

Digital Competence Assessment Survey for Language Teaching During the Pandemic

An annex to the analytical report “Digital Competences in Language Education: Teachers' Perspectives, Employers' Expectations, and Policy Reflections”

Authors

Maria Didkovsky, Maria Khuzina, Evgenia Kutergina, Mariam Reyhani and Daria Zhukova

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Summary

In this report, we present the design and results of the “Digital Competence Assessment Survey for Language Teaching During the Pandemic”. The results of the survey provide the teacher’s perspective on the digital competences in language learning in the pandemic context. We are launching the Survey for the second time in an almost unamended form in order to analyze how the situation has changed due to the pandemic challenges.

This document is an annex to an analytical report “Digital Competences in Language Education: Teachers' Perspectives, Employers' Expectations, and Policy Reflections” <https://www.dc4lt.eu/report/>

Similar to the original survey, launched in 2019, the pandemic survey was designed to answer the five questions below:

- What instructional models do language teachers use in computer-supported language learning?
- What attitude do language teachers have towards the use of digital technologies?
- How do language teachers assess their digital competence level?
- How satisfied are language teachers with their level of digital competences, and what are their training needs?
- What do language teachers think of the institutional aid in personal and professional development towards digital competences?

In the current survey, we asked the respondents to identify their most widely used instructional methods and methodologies from March 2020.

1. Survey Methodology

The survey was designed for two main target groups:

- Language teachers
- Administrators (both administrators and policymakers working in the area of language learning)

The survey included 53 questions structured in several topics (Table 1). Some questions were formulated differently for the addressed respondents of the two target groups (topics 2-7, Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of the survey questions

Topics	Question codes	
	Teachers	Administrators
1. Personal and Professional Background	Q0, Q1, Q2, Q7, Q16-20	
2. Level of Teaching	Q3, Q4	Adm Q4a,b
3. Language Learning Pedagogical Approach	Q5a-j, Q5	Adm Q5a,b
4. Attitude towards digital tech in language teaching	Q6a-c	Adm Q6a-c
5. Competencies in digital language teaching	Q7, Q8, Q9	Adm Q7, Adm Q8a,b, Adm Q9
6. Digital competencies training & required improvement	Q10, Q11, Q11a, Q12	Adm Q10, Adm Q11, Adm Q11a, Adm Q12
7. Institutional support for enhancing digital competencies	Q13, Q14, Q15, Q15a	Q13, Q14, Adm Q14

The data were collected from July 2021 until December 2022. The gained data were analyzed using R-programming software. The descriptive statistics were used for data analysis.

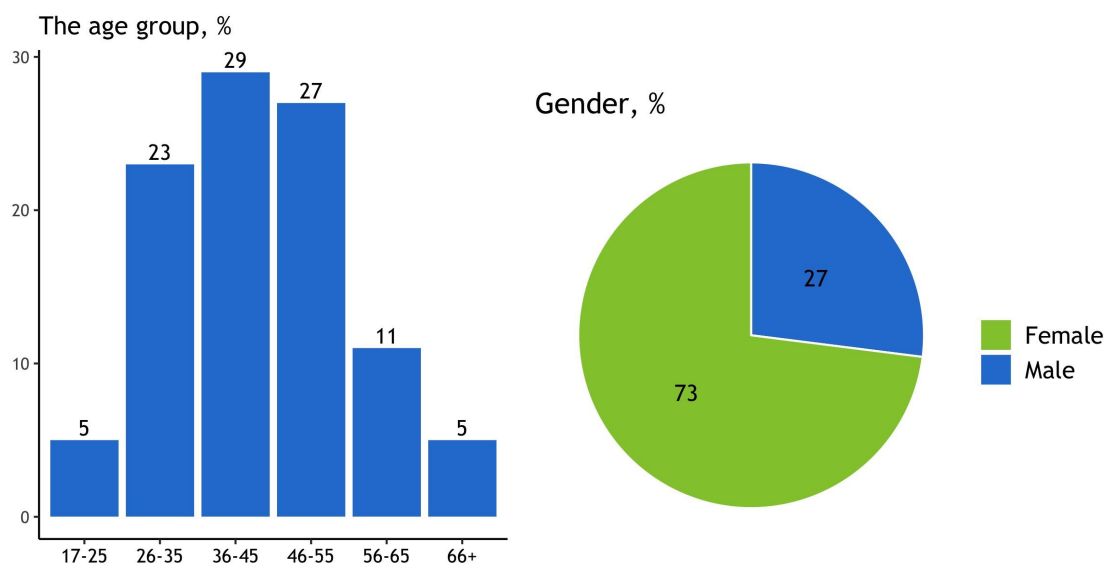
The survey was completed by a total of 202 respondents (19 of whom did not answer all the questions included). Because the majority of the respondents (77%) belong to the language teacher target group, quantitative analysis of the data was done for this group of respondents. Data from the second target group of respondents (administration staff members and policymakers), are subject to interpretation using the qualitative data analysis methods (implying a more detailed and in-depth evaluation of the answers given by each individual respondent).

The following section retains the division of the survey results based on different categories of respondents. Section 2 presents the results for language teachers, while Section 3 presents the results for administrators and policymakers.

