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THE CONCEPT OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO STUDENTS OF NON-PHILOLOGICAL FIELDS

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Abstract: This article provides an in-depth analysis of the development of professional competence in teaching English to students of non-philological specializations. In particular, it highlights the role of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), its psychological and methodological features, and its significance in the context of professional education. The author emphasizes the necessity of using authentic materials in English lessons and substantiates the importance of selecting textbooks and tasks that align with students' professional needs. Furthermore, the article explores the concept of professional competence, its components, and the role of language education in fostering these skills, based on the views of various researchers. Professional competence is defined not only as theoretical knowledge, but also as a complex set of qualities including practical skills, communicative abilities, psychological preparedness, independent thinking, and the ability to use modern technologies. Especially in technical fields such as mechanical engineering and robotics, mastering English in a professional context is considered a crucial factor in ensuring students' competitiveness in the global labor market.

Keywords: Professional competence, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), non-philological students, vocational English, authentic materials, subject-specific vocabulary, language for professional communication, communicative competence, interdisciplinary integration, professional development.

Nowadays, in non-philological higher educational institutions, teaching target English (English for Specific Purposes - ESP), especially the teaching of terminological vocabulary for acquiring professional and communicative competencies in specific fields, is becoming increasingly relevant. It is known that in higher education institutions, English is taught in two forms: General English and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Starting from the second year, students of non-philological specialties begin studying ESP.

Salmani-Nodoushan emphasizes that the needs of ESP learners are a significant psychological factor, and that materials used for learning professional English should not be simplified or modified, but should be "pure" and "authentic" [3,247]. Thus, ESP includes the following elements: purpose, specialization, learners' needs, existing conditions and authentic material. Hutchinson and Waters highlight in their research that ESP is one of the essential types of language teaching. They particularly note the importance of teaching terminological vocabulary and grammar relevant to specific fields, especially in technical education institutions. According to the principles of specialized learning, ESP does not differ from other types of language

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learning. It is an approach based on learners' needs and directed by specific and distinct reasons for learning[1,18].

In today's labor market, being a competitive specialist requires having and continuously developing professional competence. The term "competence" in English means "ability." It implies the capacity to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, demonstrate high professional skills, mastery, and talent. The term "competence" was first introduced into science in 1973 by David McClelland in his article "Testing for competence rather than intelligence" [2,290]. In his article, McClelland used this term to define the distinguishing behaviors of a competent specialist compared to an ordinary worker. He argued that possessing multiple diplomas and certificates does not always guarantee effective job performance, linking job efficiency to the concept of competence. American scholar D. Star explains professional competence as being manifested in a specialist's social relations and includes the following: professional aptitude, acceptance of professional norms and responsibilities through socialization, professional ethics, competitiveness, effective functioning within market relations, achieving academic excellence, acquiring new knowledge through research, enthusiasm for education, and the ability to demonstrate existing knowledge and abilities according to current demands [7,56].

Researcher V.A. Slastenin states that professional competence encompasses the theoretical, psychological, and practical readiness of undergraduate students [10,125]. T.I. Shamova defines "professional competence" as the possession of professional knowledge and the ability to work [12,14]. I.P. Smirnov describes it as the integration of knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to perform work-related tasks [11,67]. V.V. Serikov considers it to be the qualification knowledge required for carrying out professional activities and applying theoretical and practical knowledge [9,54]. V.N. Zimin believes that professional competence is not only about having knowledge, skills, and abilities, but also about exhibiting personal qualities and effectively functioning in society [5,38]. O.A. Kopus' focuses on the concept of professional linguodidactic competence and describes it as an integrated set of professional qualities that aid in developing knowledge, skills, and abilities manifested in professional activity.

A.V. Matienko states that professional competence encompasses not only knowledge and moral qualities but also long-term preparation for complex professional activity.

Researcher X.F. Maksudova identifies the following components of professional competence:

- Specialization component (professional knowledge, skills, and abilities);
- Social component (ability to use foreign languages and information technology in professional activity;
- Motivational component (self-directed professional development)
- Personal component (composure, responsiveness, alertness, agility) [8,24].

Yu.V. Lopatina includes the following features in professional competence:

- Competence in the field (complete mastery of the profession)
- Creative approach to work
- Clear goal setting
- Ensuring high quality of results
- Stress tolerance, risk-taking ability
- Leadership skills and team management
- Continuous self-development [6, p. 15]

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Based on the views above, a highly qualified specialist can be considered professionally competent if they possess in-depth knowledge in their field, constantly learn about new developments, can use modern information technologies, speak foreign languages, think creatively and independently, and possess leadership abilities.

As we live in an era of information and integration, and as our country continues to gain a worthy place in the global community – especially in the fields of mechanical engineering and robotics – it is crucial that specialists in robotics possess a high level of professional competence and communicative competence in English, which is the global language of communication.

In recent years, the demand for English language proficiency has significantly increased in non-linguistic higher education institutions, especially among students in technical disciplines such as engineering, robotics, and information technology. This trend reflects the globalization of the job market, where the ability to communicate effectively in English within one's professional domain is no longer optional, but essential.

Integrating ESP into the curriculum equips students with the language skills necessary to operate in international environments, read scientific literature, write reports, and participate in professional discussions. The role of the teacher in this context is not only to deliver language knowledge but also to serve as a facilitator who guides students toward achieving practical, career-oriented communication goals.

Moreover, task-based learning (TBL) and content and language integrated learning (CLIL) approaches have proven effective in ESP instruction. These methods encourage students to engage in meaningful language use by completing tasks related to their field of study, thereby reinforcing both linguistic and professional competencies simultaneously.

Assessment in ESP courses should also be aligned with real-world tasks. For example, evaluating students through presentations, report writing, or simulations of workplace scenarios can better measure their ability to apply English in a professional context.

The development of professional competence through ESP also supports lifelong learning. Students not only acquire immediate job-related language skills but also develop the ability to independently expand their professional vocabulary and stay current with innovations in their field by accessing English-language resources.

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