Based on these definitions, it is evident that the core of engagement strategies lies in systematically organized and purposeful methods directed at activating, maintaining, and deepening audience interest and involvement to improve the quality of interaction and achievement of intended goals.

Engagement in the university lecture refers to the active involvement of students in the learning process – cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally [7]. Effective engagement strategies include interactive questioning, multimedia use, group discussions, and real-life problem solving, all aimed at breaking the one-way communication.

Active engagement supports the development of critical thinking and deep learning, which are essential for university students to master subject content and apply knowledge in practical contexts. Different pedagogical strategies — such as scaffolding, feedback loops, and peer interaction — are instrumental in motivating students, especially in large lecture settings where individual attention is limited [8, p. 3].

In addition to individual student benefits, engaged lectures create a more dynamic and inclusive classroom environment. This shifts the lecture from a monologic delivery to a dialogic interaction, enabling students from diverse backgrounds to connect and learn collaboratively [9]. It has been proved by the survey which was done among 40 students, preservice for language teachers by really engaged in the lecture.

Conclusion. Based on the theoretical framework and the survey results presented in the main part of this article, the importance of engagement strategies in university lectures is evident. These strategies facilitate active learning, heighten student motivation, and improve educational outcomes. Transforming lectures into interactive and inclusive sessions fosters a richer educational experience and better prepares students for intercultural and international professional contexts. Future research should focus on developing and testing specific engagement techniques to maximize their effectiveness within diverse higher education settings.

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THE VALUE OF THE 21ST CENTURY SKILLS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Introduction. In today’s quickly changing world, learning facts is no longer enough for students to succeed. In modern global environment requires people to apply knowledge creatively, solve unexpected problems, and adapt to new conditions. These abilities are known as 21st century skills, and they are becoming essential in education. Foreign language teaching represents a particularly important area for developing these skills, as language learning naturally involves communication across cultures, critical thinking, and creativity.

Main part. Defining the term “21st-century skills” poses a major challenge due to the lack of agreement among researchers. As noted by S. Lamb, the concept is “wide-ranging, rather vague and not easy to define. While the term has come to be used fairly widely in education, it is not always clear what it covers or means” [1, p. 11]. This view is echoed by other scholars, such as D. Chen, who points out the term is “treated as interchangeable with many of its synonyms” like “soft skills” or “life skills” [2, p. 5]. Therefore, it is important to recognize that we are not dealing with a fixed, agreed-upon list, but a dynamic concept that responds to changing educational and societal needs.

Still, even without one perfect definition, a common framework has emerged, often called the 4 Cs: Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity [3]. These are often expanded to include Self-Learning [4, p. 3].

The value of these skills is confirmed by their alignment with global educational trends. For instance, the official document "Concept for the Development of the Education System of the Republic of Belarus until 2030" states that: "the formation of 'soft' ('flexible') skills in schoolchildren, should become not just personality traits, but their needs" [5, p. 3]. The document specifically lists and defines these core skills: "communication (establishing contact, ability to convey one's point of view, interaction), creativity (a comprehensive assessment of a situation or problem and its effective solution), cooperation (the ability to work in a team to achieve a goal), and critical thinking (evaluating information and selecting it to make the right decision)" [5, p. 3].

Furthermore, the document highlights a second trend: "The most important trend in education in recent decades is the transition from a one-time qualification for life to the acquisition of competencies that promote self-learning and the necessity of learning and self-improvement throughout life" [5, p. 12].

These official statements remove any vagueness, confirming these skills are fundamental priorities.

Therefore, the value of these skills in foreign language teaching is immense and directly supports national and global trends. Moreover, foreign language classroom is an ideal place to practice these skills. Communication is at its core, while group work fosters collaboration. Creativity is used to express ideas, and critical thinking is needed to analyze cultural nuances.

However, recognizing the value of these skills is different from effectively teaching them. Therefore, to explore this gap, we conducted a small-scale study. A survey was distributed to eight foreign language teachers to assess their perceptions and practices. The survey was designed to measure two key aspects of skill integration: the teacher's own self-confidence in these skills and their self-reported success in fostering these skills in their students. The survey used a standard 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) to evaluate five core skills, which were mentioned before: Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Communication, Creativity, and Self-Learning. Question statements, assessed skills and average scores can be seen below (Table 1, 2).