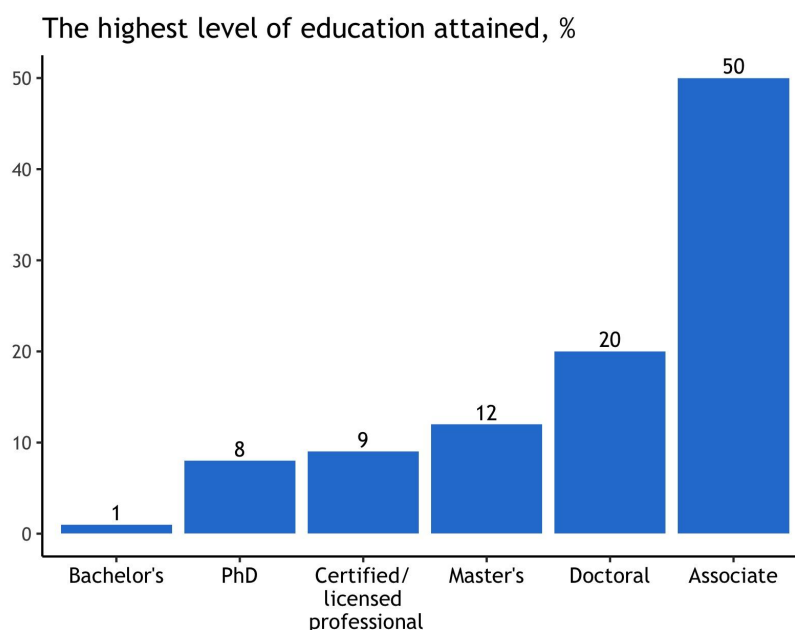
2. Survey Results for Language Teachers

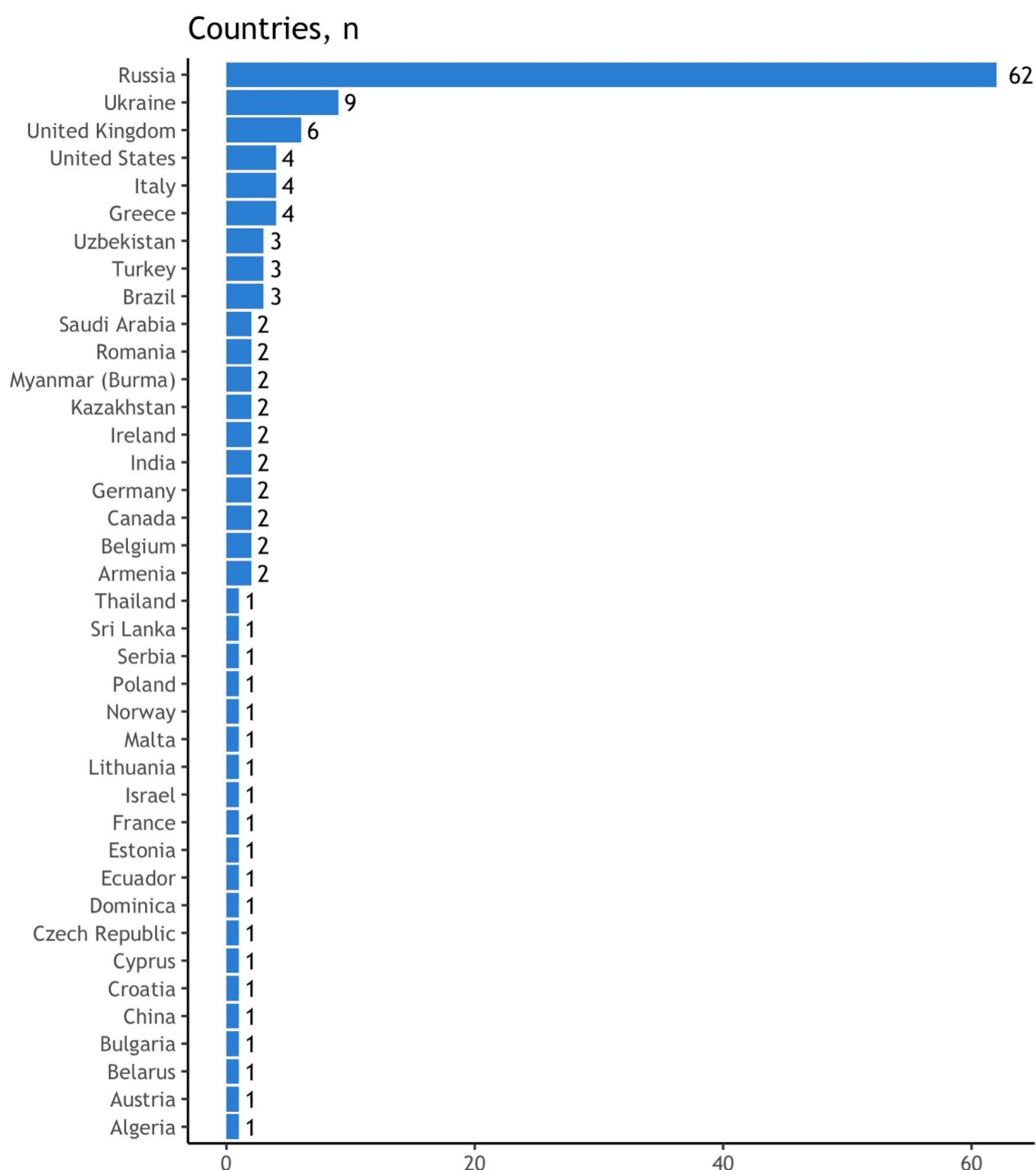
Personal and Professional Background

The general characteristics of the respondents are as follows. The number of participants who identified themselves as language teachers is N=156 (19 of whom did not complete the survey in full). The majority of the teaching staff surveyed (73%) are female and come from the 26 to 35 (23%), 36 to 45 (29%), and 46 to 55 (27%) age groups. The majority of the teaching staff surveyed (50%) have indicated an Associate degree as their highest level of education attained. Another significant cohort of the respondents (20%) have Doctoral-level (DSc) education.



The respondents' employing organizations are located in a total of 39 countries. 17% (n=27) were employed from countries with developed market economies, including from 16 EU countries. The majority of the respondents (45%) were employed in Russia (n=62).





Q17 Please select your number of years in service

The majority of the teaching staff surveyed (30%) have been in the profession for 11 to 20 years. The second-largest cohort of the respondents (24%) have been teaching for 6 to 10 years. Close to the latter, with 22% of the respondents, is the group with 21 to 30 years in service.

The respondents with 5 or fewer years in service represented 10%. And the respondents with more than 30 years in service – 14%.

Q0 Please select the type of institution you work at

The majority of the teaching staff surveyed (74%) work at a university. A smaller but still sizable group of the respondents (13%) work at a secondary, middle, or primary school. Other

respondents represent colleges (3%), lifelong learning and distant/online education institutions (2%), vocational educational institutions (2%), or are self-employed (6%).

Level of Teaching

In this part of the survey, we asked language teachers about the cohort of students they teach (in respect to their language acquisition), and about the instructional models (f2f, blended, online) the teachers tend to use in their everyday practice.

