
THE IMPACT OF ELECTIVE DISCIPLINES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS AT MEDICAL UNIVERSITIES

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INTRODUCTION

With its dynamic integration-driven changes, the modern world constantly generates new types of professional activities, determining their relevance in the labor market. Today, a foreign language teacher is one of the most important professions, as knowledge of a foreign language provides individuals with more opportunities for self-development and self-realization, creates prerequisites for academic mobility, and highlights the importance of high-quality training for qualified foreign language teachers as a key factor in their professional competence.

Therefore, the higher education system must expand students' learning opportunities beyond narrowly specialized application areas, creating more opportunities for comprehensive development and self-education. According to Article 62 of the Law of Ukraine «On Higher Education»¹ one of the main rights granted is the right of students to independently choose educational disciplines within the framework of their training program. The total percentage of such disciplines may amount to 25% of the total number of ECTS credits provided for the respective educational level.

Given the global transformational processes in the medical field, improving the training of future foreign language teachers in medical universities is a key condition for effective international interaction and enhancing the quality of specialist training within the global community. Introducing elective disciplines into the training system for foreign language specialists in medical institutions of higher education will expand pathways for improving professional competence and enhance the quality of training qualified professionals. Elective disciplines will broaden students' overall level of self-education, improve their general and specialized competencies, and refine their professional skills.

¹ Про вищу освіту: Закон України від 01.07.2014 №1556-VII. – Режим доступу: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1556-18>.

1. The Essence of Professional Competence

The term «competence» has become a widely integrated concept in professional activities and everyday life. Anyone can be deemed competent in various matters, but it is predominantly viewed as professional awareness, specialized skills, and abilities that enable an individual to perform effectively in a specific field. The term «competence» (translated from English) refers to the ability to perform relevant professional tasks at the «standard» level. It encompasses the capacity to select and apply an integrated combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to accomplish specific tasks. Personal characteristics such as motivation, self-confidence, and willpower are essential to this context².

The concept of «competence» first emerged in the United States during the 1960s in the context of performance-based education. This educational approach aimed to prepare specialists capable of successfully competing in the labor market. However, it faced criticism for its overemphasis on practical knowledge, which was seen as insufficient for fostering student creativity and individuality. Competence began to be regarded as a personal category, while competencies evolved into curriculum units, forming the «anatomy» of competence³.

White (1959) introduced competence in psychology. He defined competence as the effective interaction between an individual and their environment. He emphasized its motivational nature, stating that there is a «competence motivation» alongside competence as a more conventional «achieved ability.» For White, the motivation to become competent is driven by the effectiveness of activity and the sense of achievement in one's outcomes.

The spread of the term «competence» can largely be attributed to the research of D. McClelland, who authored the article «Testing for Competence Rather Than Intelligence » in 1998. McClelland argued that intelligence alone is not a guarantee of success in professional tasks. Instead, a set of key competencies determines the level of suitability for professional activity and its quality. It was not until the 1980s that the concept of competencies began to gain worldwide recognition.

McClelland used the term «competence» to predict job performance success. His goal was to reduce the influence of racial, gender, or socio-economic factors in candidate selection. He cited an example from the 1970s when young people of European descent were recruited for diplomatic service in America based on standardized tests. However,

² Bojovic, M., Teaching foreign languages for specific purposes: Teacher development, The proceedings of the 31st Annual Association of Teacher Education in Europe, 2006, pp. 487-493.3.

³ Муранова Н.П., Н.Ф. Федорова Компетенції та компетентності в освіті. Освіта та розвиток обдарованої особистості. 2017. № 5(60). С. 57–62.

McClelland noted that such tests failed to assess how well a young diplomat might handle a mission «somewhere in Ethiopia»⁴.

As a result, a three-dimensional classification of key competencies was established. It includes the ability to use a broad set of tools for interaction with physical, informational, and socio-cultural objects, the capacity to engage with others in various aspects of life and work, and the ability to act autonomously and take responsibility for managing one's life within a broad societal context.

These competencies emphasize a person's ability to interact with physical, informational, and socio-cultural objects and other people. Additionally, acting independently and taking responsibility for one's actions is crucial.

According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology, competence reflects the ability to control one's life, effectively manage specific problems, and adapt behavior and the environment instead of merely adapting to circumstances⁵.

Thus, competence can be described as a set of specific skills, knowledge, and abilities in a particular area of activity that enables maximum efficiency. G. Bondar and V. Pavlyuk define competence as a «complex personal resource that ensures

effective interaction with the world in a given field and depends on the necessary competencies.»

The terms «competence» and «competency» are often used interchangeably, but distinctions exist between them. According to M. Hyland, competence is a property of an individual that describes broad qualities relative to a standard (e.g., being a competent driver). Conversely, competencies are narrower, atomic elements linked to tasks or activities (e.g., performing a specific driving maneuver). Based on this distinction, Hyland suggests using «competence» to refer to «broad groups of general abilities» and «competencies» to label specific outcomes or aspects of activity.

We concur with this interpretation, applying «competence» to denote general competence and «competency» for specific competencies.

