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## LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS FOR TECHNICAL SPECIALTIES

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose.** *The article examines the question of the levels of foreign language communicative competence development of students for technical specialties. The characteristics of the corresponding levels are given. The tasks are to find out the essence of the concept «level of foreign language communicative competence»; to analyze classifications of foreign language proficiency levels; characterize the criteria for the levels of foreign language communicative competence development of students for technical specialties, based on the analysis.*

**Methodology.** *Research methods are the analysis and summarization of relevant scientific materials for the purpose of collecting and presenting results, as well as coming to the conclusions.*

**Results.** *The concept of the mastery level of a foreign language can be defined as a student's ability to formulate his foreign language statements in a grammatically correct and communicatively acceptable way to solve certain functional communication tasks, that implies the possession of a certain set of linguistic and sociocultural knowledge, skills. Many level systems are oriented (for practical purposes) to three main levels: elementary; medium (intermediate); advanced, they can be divided into sublevels depending on the purpose of level determining. As a result, six levels emerged, where each of the three main ones is divided into one more*

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*advanced and one less advanced, compared to the most basic level of foreign language proficiency.*

*The system of levels of foreign language proficiency is closely related to the system of control, assessment and self-assessment of the level foreign language communicative competence development. Each type of foreign language communicative competence corresponds to its own level of learning, that differs in final target settings. The training level (planned result) is a projection of the goal on the content of training, it involves taking into account the training conditions.*

*Taking into account the characteristics of the component composition of foreign language communicative competence, the experience of developing new control models, it is possible to single out the parameters and criteria necessary for assessing the level of foreign language communicative competence development of students. Namely, the purpose of the final control is to establish the correspondence between the level of foreign language communicative competence and the requirements of the English language curriculum for students of technical specialties.*

**Conclusion.** *Thus, when considering issues related to the control of foreign language knowledge, skills (definition of goals, content, exam type, evaluation criteria), one should take into account both international standards of the level of foreign language proficiency and modern national requirements, they are submitted in educational programs and foreign language textbooks. In other words, all components of foreign language communicative competence should be the object of control.*

*In particular, the pan-European system of language proficiency levels can be adapted to the goals of professional education and can serve as a basis for various diagnostic models that ensure the technologicalization of the competence approach in the process of foreign language training under the conditions of non-language higher education.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Multi-Level Model, Pan-European System, Language Proficiency Levels, Foreign Language Communicative Competence, Competence Approach, Levels of Foreign Language Proficiency.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's conditions, the system of training students of higher education institutions, in particular technical specialties, requires not only a rethinking and restructuring of the content and structure of the learning process, but also the need to effectively solve the problems of diagnosis and knowledge control of future specialists.

The use of competencies as the main structural element of building the state standard of higher education requires a comprehensive study of the process of developing learning outcomes, which must identified to develop a standard to measure the achievements of the educational process in a competency framework. The competence approach affects the formation of a new assessment culture, which involves the transition from knowledge assessment to competence assessment.

An analysis of higher education standards underscored the crucial need for graduates to possess foreign language communicative competence. Within our work, we define this competence as the individual's capacity and willingness to engage in both interpersonal and intercultural communication using a foreign language.

This goes beyond simply having linguistic, sociocultural knowledge, abilities, and skills. It encompasses the flexibility and appropriateness of adapting one's language behavior to different contexts and situations, as deemed relevant and appropriate. This model of foreign language communicative competence consists of linguistic, conversational and sociocultural competences. The listed competencies appear as components of foreign language communicative competence and create a system of a single whole.

The success of building foreign language communicative competence in technical students hinges on how well these key components are developed. The level of competence formation is a characteristic that changes over time. The assimilation of components occurs gradually. The introduction of degrees of levels of competency acquisition is necessary for ranking the depth of its formation.

The **purpose** is to investigate and describe the various proficiency levels of foreign language communication skills among students in technical fields.

## METHODOLOGY

Research methods are the analysis and summarization of relevant scientific materials for the purpose of collecting and presenting results, as well as coming to the conclusions.

## RESULTS

In the British methodical tradition, the level of English language proficiency is determined by how close a student is to a native speaker in their language behavior.