Q3 Please choose the cohort of students you teach

In language learning, people usually refer to the following standard cohorts:

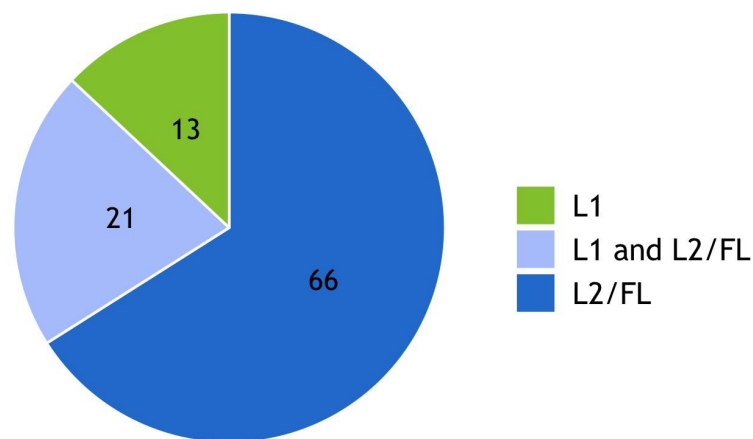
L1 = first language or mother tongue

L2 = refers to any language learned after L1 (or L1s)

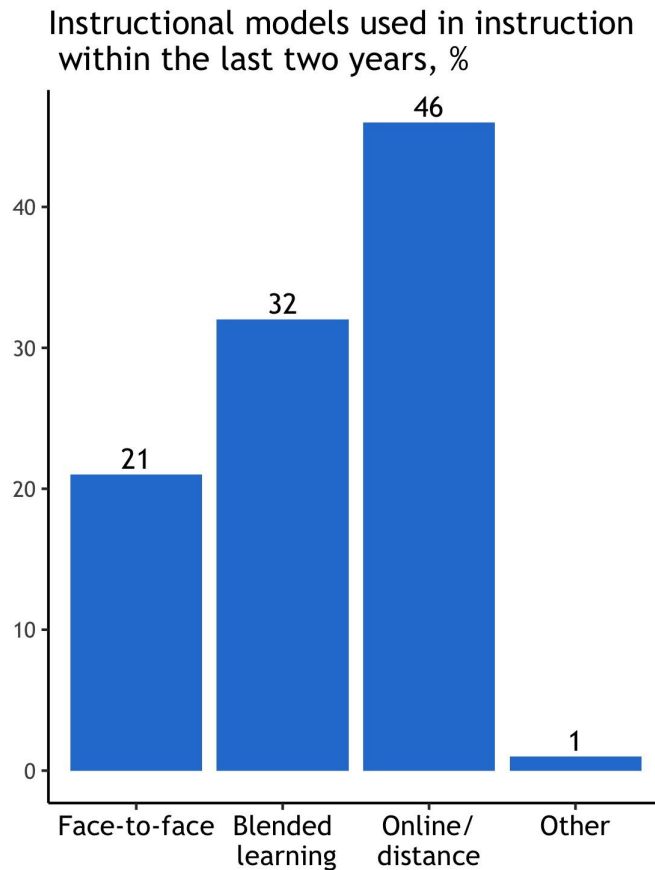
FL = foreign language

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA) a distinction is often made between “second language” (L2) and “foreign language” (FL) acquisition. According to Ellis (2008), in the case of second language acquisition, the language plays an institutional and social role in the community (i.e., it functions as a recognized means of communication among members who speak some other language as their mother tongue). For example, English as L2 is learned in the United States or the United Kingdom. In contrast, foreign language learning takes place in settings where the language plays no major role in the community and is primarily learned only in the classroom. Examples of FL learning are English learned in France or Japan.

Cohort of students, %



The majority of the teaching staff surveyed (66%) are L2/FL teachers. Almost a quarter of the participants (21%) teach both L1 and L2/FL cohorts. And only 13% of the respondents teach L1.

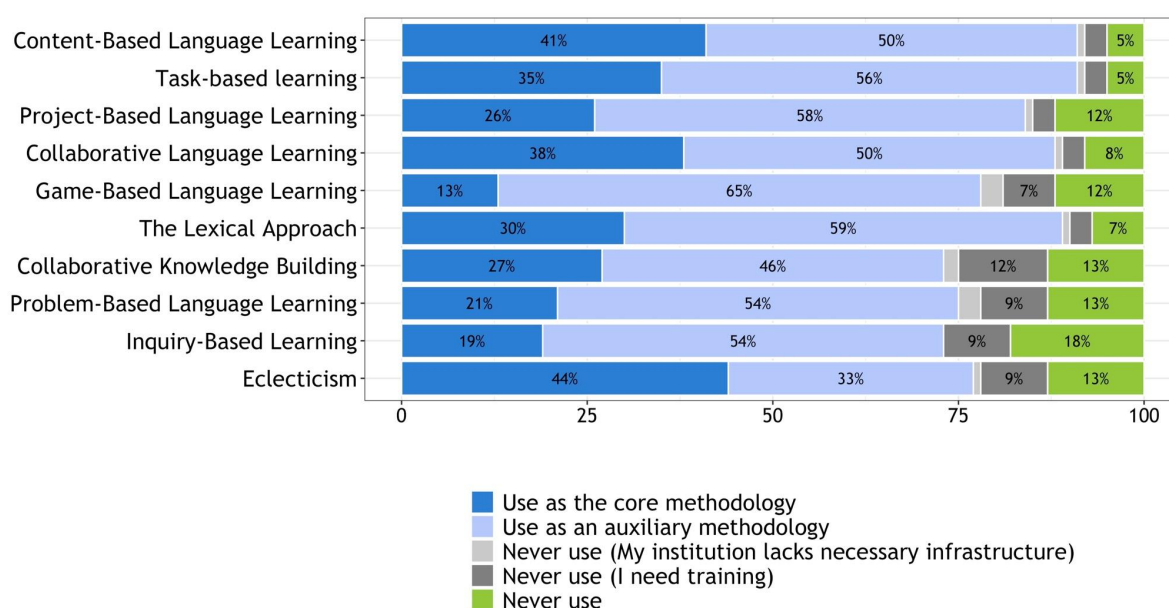


The majority (46%) of the teaching staff who participated in the survey train their students online/remotely. Almost a third (32%) of the respondents in this category practice the blended learning model of instruction. Less than a quarter of this category's respondents use the face-to-face instructional model.

Language Learning Instructional Methods

In this part of the survey, we evaluated the instructional methods that language teachers use in their daily practice. The survey question included 10 instructional methods most commonly used in computer-assisted language teaching (see plot for Q5). The response options included two positive alternatives, formulated as follows: "Use as the core methodology" and "Use as an auxiliary methodology". The response options also included three alternatives for not using instructional methods because of the three most common reasons: lack of infrastructure, irrelevance to the teaching goals, and need for training on using the instructional model.

