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DIGITAL ASSESSMENT AND B2 LEXICAL COMPETENCE IN EFL CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the application of digital assessment tools in evaluating and enhancing B2-level lexical competence among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners in Uzbekistan. As higher education shifts toward digitized pedagogical frameworks, assessing vocabulary depth, collocation precision, and contextual usage through digital platforms presents both opportunities and methodological challenges. The study examines formative and summative digital assessment methods, analyzing their impact on learner engagement, data accuracy, and vocabulary acquisition. The findings highlight how automated diagnostic feedback and interactive digital task designs contribute significantly to solidifying B2 lexical mastery.

Keywords

digital assessment, B2 lexical competence, EFL, vocabulary acquisition, educational technology, CEFR, language assessment, Uzbekistan.

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of foreign language education in Uzbekistan, the alignment of instructional practices with international standards, specifically the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), has become a central priority. Achieving a B2 level of lexical competence represents a crucial milestone for university students, as it signifies independent language user status. At this level, learners are expected to possess a varied vocabulary that extends beyond basic concrete concepts to include abstract terminology, idiomatic expressions, topic-specific jargon, and nuanced collocations.

However, traditional paper-based methods of measuring vocabulary often fall short of capturing the multidimensional nature of lexical knowledge. Standard multiple-choice tests typically measure passive lexical recognition rather than active, contextualized production or depth of knowledge. The rapid integration of digital assessment tools ranging from Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Moodle and Canvas to specialized platforms such as Quizlet, Kahoot, and automated writing evaluation (AWE) engines offers innovative avenues for dynamic assessment. Digital assessment allows educators to measure not only whether a student knows a word, but how quickly they retrieve it, how accurately they use it in novel contexts, and how effectively they construct complex syntactic structures around it.

Despite the growing prevalence of educational technology in Uzbekistan's higher education institutions, there remains a critical need to examine the pedagogical efficacy of digital tools specifically tailored to measuring B2 lexical targets. This article addresses this gap by investigating digital assessment strategies, evaluating their diagnostic precision, and discussing their role in developing B2 lexical competence.

MAIN TEXT

Defining B2 Lexical Competence in EFL Contexts. Lexical competence involves both breadth (the total number of words known) and depth (how well those words are understood and used) [1]. According to the

CEFR descriptor guidelines, a learner at the B2 level:

-possesses a broad lexical repertoire allowing for detailed descriptions and complex arguments.

-demonstrates good control of vocabulary, though minor slip-ups may occur without hindering communication.

-shows an ability to vary phrasing to avoid frequent repetition.

-appropriately uses complex collocations, phrasal verbs, and context-dependent discourse markers [3].

Transitioning from B1 to B2 requires moving from high-frequency general English words to mid-frequency academic and specialized vocabulary (e.g., words found in the Academic Word List). Assessing this transition demands tools capable of evaluating register, connotation, and collocational precision [2].

Methodological Approaches to Digital Lexical Assessment

Digital assessment alters how lexical knowledge is tested by introducing interactive formats, automated scoring, and real-time data collection. Key digital assessment frameworks applied at the B2 level include:

A. Diagnostic and Computer-Adaptive Testing (CAT)

Computer-adaptive tests adjust question difficulty in real time based on learner performance. When measuring B2 lexical range, CAT algorithms can quickly skip low-level items (A1–B1) and focus on fine-grained distinctions between upper-intermediate target words. This reduces testing fatigue while yielding precise data on the exact boundary of a learner's lexical ceiling.

B. Contextualized Formative Assessment Platforms

Interactive platforms (e.g., Socrative, Wordwall, Quizlet Learn) facilitate frequent, low-stakes formative evaluation. Rather than relying on static definitions, these platforms support:

1. Cloze tests embedded within authentic reading passages.
2. Drag-and-drop collocational matching exercises.
3. Audio-visual prompt responses testing active word retrieval under timed conditions.

C. Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) and Corpus-Based Assessment

At the B2 level, lexical competence is best demonstrated through productive skill execution. AWE platforms (e.g., Grammarly Edu, Write & Improve) utilize natural language processing (NLP) to analyze student writing samples instantly. These tools provide metrics on:

Lexical Diversity: Measuring the Type-Token Ratio (TTR) to ensure students are avoiding repetitive language.

Lexical Sophistication: Identifying the proportion of advanced (B2–C1) words relative to elementary vocabulary.

Collocational Accuracy: Highlighting unnatural phrasing or incorrect prepositional pairings.

Implementation and Challenges in Uzbekistan's Higher Education

The introduction of digital assessment frameworks in Uzbek universities yields several noticeable benefits:

a) **Immediate Diagnostic Feedback:** Students receive granular analytics regarding their lexical strengths and weaknesses, enabling targeted self-study.
b) **Measurability:** Instructors managing large student cohorts can collect, grade, and archive vocabulary assessments efficiently.
c) **Enhanced Learner Engagement:** Gamified digital tests increase motivation and lower affective filters compared to high-stakes paper exams.

