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**УДОСКОНАЛЕННЯ ІНШОМОВНОЇ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ
КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ-БАКАЛАВРІВ**

**ENHANCEMENT OF THE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS'
FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

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ABSTRACT

The development of modern society requires highly qualified specialists in different fields of industry, who can communicate effectively and interact productively with foreign colleagues. Proficiency in a foreign language has become crucial for a specialist's personal and professional growth. This paper aims to study the impact of communicative foreign language teaching methods on developing undergraduate students' communicative competence at Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University.

This research employs general scientific approaches and methods: theoretical for analysis, generalisation of the main provisions of the research and clarifying the essence and features of the process of developing communicative competence; and empirical: a questionnaire, observations, testing and conversations for examining the level of undergraduate students' communicative competence.

This paper starts with the analysis of theoretical fundamentals of communicative competence in foreign language learning, its general components. It briefly describes some foreign language teaching methods focused on communication activities in foreign language

classes. Due to the data of the survey conducted at Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, the impact of implementing communicative foreign language teaching methods on developing undergraduate students' communicative competence was examined.

According to the study's findings, communicative foreign language teaching methods promote students' interest and foster their engagement in the learning process, raise their motivation and improve their communication proficiency in English. The combination of innovative and traditional technologies, such as writing essays or reports, constructing scenarios, modelling communicative situations, role-playing, case-studying, etc., plays a critical role in the foreign language classroom learning. Undergraduate students felt more confident in speaking and writing in English due to the learner-centered approach and numerous interactions and communication activities undertaken in a foreign language class.

Key words: *communicative competence, foreign language learning, undergraduate students, proficiency, communication.*

Introduction. The development of modern society requires highly qualified specialists in different fields of industry, who can communicate effectively and interact productively with foreign colleagues. Foreign languages enhance human intellectual potential, enable the formation of national and universal values, foster intercultural tolerance, assist in social integration and active citizenship, and broaden career opportunities. The ability to use a foreign language fluently is irrefutable proof of their professionalism.

The recognition of Ukraine as a candidate for EU membership (2022) actualizes the country's progress toward the realization of the Copenhagen criteria (1993, 1996), which must be met before joining the EU. The prerequisites for admitting a candidate (Chapter 26) in the field of education, in particular, are to provide for the convergence of national policies in the process of accomplishing shared goals, which are determined by the framework programs of EU cooperation in the field of education and training (European Commission, 2012) [7:22].

The following factors prove the fact that foreign languages are now in high demand across the world: 1) globalization and social process integration; 2) international integration in the sphere of education; 3) access to global experience and knowledge, information availability, and the possibility to get national and worldwide education.

Future professionals should be prepared to use a foreign language as a necessary means of intercultural communication to present their thoughts, ideas or comments and communicate correctly not only with their superiors or with colleagues and business partners but also with the guests, clients, visitors. That is why foreign languages serve as an important tool as well as a special mechanism for effective cooperation. Proficiency in foreign languages affects the formation of professional competence of future specialists. Thus, it provides competitiveness in the labour market and guarantees employment in the speciality [5:63].

The purpose of this study is to study the impact of implementing communicative foreign language teaching methods on developing undergraduate students' communicative competence at non-linguistic specialties of Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University.

Research methods and techniques. This research employs general scientific approaches and methods: theoretical for analysis and generalisation

of the main provisions of the research and clarifying the essence and features of the process of developing communicative competence; and empirical: a questionnaire, observations, testing, and conversations for examining the level of undergraduate students' communicative competence.

Results and discussion. Lately, the issue of developing students' foreign language communication competence has gained special importance. Various aspects of the problem have been highlighted in the research papers of both national and foreign scientists, such as A. Aleksyuk, M. Barna, N. Bibik, J. Berman, O. Bihych, V. Bondar, R. Gryshkova, O. Kucherenko, O. Lokshyna, V. Lyhovyy, O. Ovcharuk, O. Pometun, O. Savchenko, L. Sakun, S. Savignon, O. Tamopolsky, V. Fedorchenko, D. Hymes, R. Johnson, D. Shiles, U. Widowson et al.

The concept of «communicative competence» was first introduced by D. Hymes in 1966, who opposed Noam Chomsky's (1965) theory about the distinction between linguistic competence and performance. The concept was defined by D. Hymes as «an ability of a speaker to use the language correctly and appropriately in the given situation» [9:137].

Communicative competence is the ability to achieve communicative goals in a socially appropriate manner. It is organized and goal-oriented, i. e. it includes the ability to select and apply skills that are appropriate and effective in the respective context. It includes verbal and non-verbal behaviour. The application of communicative competence is serial, i.e. different processes and activities are coordinated in a typical sequence and require appropriate timing and control of specific behaviour. It is influenced by the behaviour of the other person and by the context and requires the preparedness and willingness to communicate with the other person for the benefit of all. Communicative competence can be acquired, i.e. the necessary skills are built up step by step through repeated, reflected practice and experience [6:49].