Q5 Please indicate all methods and methodologies you have used in your instructional design within the last two years



Emerging as popular were such methods and methodologies as:

- Content-based language learning (41% core and 50% auxiliary);
- Task-based learning (35% core and 56% auxiliary);
- Project-based language learning (26% core and 58% auxiliary);
- Collaborative language learning (38% core and 50% auxiliary);
- The Lexical Approach (30% core and 59% auxiliary).

Nevertheless, the majority of respondents have indicated that they use all the included educational technologies in their professional practice. Most frequently, the respondents selected inquiry-based learning and collaborative knowledge building as the methods they use the least.

Eclecticism and content-based learning are the most used core language learning methodologies. Game-based learning and The Lexical Approach are the most used auxiliary language learning methodologies.

The lack of infrastructure has been given as the main reason for not using the methods:

- Problem-based language learning (3%);
- Game-based language learning (3%);
- Collaborative Knowledge Building (2%).

The following methodologies are applied significantly less often than others:

- Game-based language learning;
- Collaborative knowledge building;
- Problem-based language learning;
- Inquiry-based language learning.

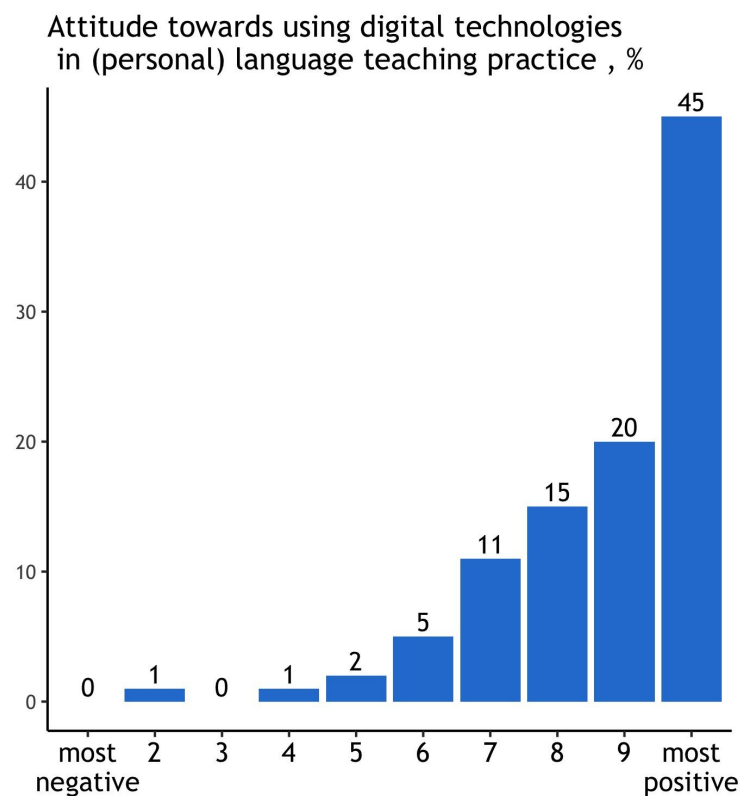
The methodologies that were most often marked with “Never use (I need training)” are:

- Collaborative knowledge building (12%);
- Eclecticism (9%);
- Inquiry-based language learning (9%);
- Problem-based language learning (9%);
- Game-based language learning (7%).

Attitude Towards Digital Technologies in Language Teaching

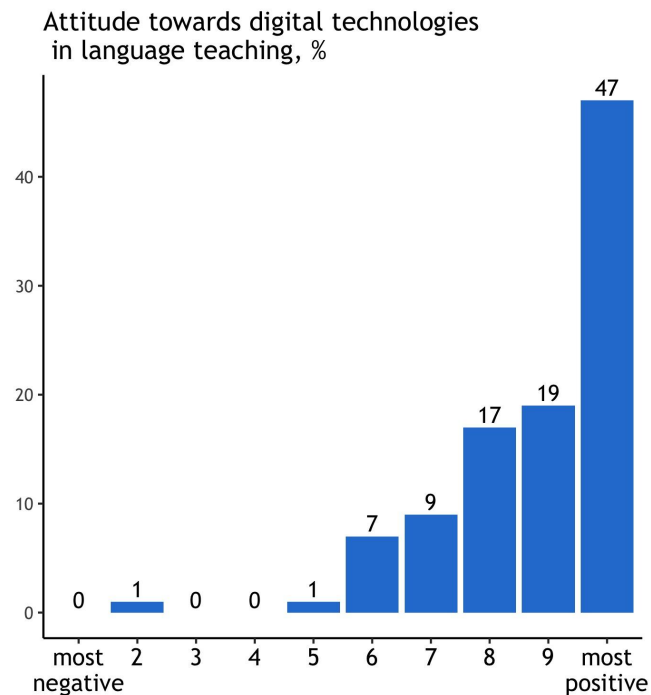
This section focused on the attitude of the teachers towards using digital technologies in their personal language teaching practice, as opposed to their general attitude towards digital technologies in language teaching.

Q6a Your attitude towards using digital technologies in your (personal) language-teaching practice



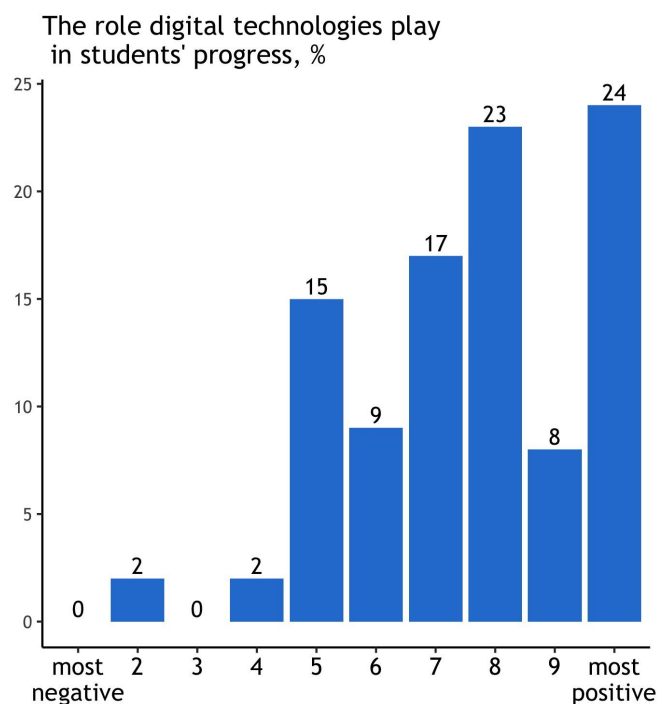
The absolute majority (67 respondents) of the teaching staff surveyed relate positively to using digital technologies in their (personal) language-teaching practice. Out of the total of 156 participants, 80% rated the use of digital technologies in their personal practice as overall positive (8, 9, or 10 on a scale from 1 “negative” to 10 “positive”).