Although competency initially gained prominence in vocational-technical education reforms, particularly in teacher training programs in the United States, this phenomenon has increasingly influenced broader educational reform policies. In higher education, competence is generally considered within the context of specific disciplines, where the discipline

⁴ Фодор К.Й. Експериментальна перевірка сформованості соціокультурної компетентності майбутніх учителів іноземних мов на засадах міждисциплінарного підходу. Інноваційна педагогіка. 2020. Вип. 30(1). С. 161-164

⁵ Competence. APA Dictionary of Psychology. 2018. URL: <https://dictionary.apa.org/competence>

serves as the starting point for defining competence and identifying core competencies.

There is no consensus in the academic community regarding the definition of «competence.» Key concepts are associated with the philosophical approach underpinning their development. However, certain characteristics can be highlighted in the above definitions of competencies⁶: a) Components of professional competence include personal qualities (abilities, motives, personality traits, self-esteem, inclinations, attitudes, values, personality) combined with work-related elements (knowledge, abilities, skills, values, behavior, actions, experience); b) Professional competencies and their contexts in the workplace primarily concern efficiency, productivity, and success achieved through collaboration and problem-solving. This also relates to adapting to evolving professional contexts; c) The evolution and assessment of competent professionals are essential. Considering that competent specialists operate in dynamic contexts, it is reasonable to expect their evolution. Assessing competent professionals, particularly in certification, remains a pressing issue.

In conclusion, competence often denotes the possession of abilities for a particular type of activity. However, it is most commonly used in the professional sphere, where professional competence is considered an indicator of specialist preparation.

2. The Structure of Professional Competence

The evolution of the concept of professional competencies can be traced through seven historical stages: Greek philosophy, modern philosophy and sociology, changes in the labor market, professional education, cognitive psychology, and industrial-organizational psychology. Of these, three stages hold particular relevance to the understanding of professional competencies and skills: the stage of global changes, the stage of professional education and training, and the stage of industrial-organizational psychology.

Most researchers highlight three primary categories in examining professional competencies. The first is basic competencies, which are formed based on knowledge, skills, and abilities. These are straightforward, easily measurable, and evident in specific types of activities. The second category is key competencies, which are significantly more complex to assess and measure. These competencies manifest across all forms of activity and relationships, reflecting an individual's actions' spiritual essence and meaning⁷.

⁶ Котенко О. В. Формування професійної компетентності майбутніх вчителів іноземних мов в умовах полікультурного середовища. Міжнар. наук.-практ. конф [за заг. ред. В. О. Огнев'юка, Л. Л. Хоружа, С. О. Сисосва, Н. М. Віннікова]. К. : Київ. ун-т ім. Б. Грінченка. С. 211-214.

⁷ Бондар Г. Павлюк В. Основи професійної компетентності вчителя іноземної мови. Актуальні питання гуманітарних наук. 2022. Вип 48, том 1, С.217-223

Some studies propose additional classifications: **standard competencies**, which are indispensable for the normal functioning of an individual or organization; **key competencies**, which ensure competitiveness in the socio-economic market by distinguishing individuals or entities from their peers; and **leading competencies**, which are forward-looking, demonstrated in innovation, creativity, dynamism, and dialogue-based approaches (cooperation, decentering, multiculturalism)⁸.

Key competencies are essential for any professional activity and manifest in the ability to solve professional tasks through the use of information and communication. As a result, key competencies are defined as general abilities, attitudes, and strategies that are useful in problem-solving and mastering new competencies across as many substantive areas as possible. Basic competencies reflect the specific characteristics of particular professional activities, such as teaching.

Specialized competencies reflect the specific nature of a particular subject area or professional activity, such as teaching a foreign language. Specialized competencies can be viewed as the realization of key and basic competencies within the field of a specific academic subject or professional domain. Key, basic, and specialized competencies interact with one another and are revealed in the process of solving vital professional tasks of varying complexity in diverse contexts.

Thus, all three types of competencies are interconnected and must be developed simultaneously. Together, they ensure the formation of a specialist's professional competence as a coherent and integrative personal characteristic.

Having a long history as a concept, professional competence carries various ethical and ideological meanings, inevitably causing some confusion in academic discourse. K. Roth interpreted competence as a tripartite concept, referring to self-competence, professional competence, and social competence. Professional competence is at the core of this framework, defined as «the ability to act and evaluate within a specific profession and take responsibility»⁹.

Professional competence, widely utilized in both everyday communication and academic discourse, serves as a tool for understanding the world, much like any abstract concept. Its nature often requires it to be complex and abstract, yet this very nature allows it to assist individuals in comprehending their environment. Thus, the understanding of professional competence forms the foundation for further study, the advancement of

⁸ Герасимчук Г.А., Ковальчук О.М., Мельничук, О.В. Особливості викладання іноземної мови професійного спрямування для студентів немовних спеціальностей ЗВО. Академічні студії. Серія «Педагогіка». 2024. №2. С.12-18.

⁹ Razzokovich , J. A., & Rashidovna , J. M. The Importance of Professional Competence Along with Personal Maturity to Harmonize All the Innovations in Society. *Excellencia: International Multi-Disciplinary Journal of Education/ 2024. №2(4), 235-239.*

professionalism, and the development of theories related to professional growth.