According to S. Nikolayeva, foreign language communicative competence can be interpreted as «the ability to meet successfully individual and social needs, act and perform set tasks. It is based on knowledge, skills, and abilities, but is not limited by them, obligatory covering personal attitudes of a person to them as well as his experience that allows to «interweave» this knowledge to that he has already known and has ability to the grasp a life situation in which he will be able to apply them» [8:12].

Current theoretical and empirical research on communicative competence is mostly based on three models: the Canale and Swain model, the Bachman and Palmer model, and the definition of communicative language competency components that were defined in the Common European Framework (CEF).

The theoretical framework offered by Canale and Swain (1980 – 1981) initially consisted of three basic components: grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. Subsequently, Canale (1983, 1984) supplemented this model with a sociolinguistic competence, which he called discursive competence.

Bachman and Palmer (1996) proposed a model that divides language knowledge into two main categories: organisational and pragmatic. According

to researchers, the organisational component refers to the formal structure of language (grammar and textual knowledge), while pragmatic deals with the ability to use language in context and includes lexical, functional and sociolinguistic knowledge.

The Council of Europe created the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR or CEF) between 1989 and 1996 to standardize language teaching, learning, and assessment across Europe. According to this document, «Communicative language competence can be considered as comprising several components: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic. Each of these components is postulated as comprising, in particular, knowledge and skills and know-how» [3:13].

The last few decades have witnessed many critical reviews of the theoretical frameworks of communicative competence in foreign language teaching. The discussion so far has shown that different models reflect different perspectives on the notion of communicative competence. However, the different competence models were developed in the early 1980s, they all shared the following four general structural components: strategic; linguistic; sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences (see Figure 1). These components are always intertwined in any language use; they are not separate «components» and cannot be isolated from each other.



Figure 1. The structural components of communicative competence [2]

Linguistic competence encompasses lexical (knowledge of idiomaticity, collocation, and spelling); phonological (ability to produce and understand the sounds of the language along with issues of stress, intonation, and connected speech phenomena); grammar, and syntactical aspects of a target language as a system.

Sociolinguistic competence refers to the social contexts of language usage. The sociolinguistic component has a strong influence on all language communication between representatives of different cultures, owing to its

sensitivity to social conventions (rules of politeness, norms governing relations between generations, sexes, classes, and social groups, linguistic codification of certain fundamental rituals in the functioning of a community).

Pragmatic competence primarily deals with the functional use of linguistic resources. Being competent pragmatically means being able to use language effectively in a context-appropriate situation. It comprises two sub-competencies: discourse and functional. *Discourse competence* is relevant to the ability to organize coherent and cohesive stretches of speech/written text in terms of register, logical sequencing, rhetorical effect and thematic organization (knowing how to use and respond to different types of speech acts – requests, apologies, etc.). Consequently, discourse competence is concerned with the organisation of words, phrases, and sentences for producing dialogues, speeches, poems, newspaper articles, etc. It is sometimes called *functional competence* and involves things like adjacency pairs (apologising and forgiving, asking and refusing, demanding and complying, etc.). Functional competence is concerned with using written or spoken discourse in communication for serving concrete functional goals.

Strategic competence deals with the ability to use language appropriately. It answers the question: When is it right to perform certain speech acts? Sometimes it is called cultural competence.

Communicative competence can be characterized as the capacity to understand, produce, and interpret various speaking events while considering not only their explicit meaning but also their implications; that is, what the speaker wants to say, what the listener wants to understand, their relationship, and the social context. As a result, communicative competence is concerned with the social, cultural, and psychological rules that govern the use of an appropriate language in a certain situation.

In order for graduates to communicate competently at the workplace, there are three basic requirements. Firstly, they have to be motivated to communicate. Secondly, they have to be knowledgeable about the situation and context in which they are communicating and the kind of communication expected and needed in certain situations at the workplace. Thirdly, they must be skilled at sending and receiving messages in the workplace context [11:67].

The specificity of a future specialist's foreign language proficiency results from the necessity of developing language proficiency for successful, fruitful, and efficient activities in a certain field of industry, which provides the potential for effective implementation of intercultural as well as business communication and a high level of implementation of the fundamental professional functions.

The broad expansion of international collaboration as well as the increasing interethnic connections require a qualitative improvement in university training. Those graduates who started their professional careers often suffer from a lack of knowledge in foreign languages rather than in purely practical subjects. Knowledge of at least one foreign language for young specialists is a sign of professional competence. In this regard, studying a foreign language is a method of developing professional communication abilities.