Table 1 — Teachers' Self-Assessment

Assessed Skill	Question Statement	Average Score
1. Collaboration	I am comfortable working with other teachers to plan lessons and share ideas.	3.75
2. Critical Thinking	I regularly analyze my teaching methods to see what is working well and what can be improved.	4.13
3. Communication	I can clearly explain complex ideas and listen actively to my students and colleagues.	4.13
4. Creativity	I often organize new learning activities or find new ways to teach traditional topics.	3.75
5. Self-Learning	I actively seek out new information and teaching ideas to improve my own knowledge.	4.13

Table 2 — Assessment of Teaching Methods

Assessed Skill	Question Statement	Average Score
1. Collaboration	I regularly create opportunities for students to work together on projects and share ideas.	3.38
2. Critical Thinking	I ask my students questions that make them analyze information, not just repeat facts.	3.88
3. Communication	I provide my students with chances to present their ideas and give feedback to their classmates.	3.75
4. Creativity	I give my students assignments that allow them to express their ideas or come up with their own unique solutions.	3.25
5. Self-Learning	I create assignments that encourage my students to explore topics and find information on their own.	2.75

A clear tendency can be seen from the data: teachers consistently rated their own abilities higher than their effectiveness in developing the same skills in students. The average scores for Teacher Self-Development are higher for all five skills compared to the scores for Teaching Methods. The most noticeable gap is seen in Self-Learning, where teachers' self-confidence was high (4.13) but their reported ability to foster it in students was the lowest of all scores (2.75). It is concerning, as it directly contradicts the stated goal of promoting "self-improvement throughout life". Overall, while teachers possess these skills, they struggle with implementation.

Conclusion. Both national policy and modern education have the same goal: to create capable and responsible people who can adapt to changes in the 21st century. Learning a foreign language is a useful way to make this happen. Our study shows that teachers already have these important skills themselves, but there is gap in their ability to implement activities that foster these same skills in students. Therefore, targeted professional development and support are crucial next steps. This way, language classes can do more than just teach vocabulary and grammar; they can also help students learn to think for themselves, be creative, work with others, and become active participants of intercultural communication.

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PEDAGOGICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR SIMULATION-BASED LEARNING

Introduction. Simulation-based learning (SBL) has become widespread across educational programs in many professions. And it seems to be quite natural, as SBL presupposes the creation of "synthetic learning environments" that represent real-life processes or activities and provide a safe surrounding to train in risky or difficult operations to get sufficient practice on in real life operations [1]. The simulated environment allows the instructor to manipulate events and use recorded data (audio, video, or action logs) for educational purposes [2]. Moreover, by engaging students in learning activities, SBL minimizes the "theory-practice gap" [3], which has a great potential in the high-quality specialists training process.

Main part. In order to establish the pedagogical and technological frameworks for SBL, we should first understand what meaning we attribute to simulation. Although universal agreement on its definition is nonexistent, many definitions employ common elements.

The operational definition of simulation includes interaction with a real or virtual object, device, or person and the opportunity to alter the flow of this interaction with the decisions and actions made by learners [4]. It means that, basically, all types of interaction, from role plays to highly immersive interactions with objects of virtual reality, can be considered simulations. Cambridge dictionary states: "Simulation is a model of a set of problems or events that can be used to teach someone how to do something, or the process of making such a model" [5]. Thus, simulation can also be understood as a process (not only the result of a process!) of creating synthetic learning environments. Cook suggests the following, more pedagogical-oriented, definition for the term "simulation": "educational tool or device with which the learner physically interacts to mimic real life" and in which "the necessity of interacting with authentic objects" is emphasized [6, p. 876].

In the realm of education, simulation-based learning has become a powerful tool indeed. Still, its effectiveness hinges on how it's designed. From the pedagogical perspective, SBL should be executed taking into account the educational objectives, student's personality, teacher's role and technological capabilities at hand. But, most importantly, the mechanisms of knowledge acquisition should be taken into account. We will have a look at some of them.

David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) posits that learning is a continuous cycle driven by experience, not a passive absorption of information. The model has four stages (which are as well depicted in Figure 1):

1. Concrete Experience (Feeling): Having a hands-on experience.
2. Reflective Observation (Watching): Reflecting on that experience from different perspectives.
3. Abstract Conceptualization (Thinking): Forming abstract concepts or theories based on that reflection.
4. Active Experimentation (Doing): Applying these new ideas to make decisions and solve problems, leading to a new concrete experience.

The theory suggests effective learners need four abilities: being actively involved, reflecting on the experience, using analytical skills to conceptualize, and making decisions to solve problems. Kolb also identified individual learning styles (e.g., Diverging, Assimilating, Converging, Accommodating) that prefer different stages of the cycle [7].

Kolb's model is a natural fit for simulations. A well-designed simulation directly creates the Concrete Experience. Debriefing and feedback sessions facilitate Reflective Observation and Abstract Conceptualization, helping learners understand why things happened. Finally, the ability to repeat the simulation or try new strategies allows for Active Experimentation, solidifying the learning.

It is also possible to align the simulation approach with the intended learning outcome by applying principles from three foundational learning theories: Behaviorism, Cognitivism, and Constructivism.

Behaviorism views learning as a change in observable behavior, strengthened through stimulus-response associations. This approach is highly structured, relying on reinforcement, practice, and immediate feedback to build accuracy. It is most applicable for teaching foundational skills requiring rote memorization or basic procedures, such as mastering a specific flight checklist or a medical suture technique in a simulated environment.