According to S. Hamidova, the problem of selecting communicative skills can be solved using the concept of «speech action». He proposes that the ability to perform the speech act of «finding out where something is» can be used as a gauge for foreign language proficiency (Hamidova et al., 2020).

But even if such language actions are mastered to the level of proficiency, it is impossible to solve the problem of selecting communicative skills, the problem of determining the content of the learning goal, since communication does not consist only of such language actions. Communication primarily arises from communicative tasks embedded within wider communicative activities, rather than isolated speech acts. These tasks constitute the essence of direct communication (Zhernovnykova et al., 2019; Zubkov, 2022; Shandruk & Arkushyna, 2021). Beyond acquiring knowledge, the real goal of learning a foreign language should be achieving a level of mastery that allows effective communication.

Within a specific methodological framework for classifying language proficiency levels, foreign language communicative competence should be viewed as a distinct level characterized by precise features of an individual's linguistic, conversational, and sociocultural behavior. This distinctness allows for clear differentiation from other levels

of language mastery, both as a tool for communication and cognition (Hosseini & Ghonsooly, 2017).

Some researchers define the pinnacle of foreign language proficiency as achieving a level where linguistic, extralinguistic, and sociolinguistic parameters closely resemble those of native speakers. Individuals at this level can:

1. Articulate their understanding of the world and engage in informative discourse.
2. Initiate and manage communication effectively, ensuring both fluency and accuracy.
3. Effortlessly process and retain language, possessing robust memory and anticipation skills across all linguistic levels.
4. Adapt their language and communication style to match their interlocutors and contexts.
5. Enact diverse social roles and build genuine social connections.
6. Engage in metacommunication, reflecting on and discussing the very nature of communication itself.
7. Leverage both verbal and nonverbal cues for enhanced comprehension and expression (William, 2017; Ishchuk & Mazurenok, 2022; Chykhantsova, 2019).

This interpretation of the highest level of foreign language proficiency differs from D Himes's perspective, which acknowledges inherent uncertainty in language acquisition and qualitative assessment. Himes argues that foreign language communicative competence develops within any method, but its effectiveness hinges on a nuanced understanding of its components and structure (Cheipesh, 2019; Palasiuk, 2014; Vasilieva, 2020).

A. Zubkov argued that effective communication task completion hinges on four key factors: individual willingness and readiness to actively express oneself in the foreign language; resourcefulness in utilizing the existing vocabulary and grammar structures; understanding of paralinguistic cues (e.g., tone, intonation) and their role in language use; awareness of kinesthetic aspects (e.g., body language, gestures) and their contribution to communication (Zubkov, 2022).

In her research on standardized language tests for business communication, S. Omelanchuk defines "level of communicative competence" as a measurable degree of proficiency that enables individuals to: solve practical communication tasks in a foreign language context; align their language skills and knowledge with the specific demands and situations of real-world business communication (Omelyanchuk, 2019).

Hosseini, H. and Ghonsooly, B. differentiate between «level» and «objective» within foreign language learning. They further identify two key characteristics associated with both «levels» and «tasks»:

- Capability: This refers to the abilities possessed by a student or language user, encompassing what they can potentially do;
- Performance: This focuses on the quality of execution, or how well they can perform a particular task (Hosseini & Ghonsooly, 2017).

Foreign language mastery revolves around a student's ability to construct grammatically accurate and communicatively appropriate statements. This ability enables them to solve specific functional tasks within communication, reflecting their grasp of diverse linguistic and sociocultural knowledge, skills, and abilities (Shandruk & Arkushyna, 2021; Chornobai, 2021).

Thus, there are also discrepancies in the selection and description of levels of foreign language communicative competence. As is obvious from the above definitions, the very concept of «level» in the studies of different authors carries a different semantic load, there is no generally accepted classification of levels of foreign language proficiency.

There has now been a transition from a 2-tiered model, which includes basic and advanced levels, to a multi-tiered model.

Within the advanced level of foreign language proficiency, two subcategories were established: advanced-superbasic (threshold), aligning with the requirements of the secondary comprehensive school program; actual-advanced (Vantage), the level students should achieve by the end of their studies with an in-depth focus on the foreign language.

In the scientific literature, six levels of foreign language communicative competence are distinguished:

- primary;
- average;
- advanced;
- high (above basic);
- professionally sufficient;
- higher (as native speakers).

