

**FORMATION OF "SOFT" SKILLS IN THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATIONAL SPACE
WHILE TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

**FORMAÇÃO DE "SOFT SKILLS" NO ESPAÇO EDUCACIONAL DA UNIVERSIDADE
AO ENSINAR LÍNGUAS ESTRANGEIRAS**

**FORMACIÓN DE "SOFT SKILLS" EN EL ESPACIO DE UNIVERSIDAD EDUCATIVA
MIENTRAS SE ENSEÑA IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS**

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ABSTRACT: The article analyzes the appropriate methodological approaches in which the ideas of forming and developing of flexible skills can be applied in seminars and tutorials in disciplines such as "Foreign language", "Foreign language in the professional sphere", "Business foreign language" implemented at the university. The formation and development of flexible skills in such disciplines on the one hand, as an independent learning goal, involves the development of a range of skills necessary for the implementation of various types of activities, and on the other hand, as a means of developing foreign-language communicative competence, increasing the students' level of foreign-language socialization. Technologies for the development of critical thinking and problem-based learning, project activities, learning in collaboration, case studies, a rotational model of mixed learning can be applied for the formation and development of flexible skills at the university.

KEYWORDS: Soft skills. Hard skills. Professional competencies. Critical thinking. Project activities.

RESUMO: O artigo analisa as abordagens metodológicas adequadas nas quais as ideias de formação e desenvolvimento de competências flexíveis podem ser aplicadas em seminários e tutoriais em disciplinas como "Língua estrangeira", "Língua estrangeira na esfera profissional", "Língua estrangeira empresarial" implementadas na Universidade. A formação e desenvolvimento de competências flexíveis em tais disciplinas, por um lado, como um objetivo de aprendizagem independente, envolve o desenvolvimento de uma gama de habilidades

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necessárias para a implementação de vários tipos de atividades e, por outro lado, como um meio de desenvolvimento da competência comunicativa em língua estrangeira, aumenta o nível de socialização em língua estrangeira nos alunos. Tecnologias para o desenvolvimento do pensamento crítico e da aprendizagem baseada em problemas, atividades de projeto, aprendizagem em colaboração, estudos de caso, um modelo rotativo de aprendizagem mista pode ser aplicado para a formação e desenvolvimento de habilidades flexíveis na universidade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Soft skills. Habilidades técnicas. Competências profissionais. Pensamento crítico. Atividades do projeto.*

RESUMEN: *El artículo analiza los enfoques metodológicos apropiados en los que las ideas de formación y desarrollo de habilidades flexibles se pueden aplicar en seminarios y tutoriales en disciplinas como "Lengua extranjera", "Lengua extranjera en el ámbito profesional", "Lengua extranjera de negocios" implementando en la Universidad. La formación y el desarrollo de habilidades flexibles en tales disciplinas, por un lado, como objetivo de aprendizaje independiente, implica el desarrollo de una gama de habilidades necesarias para la implementación de varios tipos de actividades y, por otro lado, como un medio para desarrollar competencia comunicativa en lenguas extranjeras, aumentando el nivel de socialización de los estudiantes en lenguas extranjeras. Tecnologías para el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico y el aprendizaje basado en problemas, actividades de proyectos, aprendizaje en colaboración, estudios de casos, modelo rotacional de aprendizaje mixto. Se puede aplicar para la formación y desarrollo de habilidades flexibles en la universidad.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Habilidades interpersonales. Habilidades duras. Competencias profesionales. Pensamiento crítico. Actividades del proyecto.*

Introduction

Today, we all live in a turbulent world, which is commonly called VUCA - the world, according to the abbreviation of its characteristics: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity. There is a change in the vocational education paradigm and the formation of a new educational one, which will contribute to the transition of the society to a new social and economic organization. The transition to integrated education will allow us to fully reveal not only the individual potential of each person but also the collective potential of humanity.

In this regard, the role of mentors who supervise the participation of bachelors, masters, and postgraduates in real projects will increase. By analyzing the leading practices of countries where soft skills are formed and evaluated both within hard skills and separately, it is proposed to distinguish the zones "Future Skills" and "Heritage".