Q6b Your attitude towards digital technologies in language teaching



The absolute majority of the teaching staff surveyed expressed a positive attitude towards digital technologies in language teaching. Out of the total of 156 participants, 83% rated the use of digital technologies in general language teaching practice as overall positive (8, 9, or 10 on a scale from 1 “negative” to 10 “positive”).

Q6c The role digital technologies play in your students' progress



Interestingly enough, in general the respondents rated the role of digital technologies in the academic performance of their students, based on their personal language teaching experience, as less positive than their overall attitude to digital technologies in language teaching or to using digital technologies in their (personal) language-teaching practice. The majority of the teaching staff surveyed have described the role digital technologies play in their students' progress in their personal teaching practice, as very significant, yet many of the respondents considered it only somewhat significant.

Out of the total of 156 participants, 55% rated the role of digital technologies in their personal practice as very positive (8, 9, or 10 on a scale from 1 "negative" to 10 "positive"), while 43% rated it as somewhat positive (4, 5, 6 or 7 on a scale from 1 "negative" to 10 "positive").

Competencies in Digital Language Teaching

This section presents the results of the language teachers' self-assessed competencies in digital language teaching and their estimated competencies in digital language teaching. We introduced six levels of digital language teaching competence (Table 2).

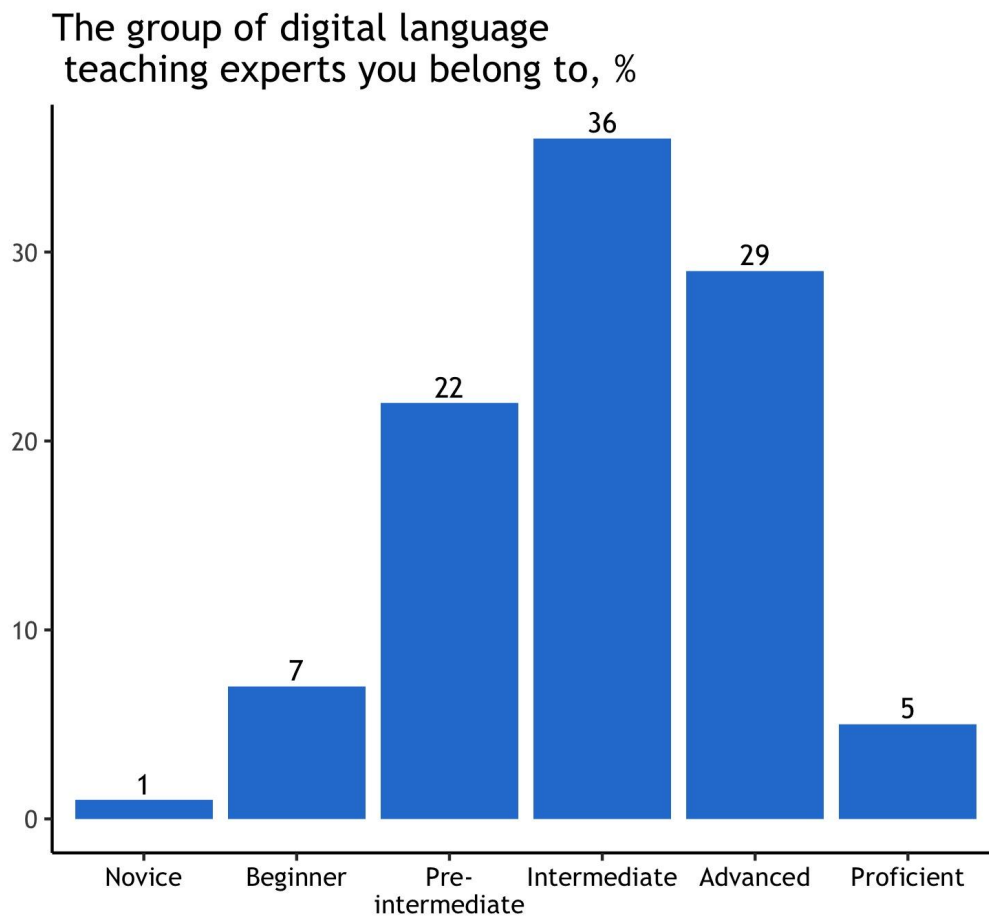
Table 2. Levels of digital language teaching competence

Level Description

Novice	I have very limited experience applying digital tools in language teaching. I usually use basic software, i.e., word processing, PowerPoint, CDs, etc., in order to prepare language learning materials, and I can find authentic material (articles, songs, etc.) for my language lessons and organise them in logically ordered digital folders.
Beginner	I know some basics for the most common application of digital technologies for language teaching, i.e., online dictionaries, voice recording tools, online flashcards, forums, etc. I also know how to use specific search engines in order to find appropriate language teaching material on the internet.
Pre-intermediate	I use the digital technologies available to me in language teaching, and I know how to choose the most relevant digital tools for every teaching need, i.e., overhead projectors for delivering grammar presentations, online dictionaries to support writing assignments, voice recording tools to practice language pronunciation and speaking skills, online flashcards to practice/learn vocabulary, forums to practice writing skills, etc.
Intermediate	I am capable of using technically specific tools and devices, i.e., interactive whiteboards (IWBs), software for creating media, audio/video files and images, main uses of digital equipment, mobile devices, software for language learning, etc. I also understand how to implement digital technologies in language teaching using the right teaching methodology for every language need, i.e., collaborative tools like Padlet to enhance writing skills, video editing tools like ToonDoo to enhance oral and writing skills, etc. I also try to enrich the variety of digital tools that I use in my language lessons and to introduce innovative teaching methodologies.