In everyday terminology, competence is described as the sufficiency of means for living and as a body of knowledge. Simultaneously, it pertains to qualities that enable a person to respond effectively, including legal capacity, suitability for specific activities, and readiness for transformation¹⁰. Reflecting on this definition, two key dimensions of the term can be identified. The first considers probability, viewing competence as a requirement for productivity, while the second concerns potential possibility, regarding competence as an opportunity. Competence spans levels ranging from minimal adequacy to full success. Adding the term «professional» to competence situates this discussion within the context of a specific profession and the demands it places on practitioners.

A workplace-based model of professional competence positions the concept as the foundation for functional competencies essential for effective performance. This model originates from the principles of scientific management found in the theories of Taylor and Fayol. The introduced competency model identifies the necessary competencies for a specific role and establishes standards for each competency. Subsequently, performance is evaluated against these predetermined standards. Once the evaluation is complete, training and the acquisition of new skills commence enabling the workforce to effectively meet the requirements of each role.¹¹.

A professional competence model based on behavioral theory defines competence as a fundamental aspect of general psychology, encompassing motives, skills, self-esteem, and knowledge. This theory builds on the work of D. McClelland, who asserted that the evaluation of competencies should be measured by the outcomes of learning and daily practice. He emphasized that a minimum level of competence is required for effective performance in any job.

G. Spencer described competencies using the metaphor of an iceberg, where abilities and knowledge are the visible elements of competence, while self-esteem, personality traits, and motives lie beneath the surface. These deeper factors serve as the underlying drivers that bring the visible aspects of competence to the forefront¹².

¹⁰ Сологор І.М., Костенко В.Г. Складові професійної компетентності викладача іноземної мови у немовному вищому навчальному закладі (оглядова стаття). *Science and Education a New Dimension. Pedagogy and Psychology*, 2015. Том 3(34), Випуск 69. С.67-69

¹¹ Kutsak, L. ., Zaskalieta, S. ., Hamorak, H. ., Hreniuk, L. ., Parshuk, S. . Components of professional competence and innovative professional activity of an hei teacher. *Revista Eduweb*. 2023. №17(3), 222–234

¹² Sivkovych, H., Boichuk, A.P., Tytun, Oksana. Professional competence of foreign language teachers in institutions of higher education. *Innovate Pedagogy*. 2022. №4. Pp.210-212.

A competence model based on business strategy defines competence as a reality that enables effort and directs an organization along a predetermined path. Consequently, this model requires participants to possess specific abilities. Emerging during the early post-industrial knowledge era, this model introduced the concept of core competencies as a new strategic approach. The primary founders of this model are G. Hamel and C.K. Prahalad.

The shift from function-based organizations to competency-based organizations provides a robust competitive strategy. Core competencies, including communication, participation, and strong dedication to work, are essential and must be integral within an organization. This strategic definition of core competencies has created new opportunities for identifying a competent worker and defining competence as a connection to corporate strategy. The central purpose of adopting this approach is to create a competitive advantage by developing key competencies. By transforming approaches to human resource management, the employee becomes a vital force in shaping core competencies.

A competence model based on cognitive and motivational approaches emphasizes aspects such as workplace reflection, intrinsic motives, culture, values, and ethics in discussions of competence and its development. This model builds on the research of N. Foss, who suggested that fully understanding learning requires studying motivation. N. Foss highlights the importance of self-motivation as an essential condition for learning.

All the reviewed models approach the definition of professional competence differently. However, they share a common set of conditions that enable individuals to perform effectively within a specific field of activity.

O. Lazurenko¹³ proposes three types of professional competence for consideration:

The indicators of professional competence include a combination of objectively necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities, along with the ability to effectively utilize them in fulfilling one's functions. They also encompass awareness of the possible consequences of specific actions, practical experience, work outcomes, methodological flexibility, critical thinking, a professional stance, individual psychological qualities, and acmeological invariants.

N.P. Muranova and N.F. Fedorova identify key competencies as including value-semantic competencies, which reflect the ability to align professional activities with personal and societal values; general cultural competencies, which involve the understanding and application of cultural norms; educational and cognitive competencies, focusing on self-directed

¹³ Лазуренко О. Психолого-педагогічні особливості моделювання професійної компетентності студентів-медиків у процесі професійного становлення. *Psychological journal*. 2018. №13. 67-85.

learning and knowledge acquisition; informational competencies, related to accessing, evaluating, and utilizing information effectively; social and labor competencies, emphasizing interpersonal and workplace efficiency; and personal self-improvement competencies, which stress ongoing personal growth and reflection.¹⁴