With the progress development in all spheres of life, the priorities for the formation of professional competencies, knowledge, skills and abilities of future graduates, which are necessary for students nowadays, are also changing. Today, graduates who are ready not only

to adapt to a dynamic society but also are capable of constant self-education, the ability to quickly change from one type of activity to another and combine various labor functions, are especially in demand. The acquired knowledge and professional qualities necessary in the labor activity are usually referred to by the term "competence". Today, the concepts of "skill" and "competence" are synonymous. In modern theory and practice, competence refers to the abilities, knowledge, skills of a specialist, thanks to which he solves any tasks or achieves the desired results. Thus, a competence is a set of formed skills.

Despite the fact that the changes have affected all levels of education, including additional ones, the teacher role remains the main one, contributing to the development of the students' skills of the 21st century. Today, there is a transition to an integrated model, which includes designing, solving cases, and internships, involving the use of simulators (simulators, models etc.). As an important result, along with the professional competencies, the development of students' abilities for communication, leadership, cooperation, diplomacy, building relationships, the formation of team, public, "intellectual" skills, the ability to present their ideas, make decisions, creatively solve open problems, including social ones is considered.

Among the competencies, a special place is given to soft skills, the concept of which has become an integral part of the global labor market in various fields over the last few decades. By definition, soft skills are a set of skills or competencies that could be meta-subject or common to various types of activities, and include some of the main features of cognitive and, in general, intellectual activity, emotional intelligence, self-management and productive interaction with other people, complex multi-level problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, judgment and decision-making, negotiation skills, cognitive flexibility, effective job search (GIZATULLINA; SHATUNOVA, 2019, p. 14).

Professional skills and the demand for them are accompanied by the following competencies: critical thinking, communication skills, teamwork.

It is not enough for a modern professional to be "smart". They must have the social and cognitive skills that will allow them to achieve success in their career: a combination of personality traits, social qualities, communication skills, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism.

The appearance of the term "soft skills" is one of the signs of new social requirements for personal development and personal qualities of the future specialist in the modern world. The term "soft skills" was formed by analogy with the computer term *software*. Scientists have not accepted a single interpretation of its meaning, although the literal translation of the term from English means "soft" or "flexible" skills, i.e., skills that do not belong to the professional

group. In the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), the concept of "soft skills" is considered as people's abilities to communicate with each other and work well together, for example, to carry out productive communication activities. But even this definition is rather inaccurate. Thus, today there is no universal definition of the concept of "soft skills". Each researcher interprets this concept through their own perception and sphere of scientific interests.

The formation and development of flexible skills in such disciplines as "Foreign language", "Foreign language in the professional sphere", "Business foreign language" at the university, on the one hand, as an independent learning goal, involves the development of a range of skills necessary for the implementation of various types of activities, and on the other hand, as a means of developing foreign-language communicative competence, increases the students level of foreign-language socialization.

Technologies for the development of critical thinking and problem-based learning, such as project activities, learning in collaboration, case studies, and a rotational model of mixed learning, can be applied for the formation and development of flexible skills in seminars and tutorials in the disciplines of "Foreign language", "Foreign language in the professional sphere", "Business foreign language" at the university.

Project activity has a great potential for the development of soft skills, in the process of which not only educational but also social management tasks are solved. In our opinion, the definition of "soft skills" as a set of non-specialized, "flexible skills", "cross-cutting" skills, qualities, and attributes of the individual that contribute to successful participation in the labor process and positively affect career and labor productivity can be considered universal (LIPPMAN *et al.*, 2015).

The organization of research activity helps to ensure students cognitive activity, involves them in solving of complex, problematic issues, updating knowledge, developing analytical skills, the ability to draw conclusions, stimulates creative activity, and emotional perception. This research activity teaches solving independent non-standard problems, thus contributes to the development of soft skills. The project activity as the most effective form of work in foreign language seminars and tutorials was chosen by the teachers of Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education (FBSU HE) "Armavir State Pedagogical University" ("ASPU"), by the Department of Foreign Languages. The features of this activity are the following: direct interaction between students, their joint coordinated activities, the ability to plan, generate ideas, interact with different audiences, and to present their own developments.

Methods

In this regard, one of the urgent research tasks is to determine the appropriate methodological approaches in which the ideas of forming and developing of flexible skills can be applied in seminars and tutorials in such disciplines as "Foreign language", "Foreign language in the professional sphere", "Business foreign language" and most effectively implemented at the university. Today, in the process of globalization, there is a widespread use of foreign languages for international communication, the growth of international tourism, and the expansion of the use of information and communication and digital technologies. Globalization also has an impact on modern higher education, which is characterized by integration processes and standardization.