Seeking to categorize foreign language proficiency, scholars from outside Europe developed a framework known as the Common European Framework (CEFR) under the auspices of the Council of Europe.

A group of international experts, working as part of the Council of Europe, established the Common European Framework (CEFR) as a system for classifying foreign language proficiency levels.

With the goal of establishing a standardized classification of foreign language abilities, the Council of Europe, in collaboration with international researchers, initiated the development of the Common European Framework (CEFR).

First of all, the problem is to determine the number of level categories. If a small number of level categories are used, the accuracy and validity of determining the level of foreign language proficiency will be sacrificed to reliability. A more flexible approach to the allocation of so-called conventional levels was needed.

Many level systems are focused (for practical purposes) on three main levels:

- elementary (elementary);
- medium (intermediate);

– advanced,

which can be divided into sub-levels depending on the purpose of determining the level.

This process yielded six distinct levels, with each of the three major categories further subdivided into one level that is more proficient and another that is less proficient compared to the foundational level of foreign language proficiency.

The project ultimately resulted in a six-level framework, where each of the three primary levels is further differentiated into one sub-level of higher proficiency and one sub-level of lower proficiency relative to the entry-level of foreign language competency.

This initiative culminated in the establishment of a six-level system, where each of the three central levels is further divided into one more advanced and one less advanced variant compared to the baseline level of foreign language proficiency (Council of Europe, 2011).

These include the following levels:

1. A1 – «Survival» (Breakthrough).
2. A2 – «Waystage».
3. B1 – «Threshold».
4. B2 – «Advanced Threshold» (Vantage).
5. C1 – «High» (Effective Proficiency).
6. C2 – «Perfect command of the language» (Mastery) (Council of Europe, 2011).

The established levels of foreign language proficiency closely align with the systems used for monitoring, evaluating, and self-evaluating the development of foreign language communicative competence. Notably, while language competence and even reading and listening skills can be assessed based on the percentage match between the task and the final grade, evaluating language and sociocultural competence often relies on a «formal, sample-based approach» (Menke & Paesani, 2019). Qualitative criteria are necessary. These can be scales consisting of a description of foreign language knowledge, skills and abilities within one or another level.

Different categories of foreign language communicative competence map to distinct learning levels, each culminating in specific target outcomes. The training level (desired outcome) translates the overall goal into the curriculum content, incorporating the specific training environment and conditions (Palasiuk, 2014).

Several key criteria can be used to evaluate the development of foreign language communicative competence:

- correctness and correctness of lexical-grammatical, intonation-syntactic and phonetic design of foreign language speech;
- acceptability and expediency of the language behavior strategies used;
- ability to communicative partnership;
- the communicative expediency of using linguistic means of broadcasting;
- acceptability of language means and language behavior in socio-cultural terms;
- presence of socio-cultural awareness of the country of the language.

The implementation of the pan-European system of levels of foreign language proficiency does not limit the possibilities of educational institutions to develop their system of levels of education. It should be noted that the development of objective criteria for assessing the level of foreign language proficiency will ensure the recognition of grades obtained by students in exams (Fandieieva, 2020).

In the real practice of teaching foreign languages, attention can be focused on a certain set of levels and categories depending on the specific goals and conditions of learning.

One of the ways to objectively assess the real level of foreign language proficiency is international standardized tests (exams), which aim to either confirm the declared level or have a diagnostic nature. Such exams of most of the largest British chambers: UCLES (Cambridge), ARELS (Oxford), Pitman Qualifications City and Guides of London Institute and others. All exams of this group are multi-level, that is, with a general format, they have a different degree of difficulty, allowing the candidate to test his strength depending on the level of language proficiency.

They involve testing abilities and skills in all four types of language activities: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

The results of this testing are recognized in various spheres: the business community, leading universities, government organizations, national educational structures. The Cambridge ESOL exams certificate is considered a «mark of quality» for an employer.

Cambridge international exams determine the level of foreign language communicative competence of candidates in everyday everyday and professional communication. In line with the communicative approach to foreign language learning, Cambridge ESOL primarily reflects the practical side of candidates' foreign language communicative competence.

When assessing foreign language knowledge, skills, and abilities, it's vital to consider both international standards for proficiency and current domestic requirements outlined in curricula and textbooks. All aspects of foreign language communicative competence should be evaluated.