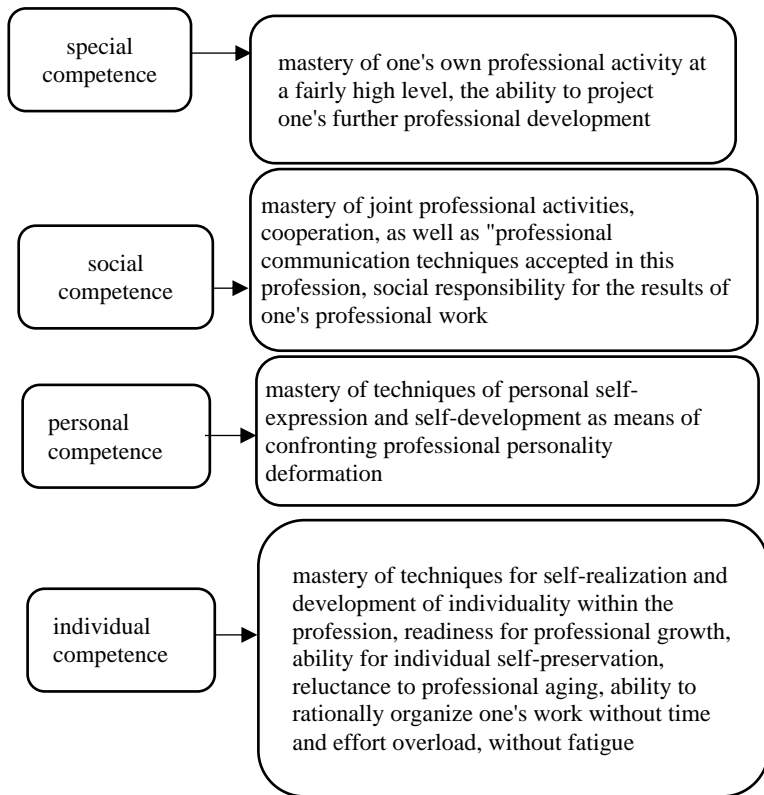


Fig. 1. Types of Professional Competence

Considering professional competence as the ability of an individual to solve a specific range of professional tasks, I. Sologor includes it as a central component within the system of professionalism. This competence encompasses knowledge that enables the execution of highly productive professional activities¹⁵.

¹⁴ Муранова Н.П., Н.Ф. Федорова Компетенції та компетентності в освіті. Освіта та розвиток обдарованої особистості. 2017. № 5(60). С. 57–62.

¹⁵ Сологор І.М., Костенко В.Г. Складові професійної компетентності викладача іноземної мови у немовному вищому навчальному закладі (оглядова стаття). Science and

Thus, professional competence serves as an indicator characterizing the level of professional success, and its study contributes to enhancing the efficiency of a specialist's activities. Analyzing various approaches to defining professional competence and its types leads to the conclusion that the content of professional activities imposes specific requirements on individuals who perform them. The psychological components of professional competence are determined by the nature of professional activities.

Professionalization is a dynamic process, and at each stage of this process, one can identify a level of development of psychological components of professional competence that facilitates achieving professional outcomes. This level can also be viewed as a criterion for its development.

3. Professional Competencies of Foreign Language Teachers

O. Kosovych defines the professional competence of a teacher as an integral characteristic that determines the ability to solve professional tasks arising in real professional situations. This competence involves the use of professional and life knowledge, experiences, values, and inclinations¹⁶. In contrast, O. Kotenko defines the professional competence of a foreign language teacher as a combination of knowledge of the discipline, methodologies, and didactics of its teaching, along with the culture of pedagogical communication and tools for self-realization (self-development) of the educator. Based on this, the researcher identifies three key components of professional-pedagogical competence: the activity-based component, the communicative component, and the personal component¹⁷.

The Council of Europe¹⁸ identifies five essential competencies for professionals today (see Fig. 2).

Education a New Dimension. Pedagogy and Psychology, 2015. Том 3(34), Випуск 69. С.67-69

¹⁶ Косович О. Сутність професійної лексичної компетентності майбутнього вчителя іноземної мови та її формування на міждисциплінарній основі. Педагогічний дискурс. 2023, №8. С.14-19.

¹⁷ Котенко О. В. Формування професійної компетентності майбутніх вчителів іноземних мов в умовах полікультурного середовища. Міжнар. наук.-практ. конф ; [за заг. ред. В. О. Огнев'юка, Л. Л. Хоружа, С. О. Сисоєва, Н. М. Віннікова]. К. : Київ. ун-т ім. Б. Грінченка. С. 211-214.

¹⁸ European Education Area. Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. 2022. URL: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/improving-quality/key-competences>