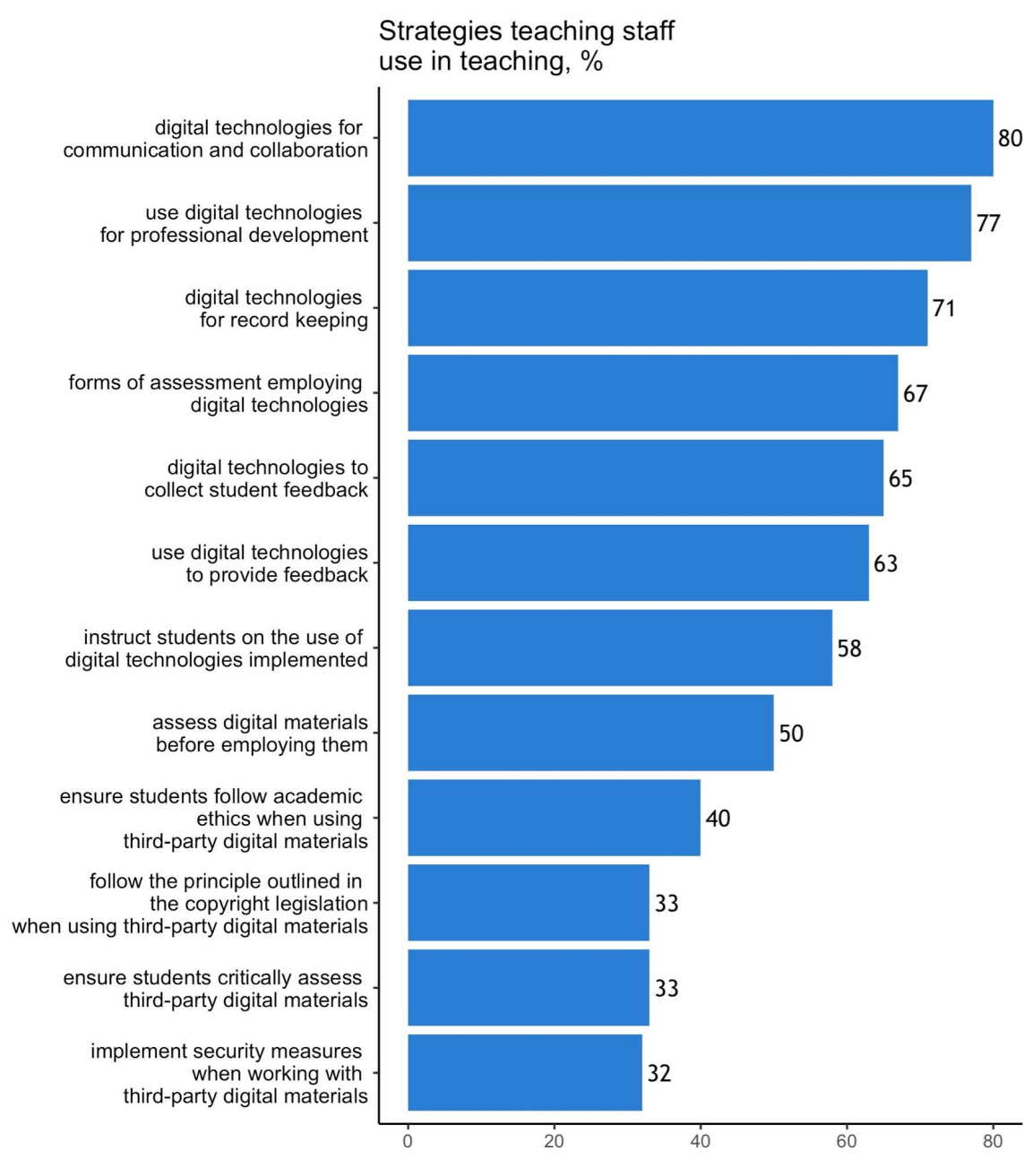
Advanced	I feel confident using more advanced digital technologies, i.e., learning management systems (LMS), web 2.0 tools, mobile learning devices and applications for language learning, etc. following the right language teaching methodology, e.g., I can independently create a blended LMS-based module on Moodle, Canvas, edX, etc. and train my students and colleagues to use the proposed technology.
Proficient	I am an expert in digital technologies for language learning. I participate in the development of digital technology-rich language learning programs and online courses. I instruct peer language teachers on the use of digital tools and am involved in digital language teaching policymaking.

Q7 Please indicate the group of digital language teaching experts you believe you belong to



The majority of the teaching staff surveyed (36%) identify themselves as belonging to the Intermediate group of digital language teaching experts. The second-largest group of respondents (29%) identify their digital language teaching expertise as that of the Advanced level, while the third-biggest percentage (22%) consider themselves as belonging to the Pre-Intermediate group. Only 5% describe themselves as Proficient digital language teaching experts.

Q8 Please indicate which of the following strategies you use in teaching



The majority of the teaching staff surveyed confirmed that they use digital technologies for communication and collaboration (80%), professional development (77%), and record keeping (71%) in their teaching practice. 67% of the respondents stated that they use forms of assessment employing digital technologies. At the same time, the strategies, such as implementing information security measures, ensuring students critically assess third-party digital materials, tools and websites, or following relevant copyright legislation, emerged as being used on the least regular basis.

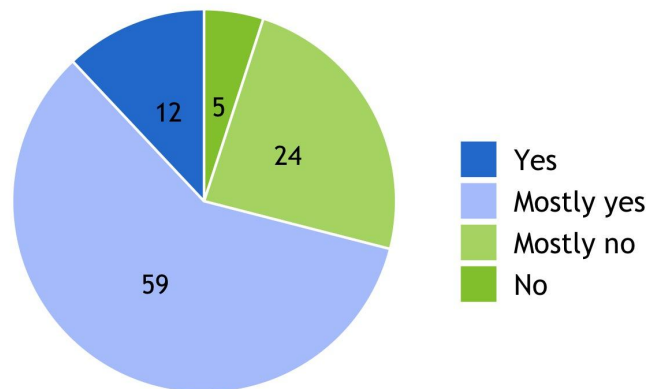
Digital Competencies Training and Required Improvement

This section considers language teachers' digital competencies training expectations. The majority of the teaching staff surveyed (71%) are satisfied with their current level of digital

language teaching expertise. The vast majority of the teaching staff surveyed (90%) believe that they can improve their digital language teaching expertise by participating in an external digital literacy training program.

