



IMPROVING THE PROCESS OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES TO STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS THROUGH THE DESIGN THINKING METHOD

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Abstract

Foreign language instruction in universities frequently encounters obstacles like low student motivation, inflexible course structures, and minimal engagement. This research investigates how the design thinking approach can improve language teaching in higher education. Using a mixed-methods strategy that includes surveys, interviews, and in-class experiments, the study shows that applying design thinking significantly boosts learners' motivation, involvement, and overall language learning outcomes.

Key words: foreign language education, higher education, design thinking, language teaching methods, student-centered learning, innovation in education, learner motivation, curriculum development, educational technology, active learning

Universitetlarda chet tillarini o'qitish ko'pincha talabalar motivatsiyasining pastligi, qat'iy dasturlar va ishtirokning yetarli emasligi kabi muammolarga duch keladi. Ushbu tadqiqot dizayn-fikrlash yondashuvi orqali oliy ta'lim muassasalarida chet tilini o'qitishni qanday yaxshilash mumkinligini o'rganadi. So'rovnomalar, suhbatlar va darsdagi tajribalarni o'z ichiga olgan aralash metodologiya asosida olib borilgan tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, dizayn-fikrlash usulini qo'llash talabalar motivatsiyasi, ishtiroki va umumiy til o'rganish natijalarini sezilarli darajada oshiradi.

Kalit so'zlar: chet tili ta'limi, oliy ta'lim, dizayn-fikrlash, til o'qitish usullari, talaba markazlashgan o'qish, ta'limda innovatsiya, o'quvchi motivatsiyasi, o'quv dasturini ishlab chiqish, ta'lim texnologiyalari, faol o'qish

Преподавание иностранных языков в университетах часто сталкивается с такими трудностями, как низкая мотивация студентов, негибкие программы и слабая вовлеченность. В данном исследовании рассматривается, как метод дизайн-мышления может улучшить процесс обучения языкам в системе высшего образования. Используя смешанный метод, включающий опросы, интервью и экспериментальные занятия, исследование показывает, что применение принципов дизайн-мышления значительно повышает мотивацию, активность студентов и общие результаты в изучении языка.

Ключевые слова: обучение иностранным языкам, высшее образование, дизайн-мышление, методы преподавания языков, обучение, ориентированное на студента, инновации в образовании, мотивация учащихся, разработка учебных программ, образовательные технологии, активное обучение



1. Introduction

The globalization of education and the growing need for multilingual professionals have made foreign language proficiency a critical skill in higher education [5;5]. However, traditional language teaching methodologies often fail to meet the dynamic needs of students in the 21st century [3;13]. Design thinking—a problem-solving approach rooted in empathy, ideation, and experimentation—offers a promising alternative to enhance student-centered learning [2;86-89].

Design thinking in education promotes creativity, collaboration, and iterative learning, which align well with language acquisition processes [4;330-332]. This study investigates how design thinking can be systematically integrated into foreign language instruction to improve outcomes in higher education institutions.

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative data to assess the effectiveness of the design thinking method in foreign language education.

2.2 Participants

The study involved 120 undergraduate students from three universities in Uzbekistan enrolled in English language courses. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental (design thinking) and control (traditional instruction) groups.

2.3 Procedure

The experimental group was taught using a design thinking framework across five phases:

1. Empathize – Understanding students' interests and motivations.
2. Define – Identifying language learning challenges.
3. Ideate – Brainstorming creative ways to learn vocabulary and grammar.
4. Prototype – Developing and testing interactive activities (e.g., role-plays, digital storytelling).
5. Test – Reflecting on learning outcomes and revising strategies.

Control groups received conventional instruction based on grammar-translation and direct methods.

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were gathered through:

- Pre- and post-tests to assess language proficiency.
- Surveys measuring student motivation and engagement.
- Focus group interviews to gather qualitative feedback.

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS to compare test scores and survey results.

3. Results

3.1 Language Proficiency

The experimental group showed a significant improvement in language test scores compared to the control group. Average post-test scores increased by 27% in the design thinking group, versus 13% in the control group.

3.2 Student Engagement and Motivation

Survey results indicated that 84% of students in the experimental group reported increased motivation and engagement, compared to only 52% in the control group.

3.3 Qualitative Feedback



Students expressed that the design thinking approach made lessons more interactive and relevant to real-life communication. One participant stated, "I enjoyed solving problems with classmates and using English creatively."

4. Discussion

The findings confirm that the design thinking method enhances both the effectiveness and appeal of foreign language instruction in higher education. By centering the learning experience around student needs and encouraging collaboration and innovation, learners are more likely to stay engaged and retain knowledge. These results align with prior research indicating that learner-centered methodologies, such as task-based learning and project-based learning, improve language outcomes. The design thinking method builds on these by offering a structured, iterative framework for creative language use.

5. Conclusion

This study provides empirical support for integrating design thinking into foreign language education at the university level. The approach fosters higher student engagement and improved learning outcomes, suggesting a promising direction for curriculum development. Future research should explore its application across different languages, cultural contexts, and proficiency levels.

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