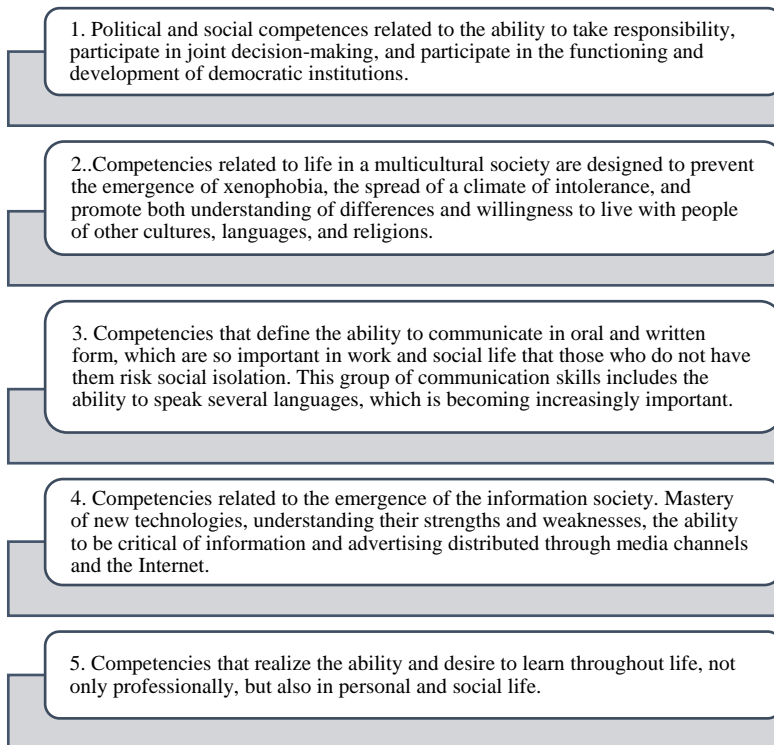


Fig. 2. Key Competencies of a Specialist (Council of Europe)

The professional competence of a foreign language teacher is largely determined by their personal qualities, which facilitate communication and reflect their level of mastery of essential skills. Such a highly qualified and competent teacher deeply understands their social responsibility, successfully plans and continuously develops their professional activities, and plays a key role in shaping professional competence¹⁹.

According to many scholars, communicative competence is the most important component of the structure of professional competence for a foreign language teacher. This is understood as the ability to communicate both in writing and orally with native speakers of a particular language in real-life situations. The significance of this competence is undeniable, as it

¹⁹Сологор І.М., Костенко В.Г. Складові професійної компетентності викладача іноземної мови у немовному вищому навчальному закладі (оглядова стаття). Science and Education a New Dimension. Pedagogy and Psychology, 2015. Том 3(34), Випуск 69. С.67-69

is absolutely essential for successful professional functioning and career growth in virtually any field. K. Fodor emphasizes that communicative competence must be developed both in the teacher's native language and in foreign languages²⁰.

Some researchers believe that methodological competence occupies a leading position in the structure of professional competence for a foreign language teacher. Its development enables the resolution of professional tasks in achieving foreign language teaching objectives, including the formation of foreign language communicative competence, education, upbringing, and personal development²¹.

American linguists distinguish grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic, and speech competencies in the structure of communicative competence. Scholars further break down communicative competence into specific components: production (excellence in oral and written communication) and reception (reading and understanding professionally significant texts).

Linguistic competence encompasses mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and phonetics, reflecting proficiency in the system of knowledge about the target language at various levels, including phonetics, vocabulary, word composition and derivation, morphology, syntax, text linguistics, and stylistics. Sociolinguistic competence involves intercultural and pragmatic competence, enabling effective communication in diverse cultural and social contexts.

M. Kostiuik and N. Mazur highlight that studying a foreign language with a medical focus allows students to learn specialized vocabulary and expressions, activate their passive vocabulary, master English pronunciation of medical terms, and enhance their fluency and confidence in using English in professional contexts²².

The following foundational principles of mastering foreign-language professional communication can be outlined²³:

– Basic linguistic knowledge: Proficiency in the target language and its associated professional discourse. This includes linguistic studies and language analysis experience, incorporating procedural knowledge in linguistic, discursive, and genre analysis.

²⁰ Фодор К.Й. Експериментальна перевірка сформованості соціокультурної компетентності майбутніх учителів іноземних мов на засадах міждисциплінарного підходу. Інноваційна педагогіка. 2020. Вип. 30(1). С. 161-164

²¹ Бондар Г. Павлюк В. Основи професійної компетентності вчителя іноземної мови. Актуальні питання гуманітарних наук. 2022. Вип 48, том 1, С.217-223

²² Костюк М., Мазур Н. Особливості методики викладання англійської мови професійного спрямування у вищих медичних навчальних закладах. Grail of Science, 2023. №34. С.304–307

²³ Герасимчук Г.А., Ковальчук О.М., Мельничук, О.В. Особливості викладання іноземної мови професійного спрямування для студентів немовних спеціальностей ЗВО. Академічні студії. Серія «Педагогіка». 2024. №2. С.12-18.

– Basic subject-matter knowledge: Familiarity with the core concepts and principles of the discipline linked to the professional English language of specialization. Understanding discursive practices specific to the discipline or profession, such as typical speech acts and genres.

– Knowledge of pedagogy: Understanding educational skills and teaching methods to enhance learning. This includes perceiving education as a human activity and a social phenomenon.

As O. Kotenko notes, the formation of professional competence in future foreign language teachers is influenced by both external factors (societal demands, the profession's relevance, and socio-cultural changes) and internal factors (age, individual characteristics, and experience). Thus, professional competence in a foreign language teacher can be defined as a combination of acquired knowledge, skills, and personal traits and qualities. Together, these elements create the image of a qualified specialist capable of effectively performing under any circumstances and resolving challenges as they arise.

O. Kosovych identifies two primary competencies in the structure of professional training for foreign language teachers: communicative and lexical competencies. According to the author, communicative competence reflects «the ability to implement linguistic competence in various contexts of verbal interaction, considering social norms of behavior and the communicative appropriateness of expression.»²⁴. Lexical competence, in turn, is the ability to solve tasks related to mastering foreign-language vocabulary during its practical application in speech by acquiring knowledge and skills. O. Kosovych identifies four components within lexical competence: motivational, cognitive, activity-practical, and reflective.