However, full-scale implementation presents notable challenges:

a) **Digital Infrastructure:** Variations in internet connectivity and device availability across different regions require offline-compatible or mobile-optimized assessment formats.

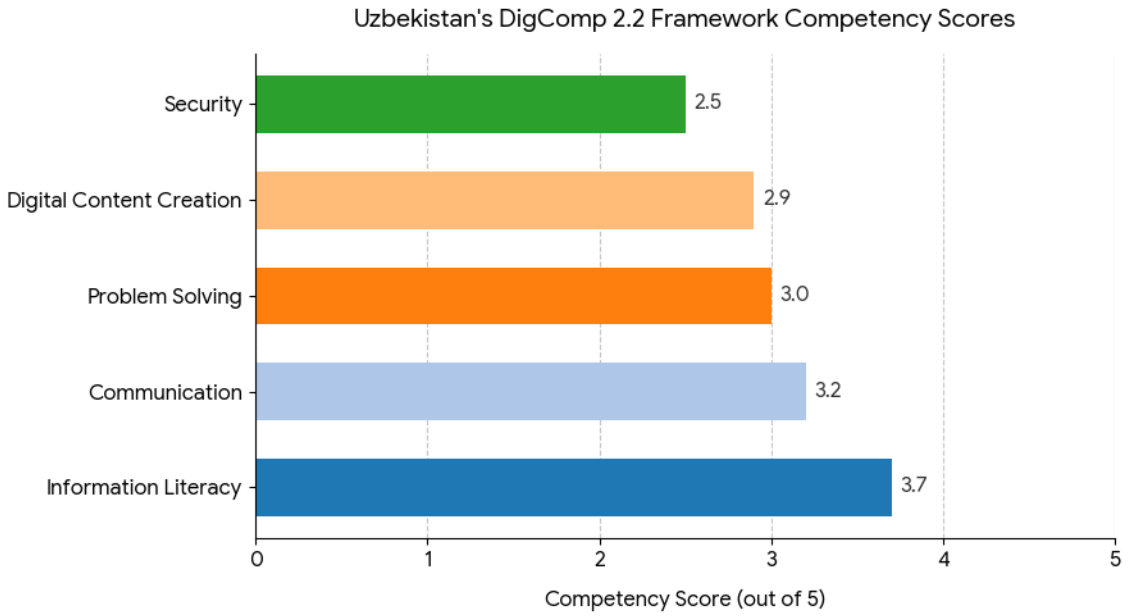
b) **Assessment Validity:** Digital multiple-choice formats still risk measuring test-wiseness or lucky guessing unless supplemented by open-ended productive tasks [5].
c) **Pedagogical Digital Literacy:** Educators require specialized training in test design, data interpretation, and LMS integration to ensure digital assessments align authentically with B2 curriculum goals.

Below are some statistics defining the process of digitalization in Uzbekistan and the digital literacy rate among possible users:

Core Statistical Metrics in Education

Digital Metrics / Segments	Current Level (Uzbekistan Overall)	Urban Center (Tashkent)	Rural Communities
School Children Digital Literacy	37.0%	~55.0%	< 30.0%
School Computer Access	40.0%	~60.0%	< 25.0%
Overall Internet Penetration	89.0%	~94.0%	~74.0%
Basic Technology Skills	15.0%	~25.0%	~8.0%
Standard/Professional ICT Skills	7.5%	~12.0%	~2.0%

The official Ministry of Digital Technologies assessment mapped educational user skills out of a **maximum 5.0 score** across core digital indicators:



- **Information Literacy**: **3.7 / 5.0** (High competency in searching and accessing basic online materials).
- **Overall DigComp Average**: **3.0 / 5.0** (Moderate functional capacity to utilize web tools).
- **Security & Ethical AI Use**: **2.5 / 5.0** (Low proficiency in data protection, safety, and understanding AI biases). [6]

These issues will be a research problem for further studies in the future to address.

CONCLUSION

Digital assessment represents a powerful evolution in foreign language pedagogy, offering dynamic, scalable, and multifaceted methods for measuring B2 lexical competence. By combining adaptive diagnostic testing, low-stakes formative platforms, and automated corpus-based writing tools, educators can obtain a detailed picture of a learner's vocabulary breadth and depth.

For higher education institutions in Uzbekistan, integrating digital lexical assessment bridges the gap between traditional testing and international CEFR benchmarks. Moving forward, successful implementation will depend on continuous professional development for educators, equitable access to digital infrastructure, and the thoughtful integration of automated analytics with teacher-led instruction.

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