THE ROLE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN MASTERING PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND DEVELOPING SPECIALIZED COMPETENCIES

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Abstract: In the context of globalization, rapid technological development, and the internationalization of higher education, foreign language proficiency has become an essential factor in acquiring professional knowledge and developing specialized competencies. The ability to understand and use foreign-language scientific literature, technical documentation, international standards, and innovative educational resources significantly expands opportunities for professional development. This article examines the role of foreign languages in mastering specialized subjects, improving professional qualifications, accessing international scientific achievements, and developing competitive specialists. Particular attention is given to the integration of foreign language education with professional disciplines in higher education institutions. The study also explores the importance of professional terminology, academic communication, independent learning, and digital educational resources in developing professional competencies. Based on a theoretical analysis of scientific literature and modern educational approaches, the article proposes methodological recommendations for integrating foreign language learning into professional training. The findings emphasize that foreign language proficiency should be considered not merely as an additional educational skill but as an integral component of modern professional competence.

Keywords: foreign languages, professional education, specialized knowledge, professional competence, scientific literature, technical terminology, higher education, international cooperation, academic communication, professional development, digital education

INTRODUCTION. The development of modern society is closely associated with scientific and technological progress, the expansion of international cooperation, and the continuous exchange of professional knowledge. Under these circumstances, the requirements for specialists are changing significantly. Today, professional competence is determined not only by theoretical knowledge and practical skills but also by the ability to access international information resources, understand modern scientific developments, and apply advanced technologies in professional activities.

Foreign language proficiency has therefore become an important component of professional education. In many fields, including engineering, medicine, economics, information technology, agriculture, construction, and industrial safety, a considerable amount of scientific and technical information is published in foreign languages. International scientific journals, technical manuals, research databases, professional standards, and innovative technological instructions provide valuable information that may not always be available in the learner's native language.

For this reason, specialists who possess foreign language skills have broader opportunities to study original scientific sources, compare different professional approaches, and acquire knowledge directly from international researchers and experts. This ability is particularly important in technical and scientific fields, where new technologies, equipment, production methods, and safety requirements are continuously being developed.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY. This study is based on a theoretical and analytical research approach aimed at identifying the relationship between foreign language proficiency and the acquisition of specialized professional knowledge. The methodological framework includes

systematic literature analysis, comparative analysis, generalization, and a competency-based approach.

Systematic literature analysis was used to examine scientific publications, educational theories, and methodological approaches related to foreign language learning and professional education. Particular attention was paid to the concepts of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), professional communication, academic literacy, and competency-based education.

Comparative analysis was applied to identify the differences between general foreign language learning and professionally oriented language education. This comparison made it possible to determine the importance of integrating linguistic knowledge with the practical and theoretical requirements of a particular professional field.

A competency-based approach was used to examine foreign language proficiency as a component of professional competence. Within this approach, the ability to use a foreign language is considered in relation to the practical tasks that specialists perform in their professional activities.

For analytical purposes, the role of foreign languages in professional development was examined through five interconnected components:

- Information and research competence – the ability to search for, understand, analyse, and use foreign-language scientific and professional information.
- Terminological competence – the ability to understand and correctly apply specialized terminology relevant to a particular professional field.
- Technical and professional communication – the ability to communicate with international colleagues, understand instructions, and exchange professional information.
- Academic competence – the ability to prepare scientific texts, presentations, reports, and research materials in a foreign language.
- Independent learning competence – the ability to use international educational resources for continuous professional development.

The study also considers the potential of integrating foreign language education with specialized disciplines through professionally oriented texts, case studies, technical documentation, presentations, and project-based learning.

It should be emphasized that this article is conceptual and analytical in nature. It does not claim to present the results of a newly conducted experiment or statistical survey. The proposed methodological approaches are based on the synthesis of existing scientific literature and educational concepts.