According to the curriculum for foreign language teacher training at the O.O. Bohomolets National Medical University, the purpose of teaching the subject "Foreign Language" is to develop practical foreign language skills in various types of speech activities within the scope of topics determined by professional needs. In line with this program, a specialist in foreign languages must possess specific competencies (see Fig. 3).

According to H. Bondar and V. Pavliuk, the primary indicators of professional competence for a foreign language teacher include the ability to develop communicative and interpersonal communication skills in students. These skills are comprised of linguistic, thematic, sociocultural, and educational-cognitive competencies²⁵.

²⁴ Косович О. Сутність професійної лексичної компетентності майбутнього вчителя іноземної мови та її формування на міждисциплінарній основі. Педагогічний дискурс. 2023. №8. С.14-19.

²⁵ Бондар Г. Павлюк В. Основи професійної компетентності вчителя іноземної мови. Актуальні питання гуманітарних наук. 2022. Вип 48, том 1, С.217-223

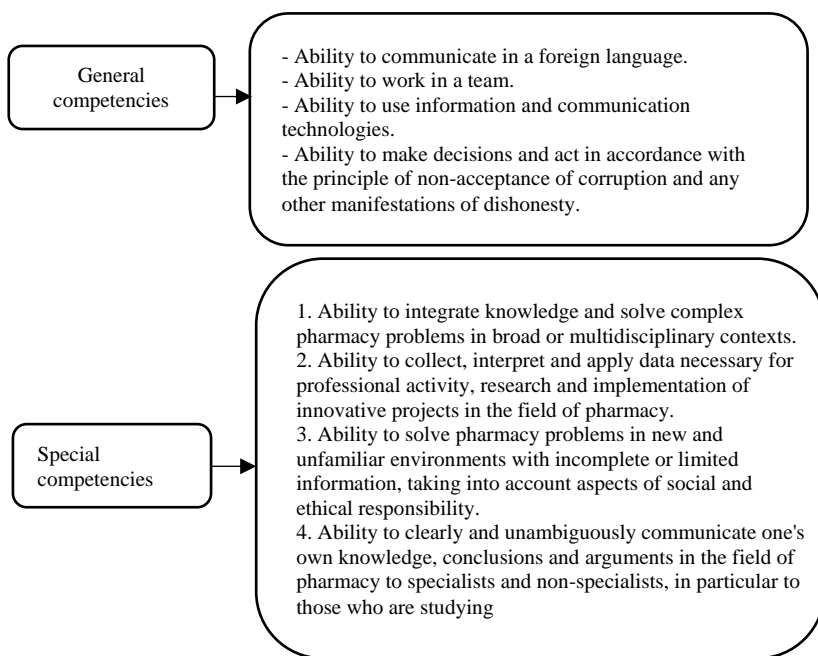


Fig. 3 Structure of General and Specialized Competencies of a Foreign Language Teacher According to the Training Program at O.O. Bohomolets National Medical University

Analyzing the concept of «professional competence,» we have outlined the main indicators for assessing the professional potential of foreign language teachers in higher education institutions:

1. Mastery of modern educational technologies and their implementation in professional activities. This includes the ability to organize the educational process in accordance with contemporary quality standards.

2. Readiness to engage in pedagogical activities and address professional tasks, reflected in high motivation for professional pedagogical work, compliance with, and adaptation to, the demands of professional roles.

3. Proficiency in professional speech culture and orientation toward various spheres of spiritual culture demonstrate the educator's personal richness. This includes adherence to the norms and ethics of professional communication.

4. Capacity for reflection and self-regulation of professional pedagogical activities in accordance with established norms and standards. This involves identifying challenges in professional work, transforming

them using internal resources, enhancing self-organization, and developing an individual style of professional activity.

4. The Impact of Elective Disciplines on the Formation of Professional Competence of Foreign Language Teachers in Medical Universities

Elective disciplines in professional and practical training offer opportunities for in-depth preparation and influence the character of future professional activities. They support students' academic mobility, cater to personal interests, and enhance resource opportunities within the specialist training process. In modern higher education, elective disciplines are actively integrated as a tool to motivate students toward educational activities, self-development, and self-education²⁶.

All students are granted the right to choose such disciplines. The number of elective courses available for the following academic year, the allocated hours for study, and the forms of assessment are determined by the working curriculum of the educational and professional program for the specific specialty pursued by the student.

The educational program for training specialists in foreign languages includes elective disciplines such as Professional Communication Skills Development, Academic English in Medicine, Communication in English in the Medical Environment, English in Clinical Practice, and English for Professional Purposes. This list enhances students' professional training at a high level, ensuring the development of advanced professional competence.

Considering the analysis of the essence and specifics of foreign language teacher preparation, we have developed a model that illustrates the impact of elective disciplines on the formation of professional competence in foreign language teachers (see Fig. 4).

