
Stimulating Foreign Language Teachers' Professional Competence

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Abstract

The article provides an essential data about what is competence, competency and professional competences of foreign language teachers. It analyses how these terms are interconnected to one another and how they contrast. It defines variety of viewpoints of different scholars. The article presents the general and specific background about the target concepts and their contemporary worth. It is possible to identify how the theory is applied into practice in the sphere of foreign language teaching. The details are given step by step in order to clarify how the study is progressed. It creates the logical flow for the reader.

Key words: *competence, competency, professional competence, foreign language teaching*

1. INTRODUCTION

As competence is the availability of knowledge, experience and skills, which are crucial for an efficient activity, it is substantially important in a teaching sphere to achieve productivity. Rapid changes in a demand of the world requires the foreign language (FL) teachers to be competent in different situations.

Development of professional competence is a dynamic process of incorporation and modernization of professional experience leading to the development of individual competencies, the accumulation of professional experience, involving ongoing development and self-improvement.

The professional competence of an FL teacher is a combination of professional and personal qualities necessary for successful teaching. A professionally competent teacher can be called a teacher who carries out his duties at a very high level. The development of professional competence implies the development of a creative personality, contributes to the formation of receptivity to teaching innovations, as well as the ability to adapt in a changing pedagogical environment. The social, economic and spiritual development of society directly depends on the professionalism of the teacher.

Professional competence of FL teacher is a blended form of professional and personal qualities necessary for successful teaching. Professional competence of FL teacher is an integrative set of teacher's qualities, reflecting the level of his personal, social and moral experience, determining the teacher's willingness to develop and improve professional activities

Modifications in an educational system in Uzbekistan requires FL teachers to improve their professional competence. The main purpose of education is to match current and future needs of the individual, society and the state, to prepare multi-developed personality of a citizen of the country, to be capable to social adaptation in the society, to start an employment, self-education and self-improvement. An open-minded teacher, predicting the results of his operations and modeling educational process, is a guarantee of achieving the goals.

2. METHODOLOGY

The article is based on meta-analysis, where the literature review is combined via quantitative findings from as many available scholars' research studies as possible that address a set of related research hypotheses for the aim of integrating the results. It has been carried out using descriptive method using valuable data collection from variety of sources.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The notion of "competence"

"Competence" means an effective use of theoretical knowledge in the activity, demonstrating a high level of professionalism, skills and abilities. The notion of "competence" came into the field of education as a result of psychological research. Psychologically, competence refers to unusual situations, how a specialist behaves in an unforeseen situation, communicates, takes new steps in interacting with competitors, uses ambiguous tasks, utilizes conflicting information, and progressively evolves in complex and complex processes.

According to Wikipedia.com "Competence is the availability of knowledge, experience and skills which are necessary for effective activity in a given subject area." "Competence" derived from Latin language and means suitable, appropriate, proper, capable and knowledgeable - the quality of a person who has comprehensive knowledge in any field and whose opinion is substantial and authoritative. Competence is an ability to carry out specific activities in a particular area based on the application of knowledge and skills and the manifestation of personal qualities that make this activity successful. At the same time, it is used together with the term of competency, which is the ability and enthusiasm to carry out professional activities in certain areas based on the implementation of the acquired competencies. (Okulovsky O. I. 2012)

In terms of the concepts of "competence" and "competency", it should be highlighted that competencies are the result of direct and indirect effects on the audience of a multitude of factors of an educational nature. Tatur Yu. G. (2004) notes "... only individual academic

disciplines or even the content of the educational program cannot be “responsible” for the formation of certain competencies. Competencies are also the result of educational technologies, methods, organizational forms, educational environment, etc.”; “... the competence of the individual is both potential and relative. In the process of studying at a university, only competencies can be assessed. ”. According to Khutorskoy A.V, under the competency we mean “a set of interrelated personality traits (motivation, knowledge, skills, ways of working), defined with respect to a particular range of subjects and processes necessary for high quality and productive activities in relation to them”. While, the competence is “a possession of a certain competency by a qualified person, including his personal attitude to it and to the subject of activity” (Khutorskoy. A.V., 2002). In other words, competence is the level of formation of competency as a theoretical construct.