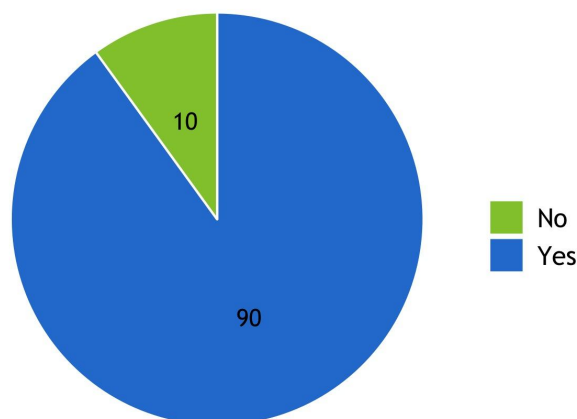
Q9 Are you satisfied with your current level of digital expertise?

Satisfaction with
digital language teaching expertise, %

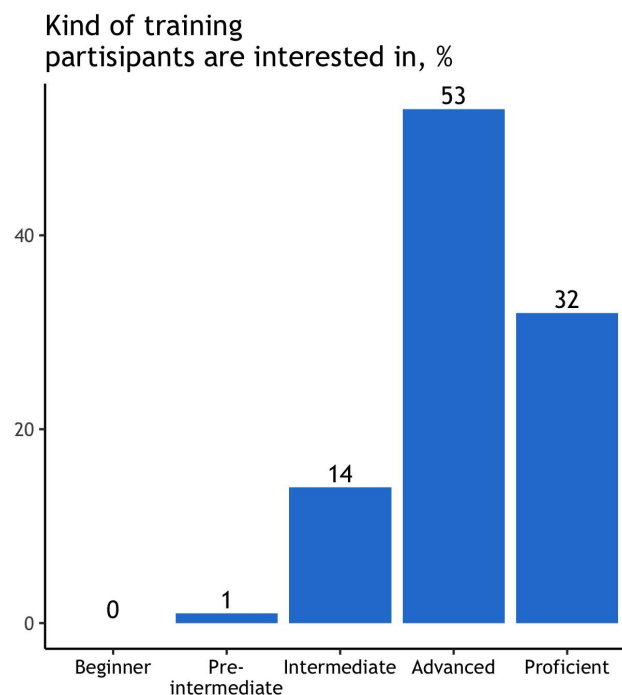


Q10 Do you feel you could improve your digital language teaching expertise?

The need to participate in
an external digital literacy training program, %

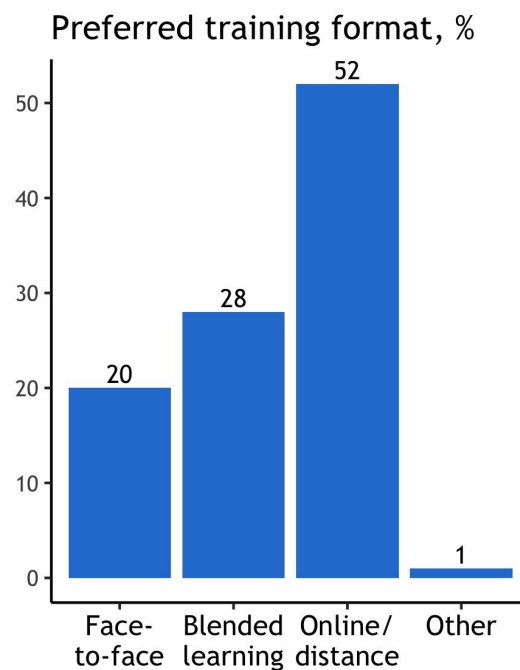


Q11 What kind of training would you be interested in?



Among those who would like to improve their digital language teaching expertise by participating in an external digital literacy training program, a majority (85%) are interested in high-level training.

Q12 Please indicate the preferred training format

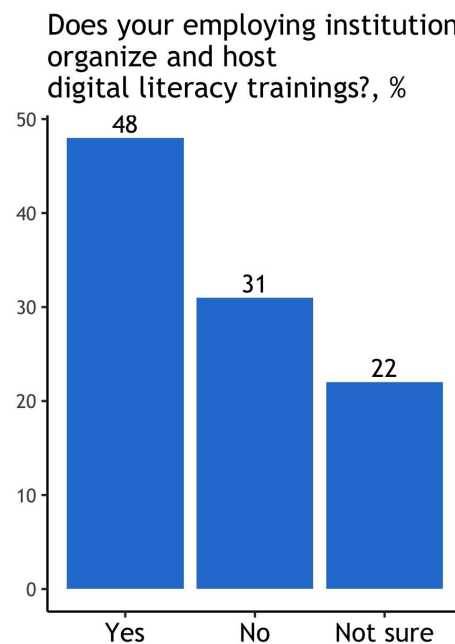


Among those who would like to improve their digital language teaching expertise by participating in an external digital literacy training program, the vast majority prefer the online (52%) and blended learning (28%) training formats (an overall preference for online education can thus be observed).

Institutional Support for Enhancing Digital Competencies

This section presents the results on the availability and frequency of the digital literacy training provided by the respondents' employers. The teachers' opinion on the efficiency of such training for them personally is also presented below.

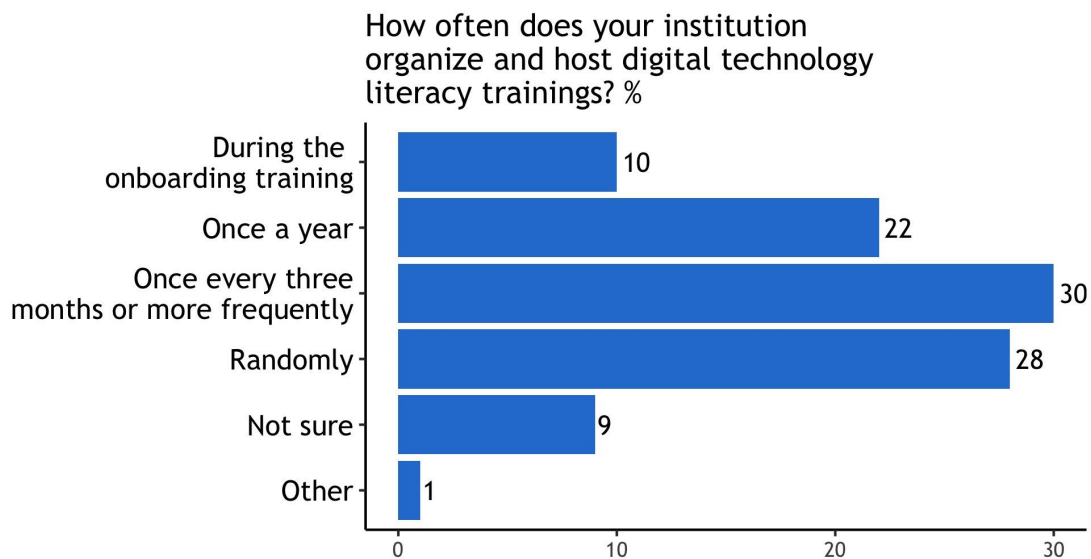
Q13 Does your employing institution organize and host digital literacy training?