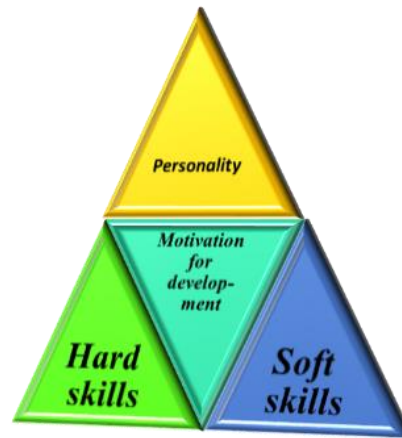
Russia's entry into the Bologna process has radically changed the structure of all higher education and continues to this day, requiring the solution of a great number of issues related to the development of new educational programs for three-level training: bachelor's (4 years), master's (2 years) and postgraduate (4 years).

The structure and content of all university undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate programs are developed in accordance with the federal state educational standards of the Russian Federation. In these programs, the main learning results aimed at developing students' universal, general, and professional competencies.

General professional and professional competencies are selected in accordance with the direction of preparation of each individual educational program and include the development of universal, highly specialized, and scientific skills, as well as skills that can be defined as professional skills (hard skills) (VETOSHKINA; POLYANOK, 2017). The term "hard skills" was formed by analogy with the computer term *hardware* (GALAZHINSKY, 2017).

The task of the Russian higher education system is to form students not only special competencies ("hard skills") but also to develop "soft skills" (ROBINSON, 2011).

Figure 1 – Skill development pyramid



Source: Devised by the authors

Initially, the usage of terms "hard skills" and "soft skills" was limited by economics and management, but recently these lexical units are increasingly found in the context of discussing various issues of professional education (T. A. Yarkova, I. I. Cherkasova, E. S. Bogdan, E. V. Galazhinsky, E. E. Dugai, L. A. Gushchina, A. K. Klyuev, A. A. Yashin) (IVONINA; CHULANOVA; DAVLETSHINA, 2017; BOGDAN, 2017; DUGAI; GUSHCHINA, 2012; Collins Dictionary, n.d.). Universal competencies are the same for all areas of bachelor's, master's, and postgraduate studies in higher education institutions and include the ability of thinking critically, evaluating modern scientific achievements, conducting research in interdisciplinary fields, successfully adapting to work in Russian and foreign research teams, communicating in an academic environment in Russian and foreign languages, as well as the necessary skills for professional and scientific self-improvement. These competencies are aimed at developing the so-called soft skills (VALEEVA, 2019), which become one of the most important components for a successful future scientist career.

The combination of activity and communication approaches in the implementation of communication and personal competencies related to non-professional skills increases the effectiveness of future specialists. Soft skills can be divided into 4 groups: 1) basic communication skills (the ability to convince, negotiate, argue, work in a team, the ability to do business correspondence, make presentations, etc.); 2) intellectual thinking skills (search and analysis of information, creative thinking, design skills, competent decision-making); 3) self-management (the ability to manage emotions, behave correctly in stressful situations, plan and set goals, use your time effectively, and control your emotional state); 4) foresight

management (knowledge of the skills of setting tasks, project management, motivation, control).

All the groups mentioned above are applied to any field of knowledge. Teaching the disciplines "Foreign language", "Foreign language in the professional sphere", "Business foreign language" at the university become a source for all-around intellectually developed person, providing an opportunity for students to communicate on any topic: everyday, scientific, political, and professional, uniting the business and consumer cultures of different countries. Teaching a foreign language includes linguistic competencies, but, at the same time, sociolinguistic, intercultural, pragmatic and social ones occupy an equally important place. While teaching a foreign language on the bases of the axiological approach, a fully developed personality is formed (LEONTIEVA; KOTENKO, 2017, p. 155-156).