According to the developed model, the active implementation of elective disciplines into the training programs for foreign language specialists promotes continuous self-development among students, the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and abilities, and the development of innovative and digital competencies. Examining the content of each of these components reveals that elective disciplines stimulate motivation for self-education and self-improvement, enhance students' cognitive interests, and increase their engagement in learning and self-realization.

By providing additional opportunities for studying a foreign language, elective disciplines broaden students' academic horizons and help form a competent worldview, which is a significant prerequisite for professional competence. Furthermore, elective disciplines lay the groundwork for the formation of professional knowledge, skills, and abilities by deepening the

²⁶ Стучинська Н.В., Матвієнко М.М. Роль вибіркових дисциплін у формуванні цифрової компетентності майбутніх лікарів. Педагогіка формування творчої особистості у вищій і загальноосвітній школах. 2023. №88. С.138-146

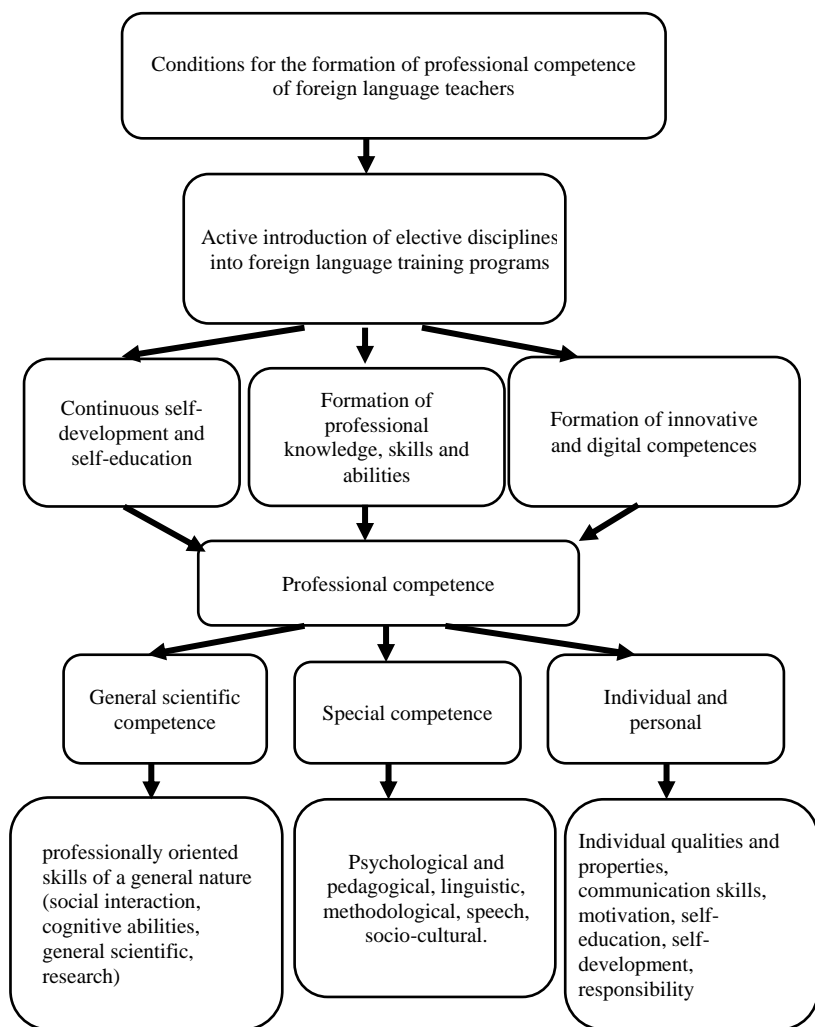


Fig. 4 Model of the Impact of Elective Disciplines on the Formation of Professional Competence

mastery of the knowledge and skills outlined in the curriculum²⁷. Students can complement their primary specialization with additional courses or

²⁷ Орлова Н. Навчання іноземної мови професійного спрямування студентів немовних спеціальностей закладів вищої освіти: багатогранність і комплексність

attend individual classes to broaden their knowledge. The ability to choose disciplines from various faculties and departments is an effective tool for fostering interdisciplinarity. Learning in mixed groups also enables students to acquire informal experience from peers in other specialties.

An undeniable result of implementing elective disciplines is the development of students' innovative and digital competencies. In today's era of digitalization, an in-depth study of additional subjects promotes the growth of an innovative culture and digital competence, equipping students to remain mobile and respond promptly to society's contemporary challenges.

Professional competence, through the introduction of elective disciplines, integrates general scientific, specialized, and individual-personal competencies. General scientific competence includes cognitive and research competencies. The foundation of cognitive competence lies in processing various sources of information about universal values, native (and foreign) cultures, and general scientific knowledge about the process of cognition. Research competence involves the knowledge and skills required to study language and literature in their contemporary and historical development and the ability to plan and conduct basic research methods. It is evident that the professional development of a foreign language teacher today is incomplete without the formation of research competence.

Psychological-pedagogical competence constitutes a significant domain of professional consciousness for a foreign language teacher. It encompasses pedagogical consciousness, which represents a mode of thinking, decision-making, emotional response, and motivation. It serves as both a guideline and a tool for reflecting and implementing pedagogical activities. This competence facilitates the transfer of social experiences embedded in other competencies and consists of psychological, pedagogical, and methodological competencies.