Okulovsky O. I. considers a competence-based approach is a method that put emphasis on the effect of training, and the effect is not the amount of learned data, but the person’s ability to adequately act in various situations including in circumstances of uncertainty. Developing this concept in a broader sense, it is possible to mention that the specialist could be competent whose activities, actions, manners are adequate to solve problems. A number of studies have directly investigated the competence and its types. These studies include studies by Markova A. K (2017). She notes that the competence is based on the following components.

- Personal competence (self-development, self-representation);
- Individual competence (self-management, professional development and innovation);
- Social competence (co-creation of additional activities);

Kuzmina N. V. states the notion of «competence» as the ability of a teacher to transform a specialty, the carrier of which he is, into a means of shaping a learner's personality, taking into consideration the restrictions and prescriptions imposed on the teaching and educational process by the requirements the pedagogical norm in which it is implemented. N. V. Kuzmina distinguishes the following types of competence:

- Special and professional competence (in the field of the taught discipline);
- Methodological competence (in the field of ways of forming knowledge, skills and skills of students);
- Socio-psychological competence (in the field of communication processes);
- Differential psychological competence (in the field of motives, abilities, orientation of students);
- Auto-psychological competence or reflection of pedagogical activity

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is an international framework within which the language ability of learner is explained and assessed identically (assessment). However, CEFR is not limited to assessment. It is also about teaching and learning. Within CEFR, teaching and learning are based on communicative language teaching (CLT) within which four competences are taught during the class.

- **Communicative competence** – an ability and knowledge of a language user about how, what and where to speak appropriately from the view point of culture, traditions, shared rules and norms. An ability of understanding social meaning and being understood within a social context. It consists of four aspects: linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic/discourse, and strategic competence.
- **Linguistic or grammatical competence** – is the ability to be able to apply grammatical, lexical, syntactical, and stylistic rules to oral and written utterances. Linguistic competence is important since it explains how utterances and sentences are structured – structural conceptualization of language. However, these rules are not enough to accomplish a communicative goal since non-linguistic factors play a role in constructing social meanings.
- **Pragmatic/discourse competence** – an ability to interpret and convey meaning in context. To understand a dynamic meaning depends on time, space, and social context. While communicating people not only exchange meaningful structures and semantics but they transfer intentions. An utterance carries within itself such intentions of a speaker. This intention is tied to time, space, and social context. To be able to interpret these intentions in communications is to possess a pragmatic/discourse competence.
- **Sociolinguistic competence** – being aware of how culture(s), shared social rules and norms affect the way we describe things, objects, and processes within a society. Sociolinguistic competence targets at developing students' ability to understand how different cultures choice different grammar, syntax, semantic, stylistics in describing the same objects, subjects, and processes. It also tries to understand how something is spoken appropriately in a social context.
- **Strategic competence** – while lacking knowledge in linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences, strategic competence is being able to overcome such a shortage of knowledge by delivering a message from one language into another one with the help of means other than those in linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competencies. While communicating with different people in a foreign language we are not always aware of certain words. To be able to deliver the meaning of these unknown words without using these words themselves implies the possession of strategic competence.

While, in Uzbekistan competence-based approach started in 2017. Following six competencies are suggested as major ones.

1. Communicative competence

- to be perfect master of the native language and any foreign language and effective use of communication in order to communicate in society;
- to be able to express themselves clearly and concisely, both orally and in writing, to ask and answer questions logically based on the topic;
- to have social flexibility, loyalty to the culture of communication, ability to work in a team;

- to be able to defend their position in the conversation, to respect the opinion of the interlocutor;
- to be able to manage their passions in different conflict situations, make the necessary (constructive) decisions in resolving problems and disagreements.

2. Informative competence

- to have an access to available information sources (Internet, television, radio (audio-video recording), telephone, computer, e-mail, etc.);
- to follow a media culture in retrieving, sorting, processing, transmitting, storing, securing and using the necessary information from the media;
- to be able to create a database, select the main ones and analyze them;
- to be able to work with documents encountered in everyday life (be able to write simple greeting cards, fill out questionnaires, record information about himself in the hotel list, etc.)