The development of professional foreign language competency necessarily requires updating the content, organisation, and methods of Foreign language for specific purpose teaching. The effectiveness of a specialist's professional proficiency in a foreign language involves the interdisciplinary integration of students' educational and professional activities, where foreign language interactions are used to overcome simulated professional-subject tasks and problems.

The traditional teaching style sees teachers as omnipotent actors in the classroom, responsible for transmitting pre-planned knowledge to pupils, where students are assumed to be passive objects of the learning process in this regard.

Nowadays, educators at high educational institutions must satisfy the rapidly changing requirements of the society as well as the expectations of the young generation of learners. The traditional approach, which has been the dominant form of learning and teaching for decades, is now insufficient in terms of providing students with learning opportunities. In terms of traditional education, conventional lecture-based approaches require students to learn merely by listening to a professor's instructions who presents subject-matter information primarily by explanation and demonstration, whereas a student remains as a passive listener. Thus, traditional approaches in learning settings are often substituted by such methods that are aimed at developing in graduating students a desire to develop themselves constantly rather than memorize academic or encyclopedic material.

Along with the traditional approach to teaching a foreign language, the active learning approach, which allows the students to become actively involved in the process of education, is getting more and more popular in high education institutions. It is critical to note that an active learning approach focuses on a student's personality because it allows each student to study at his or her own pace and according to his or her own learning style, rather than necessarily according to a rigid division of levels as is common in traditional classes. Active learning is also thought of as a method of learning in which students are actively or experientially involved in the learning process and where there are different levels of active learning, depending on student involvement [13:8].

Active learning is a student-centered approach to learning, and it assigns the responsibility of learning to the student. To ensure active learning in classrooms students should be self-regulated and have an active role in the decision-making process while engaged in cognitively challenging academic tasks. Active learning enhances the quality of student learning as students learn by creating meaning rather than memorizing information transmitted by the teacher. Active learning as a means to achieve qualitative, which is «deep», learning has become an accepted form of learning and teaching in higher education [4:45]

Future professionals must possess the necessary practical knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their duties, as well as the ability to perform these duties in a variety of foreign language communication situations.

Nevertheless, it is important to consider the certain specific features of foreign language for effective development of communicative competence

teaching to students of non-linguistic specialties at higher education institutions. Teachers who work with such students face problems that complicate the process of learning foreign languages. Among these problems are: an unequal level of training of students and their foreign language proficiency at the time of entry into non-language majors at a higher educational institution; a low level of student motivation to study a foreign language given that many non-linguistic specialties do not profile foreign languages as a subject of specialisation at a higher educational institution; an extremely short period of time for mastering a foreign language by students who are actually forced to start learning a foreign language «from scratch» (one class per week throughout the first two years), etc.

Thus, undergraduate students of Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University receive training based on specially designed textbooks, additional authentic materials (newspaper and magazine articles, videos, and Internet resources, etc.). Besides, the university encourages students to participate in foreign internship programs, the processing of regional sources, gaining practical experience both from traveling abroad and within the country, etc.

When acquiring a profession, students must be ready to daily foreign language communication, which is becoming more and more accessible thanks to the possibility of an international internship. Staying in a foreign environment and the need to contact native speakers on a daily basis positively affect the development of students' foreign language skills. Thus, foreign internships can be considered one of the most effective forms of foreign language teaching as well as a form of developing a foreign language communicative competence.

The main goal of communicative language teaching methods is to train students to be confident communicators in different situations through repetitive speaking practises and student-student interaction. While using a communicative teaching technique, student-student contact is critical. Student-student interaction, on the other hand, emphasises active engagement among the students themselves during language lessons, whereas conventional teaching approaches have been somewhat instructor-dominated, with students mostly learning through passive listening.

Communicative language teaching can offer new teaching methods and a more diverse teaching environment. Due to implementing active learning techniques, teachers may create a safe, stimulating, and enjoyable learning environment where students actively develop their own knowledge via collaboration, co-action, and connection with others. Among the active learning techniques and methodologies that are commonly applied in foreign language classrooms to promote students' interest and foster their engagement in the learning process are brainstorming, role-playing, dramatizing, and theatrical techniques; simulation; discussion; debates; problem-based learning; cooperative learning; case studies; peer teaching; and others. For example, role-playing helps students learn how to act professionally in different situations and use corresponding phrases while asking for information or responding to an interlocutor. It also improves their creative talents and develops their spontaneous communication skills.

