accordingly, the medium level “tends” more to a low rather than to a high level of communication competences (CCCs). At the same time, the sufficient level of CCCs, which is characteristic of *G2* group, tends to be higher and exceeds the similar *G1* indicator by 21.1%. It was found because of the application of objective diagnostic methods that the trends are positive. In both groups, there was a significant percentage of respondents with medium and sufficient levels of communication competencies.

In general, there is a significant statistical divide in the levels of those competencies that respondents acquired through social media applications directly. Specialized linguistic environment creates opportunities for the acquisition of communicative competencies in the relationship of:

- 1) the traditional component of linguistic education — “standard” learning with selective use of programmes, platforms, Internet resources (Drops mobile application, BBC Learning English, Listen to English – Learn English, Funbrain, English Media Lab resources and others);
- 2) non-standard training with intensified use of international social media applications Facebook, TikTok, Twominute English YouTube channel, YouTube, We Chat. This combination will provide a much better result, as the results of the study prove.

4.4 Limitations and Implications for the Research

Despite its effectiveness, presented and implemented diagnostic method has the following limitations:

- 1) the represented diagnostic model does not take into account and does not reveal the emotional and psychomotor sphere of the respondent during language learning, so it requires expansion of the diagnostic tool;
- 2) details of age and gender structure of groups *G1*, *G2* of respondents are not taken into account;
- 3) it is impossible to track the functional advantages of the whole set of applications used in the educational process and outside it in one study, which affect the development of individual components of communicative competencies;
- 4) it was developed in order to determine the level of English-language communicative competencies, while some integral and linguistic competencies remain unconsidered;
- 5) the diagnostic technique that has been tested may undergo, if necessary, certain structural and semantic transformations with its subsequent application to different categories of respondents.

Simultaneous use of conventional and unconventional diagnostic methods allowed achieving objective results and determining their correlation. We argue that the represented empirical model of the study is effective.

5. Discussions

The results of the theoretical and empirical parts of the study revealed the results obtained by analysing the evaluations of answers to the assignments and questions of the self-reflection method (Appendix A (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kRaEVRyYa7RP1DWFcmh460LLw7t4n7T/edit?usp=sharing&oid=113132809711332840432&rtpof=true&sd=true>), Appendix B (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HN-yeSrgJx9beR0PPhUwCvqvcECsiI7d/edit?usp=sharing&oid=113132809711332840432&rtpof=true&sd=true>)). The effectiveness and efficiency of involvement a variety of programmes, platforms, Internet resources and especially social media applications in the educational process and beyond was proved. It is worth noting that in both surveyed groups there are “platforms” that will ensure growth in the near future and should be taken into account. They are able to improve the linguistic environment and strengthen communicative competences. The individual proposals to support and stimulate the acquisition of communicative competencies include:

- application of the model of the educational process which is the most adapted to the modern requirements of the linguistic environment for students during the study of foreign languages in classrooms and outside them;
- careful attitude of teachers to promoting the proportional development and acquisition of certain components of communicative competencies by students, the development of which is influenced by various social media applications, platforms, programmes, messengers, Internet resources;
- intensifying the use of interactive methods;
- promoting the search for creative ways of developing English-language communicative competencies in respondents in the process of using the latest international tools: social media applications, in particular, Facebook, TikTok, Twominute English YouTube channel, YouTube, We Chat and others.

The applied method represents the research results on determining the level of English-language communicative competencies of students using international tools — social media applications. They helped students to achieve academic success and develop their own international competitiveness (Haerazi, Utama & Hidayatullah, 2020). According to the results of the study, we divide English-language communicative competencies into five types of speech activity: listening, reading, speaking, writing, translated and untranslated annotating and abstracting. We

recognize the procedure of acquiring English-language CCCs on the personal, interpersonal and synergetic levels. At the same time, the analysis of the self-reflection method applied to the *G1* and *G2* groups of respondents covered the attitudes of some of them to digitalization and the latest socio-media tools (Mitchuk et al., 2021). The importance of the latest tools in the educational linguistic environment in previous decades is emphasized (Hymes, 1972).

In another context, the key role of communicative English-language competences is recognized, “which enable a person to act using specific language tools” (Webster-Deakin, 2019). There is no doubt that “language” interaction contributes to the development of communicative English skills and is reflected in the development of “linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic” competencies. Social media platforms share information, as well as knowledge and skills through short videos, which is playing an increasingly important educational role in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic among young people (Xu, Yan & Zhang, 2019). This includes the use, for example, of mobile applications for social networks for short videos in English. Accordingly, the acquisition of language communication competence can help to create natural parameters of communication in English for those who study it (Montaner, 2020), which is undeniable.