3. Competence of personal development

- to be constant self-development as a person, to strive for physical, spiritual, mental and intellectual maturity;
- to keep lifelong learning, continuous increase of knowledge and experience independently;
- to have the qualities of self-control, honesty, integrity;
- to be able to solve problems in everyday life using what they have learned and life experience.

4. Socially active civic competence

- to be active in participating in events, happenings and processes in the community;
- to be aware of and fulfill their civic duties and rights
- to have a culture of labor, economic and legal relations in labor and civil relations;
- to serve the interests of society and family, to be generous to those in need, in pursuit of professional growth.

5. General cultural competence

- to be loyal to the motherland, kind to people and believe in human and national values;
- to understand and study works of art and works of art;
- to be faithful to cultural norms and a healthy lifestyle in dress, behavior;

- to know the values (customs, ceremonies, national and cultural traditions, etc.) acceptable for universal education, to treat them with respect;
- to respect humor and kindness, generosity, worldview, religious beliefs, national and ethnic characteristics, traditions and ceremonies;
- to be careful at preservation of the history, culture and cultural heritage of the people, adherence to the rules of etiquette to be healthy in society.

6. Professional competence

- to be good at a certain field;
- to have a high level of knowledge and skills in a chosen occupation?
- to have sufficient experience to carry out a certain type of activity that is associated with decision-making.

All above-mentioned competences reflect a competent person who has certain capabilities and training that allow him to act relevantly in numerous conditions, activate and update the necessary knowledge and skills, techniques and methods.

According to Nassira Boudersa, being a competent and well-performing teacher is one of the most important requirement in any educational institution. The teacher is considered the professional agent and the most directly responsible person in the process of learning; s/he is the one in charge of making/helping learners study well and get benefit or suffer from the quality of his/her teaching. Given this, the teacher and the quality of teaching are always under discussion and receive prevalent importance in education. Learning is a varying process since education is not something steady. For this reason, teaching should be enhanced and should move beyond traditional and theory-based basics; it should also be research-based and should have data-driven evidence. “Given principal significance that education exists in any society, teachers are expected not only to be competent but also to be professional in their correlated domains and subject matters. Thus, they have to possess a great deal of knowledge and skills concerning both teaching and assessment in order to meet the high demands and standards of quality education” (Nassira Boudersa, 2016). So that teachers could present qualified lessons, they should be involved to teacher training and professional development programs, which are combined with inspiring environments. They have positive impacts on the teaching/learning improvement. Comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge, teaching and assessment skills, clear and well-set educational goals, love and dedication, commitment and positive attitudes toward the teaching profession are central factors that all teachers’ training institutions have to consider substantially important. Teacher trainings have to make great efforts to enable teachers to enrich professional development.

The role of "professional competence" in a FL teaching sphere.

The term "professional competence" has been actively used since 90s of the last century and the concept became the theme of an exceptional, inclusive study of many investigators dealing with educational activities including T.I. Rudnev, G.Stein, Fullan M.G., Freeman D. and G. Crookes. Professional competence is the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and abilities that are demanded by an expert to carry out professional activities and to apply them at a high level. Professional competence does not mean the acquisition of individual knowledge and skills by a specialist, but rather the integration of integrated knowledge and actions in each independent field. Competence also requires continual enrichment of specialist knowledge, up-to-date information, comprehending important social requirements and the ability to search for new information, process it and apply it in its actions.

The professional competence of the FL teacher, is associated with his ability to solve professional issues and problems arising during the educational process. In the pedagogical dictionary edited by G. M. Kozhaspirova the following definition of the teacher's professional competence is given in: «The teacher's possession of the necessary amount of knowledge, skills and skills that determine the formation of his pedagogical activity, pedagogical communication and the personality of the teacher as the bearer of certain values, ideals and pedagogical consciousness»

In terms of Makeeva T. S., the professional competence of the FL teacher is a combination of professional and personal qualities necessary for successful teaching. A professionally competent teacher can be known as a teacher who carries out his educational activity at a very high level and achieves consistently high results in teaching. The development of professional competence leads to the improvement of a creative personality, contributes into the development of accessibility to teaching innovations, as well as the ability to adapt in a changing educational environment. The social, economic and spiritual development of the society directly depends on the professionalism of the teacher. Guerriero and R.Vai (2017) state that affective professional competences include aspects "such as career choice motivation, achievement motivation and goal orientation, but also teachers' belief about their subject area, about teaching, as well as their perceptions of teaching and of the profession".