LITERATURE REVIEW. The relationship between language acquisition, knowledge development, and professional education has been widely discussed in educational and linguistic research. Various scholars have emphasized that language is not simply a communication tool but also an important instrument for acquiring, organizing, and transmitting knowledge.

One of the important theoretical foundations for understanding the relationship between language and intellectual development is the work of L. S. Vygotsky. In *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky explains the close relationship between language, thinking, and social interaction [1]. His theoretical approach demonstrates that language plays an essential role in the development of higher mental processes and the formation of conceptual understanding. From the perspective of professional education, this suggests that foreign language learning can support students in understanding specialized concepts and accessing knowledge developed in different linguistic and cultural environments.

An important contribution to the methodology of professionally oriented language education was made by Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters. In their book *English for Specific Purposes: A*

Learning-Centred Approach, the authors explain that English for Specific Purposes should be organized according to learners' specific needs and professional objectives [2]. This approach is particularly relevant to higher education because students studying engineering, medicine, economics, and other disciplines require different types of vocabulary, texts, and communication skills. Therefore, foreign language instruction should be connected with the professional requirements of the learners.

The literature reviewed demonstrates that effective professional language education should be based on learners' academic and occupational needs. It should combine general linguistic knowledge with specialized vocabulary, professional reading, academic writing, and practical communication. Consequently, foreign language proficiency can be considered an important instrument for expanding access to professional knowledge and improving the quality of specialist training.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. Foreign language proficiency therefore expands the information base available to students and supports a deeper understanding of their chosen disciplines.

The Role of Professional Terminology in Mastering Specialized Subjects. Professional terminology is one of the fundamental components of specialized knowledge. Every professional field has its own system of concepts, definitions, abbreviations, and technical expressions. Understanding this terminology is essential for interpreting scientific publications, technical documentation, and professional instructions.

Learning specialized vocabulary in a foreign language enables students to establish connections between concepts used in their native language and those applied in international professional communication.

For example, students in occupational safety and technical safety may encounter terms such as *occupational risk, hazard identification, personal protective equipment, industrial safety, emergency response,* and *risk assessment*. Understanding these terms provides access to international professional materials and helps learners compare national practices with international approaches.

Similarly, engineering students need to understand terminology related to mechanical systems, materials, manufacturing processes, automation, and equipment maintenance. Without sufficient knowledge of professional terminology, even students with general foreign language skills may experience difficulties when reading specialized documents.

Professional terminology should therefore be taught in context. Instead of memorizing isolated words, students should learn how terms are used in scientific texts, technical instructions, diagrams, reports, and professional discussions.

A systematic approach to terminology acquisition can include the following stages:

- identifying the most frequently used terms in a particular professional field;
- studying their definitions and equivalents in the native language;
- analysing their use in authentic scientific and technical texts;
- applying them in written assignments and oral presentations;
- using them in simulated professional communication situations.

This approach contributes to the development of both linguistic and professional competence.

Foreign Languages as a Tool for Developing Professional Competence. Professional competence includes theoretical knowledge, practical skills, the ability to solve professional problems, and readiness to perform occupational tasks effectively. In modern conditions, foreign language proficiency increasingly supports the development of these qualities.

A specialist who knows a foreign language can communicate with international colleagues, participate in professional training programmes, understand equipment instructions, and become familiar with international standards and technological developments.

For future engineers, for example, foreign language proficiency makes it possible to study the technical characteristics of modern equipment and understand manufacturers' documentation. In industrial enterprises, this can be particularly important when operating, maintaining, or repairing equipment produced abroad.

For researchers, knowledge of foreign languages provides access to a wider range of scientific publications and creates opportunities to participate in international research projects. It also helps them prepare scientific articles, conference presentations, and research reports for international audiences.

Foreign language proficiency is therefore not an isolated skill but a supporting component of professional competence. Its practical value becomes especially evident when language knowledge is applied directly to professional tasks.