## **DISCUSSION**

The problem of foreign language communicative competence development was discussed among national researchers (Kostikova et al, 2019; Kostikova et al, 2024; Holubnycha et al. 2021; Gunerathne & Marikar, 2023). The problem of training students for technical specialties was discussed among national researchers too (Lebedeva, Norik, Lebedev, 2022).

## **CONCLUSION**

The pan-European language proficiency levels are a flexible framework, not a rigid one. While educators can still design their own learning levels, using the standard categories enhances understanding and ensures objective assessments. Additionally, these levels can be adapted to specific professional needs and form the foundation for technology-driven assessment models, aligning with the competence-based approach in foreign language training for non-language majors. This system is expected to evolve with experience, further supporting its effectiveness in achieving educational goals.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

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**АНОТАЦІЯ / ABSTRACT** [in Ukrainian]:

### **ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА РІВНІВ СФОРМОВАНОСТІ ІНШОМОВНОЇ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ ТЕХНІЧНИХ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТЕЙ**

*В статті розглядається питання щодо рівнів сформованості іншомовної комунікативної компетентності студентів технічних спеціальностей. Наводиться характеристика відповідних рівнів.*

**Мета** – визначити та охарактеризувати рівні сформованості іншомовної комунікативної компетентності студентів технічних спеціальностей. **Завдання:** з'ясувати сутність поняття «рівень іншомовної комунікативної компетентності»; проаналізувати класифікації рівнів володіння іноземною мовою; на основі аналізу охарактеризувати критерії рівнів сформованості іншомовної комунікативної компетентності студентів технічних спеціальностей.

**Методологія.** Методами дослідження є аналіз та узагальнення відповідних наукових матеріалів з метою збору та представлення результатів, а також формулювання висновків.

**Результати.** Поняття рівня володіння іноземною мовою можна визначити як здатність студента граматично правильно і комунікативно прийнятно оформляти свої іншомовні висловлювання для вирішення певних функціональних завдань спілкування, що передбачає володіння певною сукупністю мовних та соціокультурних знань, умінь та навичок. Багато систем рівнів орієнтовані (у практичних цілях) на три основні рівні: елементарний (*elementary*); середній (*intermediate*); просунутий (*advanced*), які можуть поділятися на підрівні залежно від мети визначення рівня. У результаті виникає шість рівнів, де кожен із трьох основних ділиться на один більш просунутий і один менш просунутий, порівняно з самим базовим рівнем володіння іноземною мовою.

Система рівнів володіння іноземною мовою тісно пов'язана з системою контролю, оцінки та самооцінки рівня сформованості іншомовної комунікативної компетентності. Кожному типу іншомовної комунікативної компетентності відповідає свій рівень навченості, який відрізняється кінцевими цільовими установками. Рівень навченості (планований результат) є проекцією мети на зміст навчання і передбачає врахування умов навчання.

Враховуючи характеристики компонентного складу іншомовної комунікативної компетентності, досвід розробки нових моделей контролю, можна виділити параметри та критерії, необхідні для оцінки рівня сформованості іншомовної комунікативної компетентності

студентів. Метою підсумкового контролю є встановлення відповідності між рівнем іншомовної комунікативної компетентності та вимогами навчальної програми з англійської мови для студентів технічних спеціальностей.

**Висновок.** Таким чином, при розгляді питань, пов'язаних з контролем іншомовних знань, умінь та навичок (визначення цілей, змісту, формату іспитів, критеріїв оцінки), слід враховувати як міжнародні стандарти рівня володіння іноземною мовою, так і сучасні вітчизняні вимоги, які подаються у навчальних програмах та підручниках з іноземної мови. Іншими словами, об'єктом контролю мають стати всі компоненти іншомовної комунікативної компетентності.

Зокрема, загальноєвропейська система рівнів володіння мовою може бути адаптована до цілей професійної освіти і може послужити основою для різних діагностичних моделей, які забезпечують технологізацію компетентнісного підходу у процесі іншомовної підготовки в умовах немовного закладу вищої освіти.

**КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА:** багаторівнева модель, загальноєвропейська система, рівні володіння мовою, іншомовна комунікативна компетентність, компетентнісний підхід, рівні володіння іноземною мовою.

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