Concerning above-mentioned scholars' opinion professional competence is obvious in the following cases:

- in complex processes;
- when performing uncertain tasks;
- in the use of conflicting information;
- to have a plan of action in case of unforeseen circumstances

Teachers can develop professional competence, as long as they follow these requirements:

- consistently enriching their knowledge;
- acquiring new information;
- understanding the requirements of the time;
- pursuing new knowledge;

They are processed and effectively used in their practical activities. At the core of professional competence are the following types:

1. Social competence - ability to act in social relationships, ability to communicate with subjects in professional activities.
2. Special competence - preparation for the organization of professional and pedagogical activity, rational decision of professional and pedagogical tasks, realistic evaluation of the results of activities, consistent development of, which are based on psychological, methodological, informational, creative, innovative and communicative competence.

They represent the following contents:

- a. Psychological competence - to create a healthy psychological atmosphere in the educational process, to establish positive communication with students and other participants of the educational process, to be able to recognize and respond to various negative psychological conflicts in a timely manner;
- b. Methodological competence - methodical organization of pedagogical process, proper definition of forms of educational or educational activity, purpose and methods to apply techniques effectively, to use tools successfully;
- c. Informative competence - search, collection, sorting, processing, and purposeful, efficient, efficient use of necessary, important, necessary, useful information in the information environment;
- d. Creative competence - the critical and creative approach to pedagogical activity, the ability to demonstrate their creative skills;
- e. Innovative competence - promotion of new ideas on improvement of pedagogical process, improvement of quality of education, increase of efficiency of educational process, their successful implementation in practice;
- f. Communicative competence - the ability to communicate warmly with all participants of the educational process, including students, to be able to listen to them, to have a positive impact.
- g. Personal competence - consistent achievement of professional growth, professional development, demonstration of internal capabilities in professional activity

h. Technological competence is the development of advanced technologies that enrich vocational and pedagogical education, the ability to use modern tools, techniques and technologies.

i. Extremely competence - ability to make wise decisions and act in the event of an emergency (natural disasters, technological disruptions), pedagogical conflicts. (Markova.A.K. 1999)

Numerous prominent researchers were also involved in the research of the study of the professional competence, among them are Guskey, T. R. "Staff development and the process of teacher change" (1996) and "Evaluating professional development" (2000), Hamilton, J. "Inspiring innovations in language teaching" (1996). J.K. Babansky, B.G. Ananiev, T. Shamova and others. There have been mentioned following aspects of pedagogical competence in the works of these researchers:

- The management aspect: as a teacher analyzes, plans, organizes, supervises and regulates the relationship with the educational process of students;
- The psychological aspect: in what way the identity of teachers influences to students as the teacher takes into consideration the individual abilities of students;
- The pedagogical aspect: in what forms and methods the teacher is teaching students.

The professional competence of FL teachers is a set of skills to structure scientific and practical knowledge for better decisions of pedagogical and educational goals.

In fact, professional competence is a system of linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural, strategic and discursive knowledge and skills that allow communicators to effectively interact in specific socio-communicative situations, as well as the skills and ability to apply existing knowledge in the field of the methodology of teaching foreign language (Ibrokhimova L. I. 2018). Thus, the competence of the teacher of a foreign language is a special professional competence.