The integration of these three competencies into a unified domain underscores the coherence and continuity of educational disciplines that develop these components during professional training. Additionally, it highlights the specificity of interdisciplinary connections, which, in essence, should not be external but rather internal and systemic, as they form a single domain of professional consciousness²⁸.

Linguistic competence is an essential component of the professional competence of foreign language teachers. It encompasses knowledge of the

наповнення концепту. Актуальні питання гуманітарних наук : міжвузівський збірник наукових праць молодих вчених Дрогобицького державного педагогічного університету імені Івана Франка. Дрогобич, 2019. Вип. 23. Том 3. С. 93–99.

²⁸ Трубіцина, О.М., Негрівода О.О. Особливості та проблеми формування англомовної професійної компетентності здобувачів вищої педагогічної освіти. Закарпатські філологічні студії / редкол.: І. М. Зимомря (голов. ред.), М. М. Палінчак, Ю. М. Бідзіля та ін. Ужгород : Видавничий дім "Гельветика". 2024. Т. 2, вип. 33. С. 145–149

language system and the rules governing its functioning in foreign language communication. Linguistic competence includes understanding language tools with specific communicative potential, knowledge of these tools and their functions, and mastery of the underlying mechanisms of linguistic activity. Language knowledge is necessary for acquiring language and linguistic/speech activities and mastering the system of the studied language. Effective linguistic activity results from mastery of the language system. The more students engage in elective disciplines, the greater the opportunities they have to improve their linguistic competence.

The process of forming linguistic competence is interconnected with the development of lexical, grammatical, semantic, and phonological competencies. It follows a step-by-step approach and is practically oriented toward using language material from multi-genre texts with repetitions. The formation of skills, the development of linguistic abilities, and the execution of deliberate communicative actions depend on the correct gradation of tasks by complexity level and the teacher's ability to construct a chain of meaningful and linguistic exercises, adhering to the principle of accessibility and preventing errors.

The essence of speech competence and its development are complex. The process of generating speech is not only tied to the linguistic component of the conveyed information but also involves higher cognitive functions, cognitive activity, and socially conditioned factors. Linguistic activity, as a complex act of human behavior, is linked to thinking and perception and aims at communication and social interaction.

Personal competence serves as a regulator of personal achievements, a motivator for finding personal meaning in communication, self-management, self-knowledge, professional growth, mastery improvement, meaning-making activities, the development of reflective abilities, and the formation of an individual didactic style. Personal competence is practically expressed through reflection, which is based on monitoring and evaluating readiness to carry out professional activities and assessing the outcomes of such activities. Structurally, it consists of four components²⁹: Psychological competence is characterized by the presence of stable motivation for professional activity and appropriate personal qualities, such as willpower and emotional resilience. The methodological component involves knowledge and actions of an educational and self-educational nature, including independent orientation and motivation, planning, self-organization, self-monitoring, and other related skills.

It is essential to emphasize that a distinctive feature of a foreign language teacher's professional competence is the importance of self-educational competence. The notion that a foreign language cannot be

²⁹ Kutsak, L. ., Zaskalieta, S. ., Hamorak, H. ., Hreniuk, L. ., Parshuk, S. .. Components of professional competence and innovative professional activity of an hei teacher. *Revista Eduweb*. 2023. №17(3), 222–234

taught but can only be «learned,» implying self-directed learning, plays a significant role not only in the process of mastering a foreign language but also in the professional preparation of teachers, especially with the integration of elective disciplines.

Self-educational competence uniquely accumulates all four competencies: communicative-cultural, general scientific, psychological-pedagogical, and personal. Personal competence is reflected in the psychological component, while general scientific competence, in essence, permeates all components of self-educational competence. This integrative nature highlights the pivotal role of self-directed development in forming a well-rounded and effective foreign language educator.

CONCLUSIONS

The successful implementation of the key aspects of preparing foreign language teachers in the modern context entirely depends on the specialist's professional competence level. This competence must encompass a complex array of integrative qualities, attributes, and knowledge that act as triggers for their effectiveness as professionals. Under current conditions of modernizing the higher education system and its integration into the European educational space, the primary factor in forming the professional competence of foreign language teachers is the integration of elective disciplines into the curriculum. These courses allow for the deepening of knowledge, developing new skills, and expanding competencies.

Professional competence, as an indicator of the effective application of professional knowledge and skills in practice, includes general, specialized, and individual-personal competencies. While elective disciplines are not the sole determinant of professional competence, they serve as an additional factor contributing to the comprehensive development of young specialists, ensuring their high-quality training and competitiveness in the labor market.

SUMMARY

Rapid modernization and globalization are elevating higher education to a qualitatively new European level in modern Ukrainian society. Integrating innovative methods and approaches into the training system of specialists promotes a high level of qualification and market demand. Today, the preparation of foreign language specialists in medical universities is especially relevant. Such specialists are multifunctional and must possess a set of professional knowledge and skills that elevate their professionalism to a new level. The effective means of training these specialists include the integration of elective disciplines, which broaden their professional outlook and foster the formation of general, specialized, and individual-personal competencies.

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