Findings. The survey was conducted (September–January 2022) at Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University to study the impact of implementing communicative foreign language teaching methods on developing undergraduate students' communicative competence. In general, 92 second-year students from four faculties agreed to participate in the survey. In particular, 22 students of the Faculty of Geography, 20 students of the Faculty of Biology and Chemistry, 26 students of the Faculty of Engineering and Pedagogy, and 24 students of the Faculty of Arts. The students were divided conditionally into two equal groups: the Control Group (CG) (46 students) and the Experimental Group (EG) (46 students).

The survey research involved the following stages: diagnostic, procedural, and finale. At the diagnostic stage, students took a placement test aimed to examine their level of English language proficiency. The test included lexical, grammar, reading, listening, writing and speaking tasks. The procedural state involved more communicative-oriented methods of teaching in the EG and traditional methods of teaching in the CG. At the finale stage, students completed the test evaluating their lexical, grammar, reading, listening, writing and speaking skills.

According to the tests at diagnostic and finale stage, the levels of academic achievements of the core components of communicative competence of the students of the EG and CG at the end of the survey were determined. As we can see in *Table 1* the level of language competence in the EC has risen at the finale stage by 14,5%, reading competence by 11,2%, writing competence by 6,2%, and speech competence by 20,4%, compared to the diagnostic stage. Notably, that the students of the EC as compared to the students of CC achieved far higher results. If to compare competences in the CG between diagnostic and finale stage, we observe insignificant changes at all levels. At the same time, there are obvious differences at the finale stage between two groups. Namely, language competence has risen by 9,5%, reading competence by 12,5%, writing competence by 5,7%, and speech competence by 12,4%.

Table 1

**Dynamic of undergraduate students' communicative competence
[developed by authors according to the conducted survey]**

Competence	Control Group (%)		Experimental Group (%)	
	Diagnostic stage	Finale stage	Diagnostic stage	Finale stage
Vocabulary and grammar (language competence)	56,2	60,8	55,8	70,3
Reading competence	42,6	46,9	48,2	59,4
Writing competence	12,4	16,8	16,3	22,5
Speech competence	36,3	42,4	34,4	54,8

The comparative examination of undergraduate students' levels of speech, language, and operational competencies made it possible to estimate the positive impact of communicative methods of teaching on the development of undergraduate students' communicative competence.

Conclusions. According to the study's findings, communicative foreign language teaching methods promote students' interest and foster their engagement in the learning process, raise their motivation and improve their communication proficiency in English. The combination of innovative and traditional technologies, such as writing essays or reports, constructing scenarios, modelling communicative situations, role-playing, case-studying, etc., plays a critical role in the foreign language classroom learning. Undergraduate students felt more confident in speaking and writing in tourist English due to the learner-centered approach and numerous interactions and communication activities undertaken in a foreign language class.

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Розвиток сучасного суспільства вимагає висококваліфікованих спеціалістів у різних галузях промисловості, здатних ефективно спілкуватися та продуктивно взаємодіяти з іноземними колегами. Володіння іноземною мовою стало вирішальним для особистісного та професійного зростання фахівця. Метою цієї роботи є дослідження впливу комунікативних методів навчання іноземної мови на формування комунікативної компетентності студентів бакалаврату Тернопільського національного педагогічного університету імені Володимира Гнатюка.

У дослідженні використовуються загальнонаукові підходи та методи: теоретичні для аналізу, узагальнення основних положень та з'ясування сутності й особливостей процесу формування комунікативної компетентності; емпіричні: анкета, спостереження, тестування та бесіди для перевірки рівня комунікативної компетенції студентів.

У цій роботі здійснено аналіз теоретичних засад комунікативної компетентності в навчанні іноземної мови, її загальних компонентів. Коротко описано деякі методи навчання іноземної мови, орієнтовані на комунікативну діяльність на заняттях іноземної мови. За даними дослідження, проведеного в Тернопільському національному педагогічному університеті імені Володимира Гнатюка, виявлено вплив комунікативних методів навчання іноземної мови на розвиток комунікативної компетентності студентів.

Згідно з результатами дослідження комунікативні методи навчання іноземної мови сприяють зацікавленню студентів та залученню до освітнього процесу, підвищують їх мотивацію та покращують навички спілкування англійською мовою. Поєднання інноваційних і традиційних технологій, таких, як написання есе чи доповідей, побудова сценаріїв, моделювання комунікативних ситуацій, рольові ігри, кейс-стадінг тощо, відіграє вирішальну роль у навчанні іноземної мови в аудиторії. Студенти бакалаврату відчують себе більш упевнено в розмові та письмі англійською завдяки особистісно-зорієнтованому підходу, інтерактивних та комунікативних видах роботи, які використовувалися на заняттях іноземної мови.

Ключові слова: комунікативна компетентність, навчання іноземної мови, студенти, майстерність, спілкування.