According to Srebrovskaya T.B., professional competence of a foreign language teacher is an integrative set of teacher's qualities, reflecting the level of his personal, social and moral experience, determining the teacher's willingness to develop and improve professional activities, cognizance of language means of expressing semantic relations (2017). Based on the works of Kuzmina N. V and Markova A. K, the structure of the special competence of a foreign language teacher consists of the following components:

- Communicative competence (professionally focused on knowledge of a foreign language)
- Linguistic competence (supposing knowledge of the elementary theoretical provisions on language as a social phenomenon, its association with thinking, the culture of the nation, the origin and development of language)

The development of professional competence means the development of creative individuality, susceptibility to the formation of educational innovations, ability to adapt to a changing in the educational environment. Professional level of teachers is directly related to socio-economic and spiritual development of the society. On the basis of modern requirements, it became possible to identify the main ways of development of professional competence of the teacher:

- Working in the teaching unions, creative groups;
- Researching, experimental activities;
- Innovative activities, development of new educational technologies;
- Various forms of educational support;
- Active participation in educational competitions, workshops, master classes, forums and festivals;
- Summarizing own teaching experience;
- Using Informational Computer Technology (ICT).

According to the suggestions of Britishcouncil.com, so that English language teachers could develop their professional competence, they should follow these:

- Professional conduct (being prompt and punctual)
- Classroom management (achieving a firm discipline)
- Teacher's approach (being creative and organized)
- Language production (using authentic communication in social context)

Most scholars recognize that FL teachers' development must go on for the learner-output and institutional effectiveness. Planners and administrators also visualize that teacher development must be career oriented. Since the goal of most modern professional development efforts is improved performance by providing important information on crucial measures of teacher training increasingly is being considered (Guskey 1991). For the most part, however, this research has documented the inadequacies of professional development and, occasionally, proposed solutions (Wood and Thompson, 1990, 1992). However, people are still found passing comments on the practical relevance of such researches. Some researchers suggest that professional development efforts designed to facilitate change must be practitioner specific and focus principally on day-to-day activities at the classroom level (McLaughlin, 1990; Wise, 1991). Some reviewers argue the most effective professional development efforts approach change in a gradual and incremental fashion, not expecting too much at one time (Sparks, 1983). Others insist the broader the scope of a professional development program, the more effort required of teachers, and the greater the overall change in teaching style attempted, the more likely the program is to elicit the enthusiasm of teachers and to be implemented well. Many more studies have been undertaken on English as a second language curriculum implementation with the aim of improving teaching and learning, and on how to facilitate curriculum innovation in the English as a second language (ESL) context (Markee, 1997). However, only a few empirical studies have been conducted focusing on English as a foreign language curriculum implementation in general and teaching methods in

particular. (Gorsuch, 2000; Karavas-Doukas, 1995). Studies of the mandatory national English as a foreign language (EFL) curriculum at the tertiary level are still relatively scarce and limited in scope (Li, 2001, Jin and Yang, 2006).

The need for FL retraining courses is getting more attention to equip teachers with new knowledge and skills so that they could be competent when they face new challenges and reforms in education. Teacher training can enhance the professionalism of teachers who can contribute to the organization to achieve its goals. It is a professional and personal educational activity for teachers to improve their efficiency, ability, knowledge and motivation in their professional work (Chenari, et al., 2016). Retraining program offers one of the most promising roads to the improvement of instruction. It includes goal and content, the training process and the context.

Rapid technology advancements in the contemporary world imply that teachers' stock of knowledge and pedagogical skills becomes obsolete in a short time. This calls for constant upgrading to keep up with modern trends and knowledge (Wesch, 2009). Yet, new experiences demand new and specifically tailored approaches with regard to teaching methods, which justifies the need for teachers to be exposed to in-service training programs from time to time. This depicts in-service teacher training as a continuous, never ending process focused on acquiring and maintaining knowledge. (Okiror, Hayward, & Winterbottom, 2017).

4. CONCLUSION

In this article, main points of competence, competency and professional competence are discussed.

Competence is the availability of knowledge, experience and skills which are necessary for effective activity in a given subject area. Competency is a set of interrelated personality traits (motivation, knowledge, skills, ways of working), defined with respect to a particular range of subjects and processes necessary for high quality and productive activities in relation to them

Professional competence of the FL teacher is a combination of professional and personal qualities necessary for successful teaching. Professional competence of a foreign language teacher is an integrative set of teacher's qualities, reflecting the level of his personal, social and moral experience, determining the teacher's willingness to develop and improve professional activities.

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