Integration of Foreign Language Education with Specialized Disciplines. One of the important directions for improving higher education is the integration of foreign language teaching with professional disciplines. In many educational institutions, foreign language subjects and specialized subjects are taught independently. However, such separation may limit students' ability to apply linguistic knowledge in professional contexts.

An integrated approach makes it possible to combine language learning with the content of specialized disciplines. For example, students can study foreign-language scientific articles related to their specialization, prepare presentations using professional terminology, translate technical instructions, and discuss professional problems in a foreign language.

A Proposed Model for Developing Professional Competence through Foreign Language Learning. Based on the theoretical analysis, a conceptual model can be proposed for integrating foreign language education into the process of professional training.

The model consists of five interconnected stages:

Stage 1. Identification of professional language needs. The first stage involves identifying the foreign language skills required in a particular professional field. These requirements may include reading scientific literature, understanding technical documentation, using professional terminology, and communicating with international specialists.

Stage 2. Acquisition of specialized terminology. Students develop knowledge of the most important professional terms and concepts. Vocabulary is studied through authentic texts, definitions, technical documents, and examples from professional practice.

Stage 3. Development of professional reading and communication skills. Students learn to analyse scientific articles, interpret technical instructions, prepare professional presentations, and discuss specialized subjects in a foreign language.

Stage 4. Application of knowledge in practical tasks. Language skills are applied through professional projects, case studies, simulations, presentations, and independent research activities.

Stage 5. Assessment and continuous development. Students' progress is evaluated through their ability to understand professional materials, use terminology correctly, communicate effectively, and complete tasks using foreign-language information.

This expression illustrates the conceptual relationship between foreign language proficiency and other components of professional competence. It is not an empirically validated mathematical model and requires further practical investigation.

The proposed model demonstrates that foreign language learning should be connected with the actual professional activities of students. Its effectiveness depends on the coordination of language education, specialized subjects, practical assignments, and independent learning.

CONCLUSION. The theoretical analysis conducted in this study demonstrates that foreign language proficiency plays an important role in mastering professional knowledge and developing specialized competencies. In the context of globalization, technological progress, and international scientific cooperation, the ability to use foreign languages has become an essential requirement for modern specialists.

First, foreign language proficiency expands access to international scientific publications, technical documentation, professional standards, and advanced educational resources. This enables students and specialists to acquire knowledge directly from original sources and become familiar with modern developments in their professional fields.

Second, learning specialized terminology in foreign languages contributes to a deeper understanding of professional concepts and improves the ability to interpret technical and scientific information. The systematic study of professional vocabulary should therefore be an important component of professionally oriented language education.

Third, foreign languages support the development of professional communication skills. They create opportunities to exchange information with international colleagues, participate in scientific conferences, understand technical instructions, and contribute to international projects.

Fourth, integrating foreign language education with specialized disciplines can improve the practical relevance of university education. Professionally oriented reading, terminology-based learning, project work, case studies, and collaborative activities provide opportunities to apply language knowledge directly to professional tasks.

Fifth, foreign language proficiency is closely connected with digital literacy and lifelong learning. It enables individuals to use international educational platforms, electronic libraries, scientific databases, and digital professional resources more effectively.

- Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Foreign language teaching in higher education institutions should be adapted to the professional requirements of students' specializations.

- Professionally oriented texts, scientific publications, technical documentation, and international standards should be included in language learning materials.

- Cooperation between foreign language teachers and specialized subject lecturers should be strengthened.

- Students should be encouraged to prepare professional presentations, research reports, and projects using foreign-language sources.

- Digital educational platforms and international information resources should be used systematically in the learning process.

- Assessment should consider not only general language knowledge but also the ability to apply foreign language skills in professional situations.

In conclusion, foreign language proficiency should be regarded as an integral component of modern professional education. It does not replace specialized knowledge or practical experience; rather, it expands the opportunities to acquire, deepen, and apply them. Therefore, the integration of foreign language education with professional training is an important condition for preparing highly qualified, internationally competitive, and professionally adaptable specialists.

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