Employing institutions of approximately half of the teaching staff surveyed organize digital literacy training (48%). However, this is not the case for over a quarter of the teaching staff surveyed, who do not have access to this kind of training in their workplace (31%).

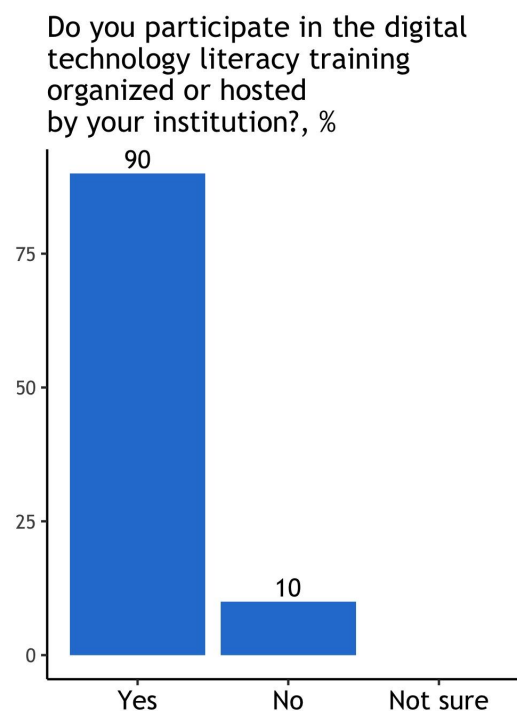
Questions Q14, Q15a were shown only to the participants who answered “yes” to question Q11 – that their employing institution organizes and hosts digital literacy training.

Q14 How often does your institution organize and host digital technology literacy training sessions?

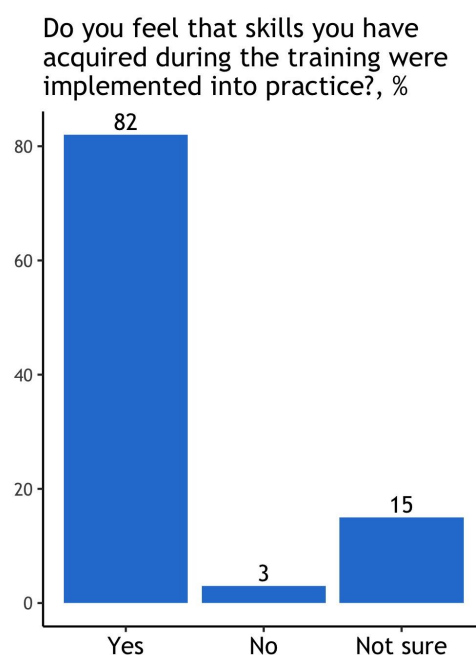


Of the respondents who stated that their employing institutions organize digital literacy training, half state that these training sessions occur on a very rare and non-systematic basis (randomly: 28%, once a year: 22%). Only 30% of the respondents stated that their institutions organize training frequently.

Q15 Do you participate in the digital technology literacy training organized or hosted by your institution?



Q15a Do you feel that the knowledge and skills you have acquired during the training offered by your organization were implemented into your everyday practice?



The majority of the teaching staff surveyed describe the training sessions held at their employing organizations as quite effective, observing that they do make use of the skills obtained in their teaching practice (82%).

3. Survey Results for the Administrators

In total, 13 administrators have participated in the survey. Due to the insufficient number of respondents representing this target group, it is not possible to provide quantitative analysis of the data. However, we present an overview of the results in this section. Generally, administrative staff members expressed very similar opinions on the topics of the survey.

Personal and Professional Background

The surveyed administrative staff were employed in the following countries: Russia, Germany, the USA, Georgia, and Poland. Nearly all respondents in this group are employed at universities (n=11); two respondents work at colleges.

Language Learning Instructional Models and Methods

In order to find out the language learning instructional models the administrative staff observe, we asked the following question:

Please indicate all instructional models that the teaching staff you supervise, guide, educate:

(Adm Q4a) is expected to use;

(Adm Q4b) is actually using in their practice.

In general, the expectations of the administrative staff for the instructional models employed by teachers match the models that are actually applied by the teachers.

Considering your position, please indicate all methodologies that the teaching staff you supervise, guide, educate:

(Adm 5a) is expected to use;

(Adm Q5b) is actually using in their instructional design.

The general opinion of the surveyed administrative staff does not contradict that of the teacher respondents. According to the administrators, during the pandemic (since March 2020) the teachers they supervise have mostly relied on task-based learning, collaborative language learning, eclecticism, and content-based language learning as either core or auxiliary methods. Importantly, the administrators' expectations for the methodologies applied during the pandemic (since March 2020) match the models that are actually applied by the teachers.

Attitude Towards Digital Technology in Language Teaching

The administrators have evaluated teachers' attitude towards using digital technologies in their language teaching practice as moderate or high, with the majority ranking it at 7-10 (on a scale from 1 to 10).

The administrators have also evaluated the role of digital technologies in improving students' academic performance as high, with only one respondent ranking it at 3 (on a scale from 1 to 10).

Competencies in digital language teaching

Both the administrative staff respondents that are satisfied with the competence level of digital language teaching and those dissatisfied agree that teachers could improve their digital teaching competencies by participating in Intermediate and Advanced digital literacy training programs.

Digital Competencies Training and Required Improvement

According to the administrators, teaching staff could benefit from additional training regardless of their current competence level (Novice, Beginner, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Advanced, or Proficient). The administrative staff respondents name online and blended learning as preferred training techniques, which parallels the tendency we have earlier identified in the teachers' responses.

Institutional Support for Enhancing Digital Competencies and Aid for Personal Development Towards Digital Competencies

The majority of surveyed administrative staff (8 out of 12) noted that their employing institutions organize and host digital literacy training sessions; two participants stated the opposite, and two more chose "Not sure." Five out of eight respondents stated that such training sessions are held once every three months or more often. Moreover, five out of eight respondents stated that the knowledge and skills acquired by teachers during such programs were implemented in their daily practice; another three were uncertain of the answer.