Facebook, Instagram, as well as WeChat and WhatsApp were social networks previously used by English teachers, as well as students (Zhao, 2019). Since 2019, especially after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the popular youth social network TikTok has become popular. It is the international version of Douyin — the Chinese social media platform with over 2 billion downloads in April 2020 against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic (Poramathikul et al., 2020). It is a short video platform that plays an event lasting up to 60 seconds with the participation of different people who share their skills, knowledge and experience (Syah, Nurjanah & Mayu, 2020). Recent research has shown that TikTok helps to provide a platform for knowledge sharing and also to promote an innovative learning that improves the motivation and interest of young people (Chakuzira & Kadyamatimba, 2017).

Based on the unique features of TikTok and its popularity among Z-generations, researchers believe that TikTok can be considered as a language tool for assessing student learning outcomes, and can also be used as an extracurricular language learning tool, motivating students to focus on their communicative learning of English (Xiong & Zhou, 2018). We do not completely agree here, because the results of our study prove the effectiveness and efficiency of the synergy of different applications. The maximum involvement of their diversity in the linguistic process will contribute to a better and faster acquisition of the CCCs. To help make full use of one of the language learning tools, researchers offer an innovative educational guide on using TikTok to support English teachers and those learning English orally in the current situation of distance learning (Liu et al., 2020).

The objectives of the English communication course consist of two parts:

- 1) these are paper assignments for reflection designed for students of each year of study;
- 2) self-recorded video presentations in English by students after each year of study. References to assignments in TikTok should be shared in the group’s mobile chat group (e.g. WhatsApp or WeChat) (Nabilah et al., 2021).

The selection is based on the principles of communicativeness, reasonability of implementing platforms and other means of language learning in order to achieve the expected learning outcome (Scheerens, van der Werf & de Boer, 2020). A unique opportunity is formed to test the acquired language skills and competencies to meet the challenge of time. This is another real opportunity to promote the growth of self-esteem, followed by a chance to manifest at the job place soon (Britchenko et al., 2018). Undergraduate students do this to broaden their horizons, as well as improve their competence in communicating in English for future development in today’s digital world with Web-2.0 in the context of Industry 4.0 (Dayu, 2018).

According to previous related research in this field (Samsin et al., 2021), the importance of effective oral English communication skills plays a crucial role in the international competitive competence of students. The student should not be perceived only as a passive recipient of knowledge and skills, acting as a listener (Sabat 2020). The student is open to acquiring knowledge using various forms of educational process and communication aids (Ndetei et al., 2019). As a result, the information obtained is longer kept in mind (Kushmar & Kolot, 2019). With the advent of social media in English education, Facebook is the most popular resource which integrates short videos recorded for learning English (Bolton, Botha & Bacon-Shone, 2017).

Previous research conducted by several scholars at universities has suggested that using Facebook in education can help increase students’ English proficiency at different years of study, including four areas: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. This increases students’ confidence and desire to use English as a communication tool in the online community (Aizawa et al., 2020). Besides, it was also found that most students show a positive attitude towards other well-known social networking programmes such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, as well as WeChat

and Weiblog made in China. It is important to use these programmes for social networks in English, to acquire communicative competencies. According to Scheerens, van der Werf and de Boer (2020), the importance of digitalization is that it provides educational dialogue, maintains the flexibility of the structure of knowledge and contributes to the prospects of linguistic education in the context of modern challenges.

6. Conclusions

The research is topical because of the need to find the latest digital tools that contribute to the acquisition of specialized English-language CCCs when used in the educational linguistic environment. This is extremely important for communication in English and the use of certain English-language communicative competences both in education, in everyday life and job search. The conducted research proved the effectiveness and persuasiveness of the use of social media applications TikTok, Facebook, YouTube and others. Their involvement in the educational linguistic environment provides higher levels (10/4) of English-language CCCs at the personal, interpersonal and synergetic levels.

The results of the study allowed identifying the peculiarities of the development and the level of English-language communicative competencies. To avoid erroneous judgments, the conventional and non-conventional methods and the method of self-reflection were applied to the respondents. Some differences in the development of communicative competencies in *G1*, *G2* students while studying foreign languages were identified. In general, most students demonstrated the medium and sufficient levels of communicative competencies quite confidently, which testified to the usefulness and effectiveness of platforms, programmes, social media applications used. We obtained our own conclusions about the usefulness of using conventional and non-conventional methods in the acquisition of English-language communicative competencies by the respondents. The developed author's diagnostic methods allowed confirming the scientific assumption about the need to use various platforms, programmes, Internet resources, and especially social and media applications that correlate with the acquired CCCs. The usefulness of the study is in the practical significance of the results and opportunities for further scientific research.

There are still several promising research objectives that require further scientific research and may be of interest to linguists. In particular, the represented evaluation methods and self-reflection models can be successfully applied to other related linguistic systems. Author's methods can be adapted in the process of other empirical research on the algorithm of development of pre-determined components of English-language communicative competencies. Promising further research can be initiated in the field of identifying universal and professionally oriented tactics for the development of English-language communicative competencies in linguistic activities in the context of digitalization.

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