The main purpose of teaching the subject "Foreign language" at the first level (bachelor's degree) is to develop students' foreign language communicative competence, which allows them to carry out business communication in oral and written forms in a foreign language(s). The main tasks include: formation of knowledge and skills of carrying on every day and business communication in oral and written forms in a foreign language(s), considering the requirements for business oral and written communication; formation skills of pronouncing norms, grammatical phenomena, syntactic structures, rules of word formation and word compatibility and their usage in oral and written business communication in a foreign language(s); development of skills and abilities of assimilation of lexical and phraseological material in the process of working on coherent, semantic-complete texts; reading skills in order to find the necessary information; formation of methods of making judgments in interpersonal business communication in a foreign language, using adequate language forms and means; development of oral and written communications skills in a foreign language(s); formation of the ability to freely perceive, analyze, and critically evaluate oral and written business information in a foreign language(s).

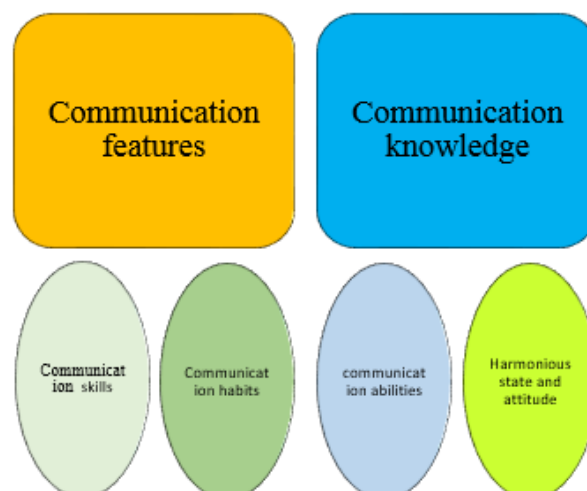
The main purpose of teaching the disciplines "Foreign language in professional communication" and "Business foreign language" at the second level (master's degree) is the ability to apply modern communication technologies in a foreign language(s), for academic and professional interaction and the ability to project pedagogical activities based on special scientific knowledge and research results.

The main tasks include: the study and practical usage of lexical, grammatical, and phonetic units in the process of generating and perceiving foreign-language utterances; the formation of skills for building holistic, coherent, and logical utterances (discourses) of

different functional styles in oral and written professionally significant communication based on the understanding of various types of texts while reading and listening; formation of skills to use the language for certain functional purposes, depending on the characteristics of social and professional interaction: depending on the situation, the status of the communicators and the addressee of speech and other factors related to the pragmatics of speech communication; the formation of skills to use and transform language forms in accordance with the social and cultural spheres of interaction in the field of professional communication.

The main goal of teaching the discipline "Foreign language" at the third level (postgraduate study) is 1) the readiness to participate in the work of Russian and international research teams to solve scientific and educational problems; 2) the readiness to use modern methods and technologies of scientific communication in the state and foreign languages. The main tasks include: expanding and deepening knowledge about the norms, the methods and technologies of scientific communication, stylistic features of presenting the results of scientific activity in oral and written form in the state and foreign languages; improving the skills of using a foreign language as a means of professional communication for solving scientific and scientific-educational tasks; improving the skills of following the basic norms adopted in scientific communication in the state and foreign languages; improving the skills of prepared monologue speech, as well as untrained monologue and dialogic speech in the situation of official communication; improving the skills of analyzing scientific texts; improving the knowledge of methods and technologies of scientific communication in the implementation of professional activities in state and foreign languages.

Figure 2 –The structure of communicative competence



Source: Devised by the authors

The development of communicative competence is an integral and the most important part of teaching the disciplines "Foreign language", "Foreign language in the professional sphere", "Business foreign language". The development of flexible skills should be considered, on the one hand, as an independent goal of training, which involves the development of several skills necessary for the implementation of various types of activities (research, organizational, etc.), and on the other hand – as a means of developing foreign-language communicative competence, increasing the level of students foreign-language socialization in foreign-language. While teaching such disciplines as "Foreign language", "Foreign language in the professional sphere", "Business foreign language", the following technologies are actively used in the formation and development of flexible skills: the development of critical thinking, problem-based learning, project activities, learning in cooperation, case study, web quest, gamification.

The articles on the problems of "Formation of Soft Skills in Students", presented in the collections of articles of the II All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference "The Actual Issues of Modern Foreign Language Education", the VII National Scientific and Practical Conference "Thinking and Understanding in the Process of Teaching Foreign Languages in the 21st Century", the All-Russian scientific and practical conference "National Languages and Cultures: Thinking and Understanding in The Context of Globalization", Regional and University Round Tables "Education for the Modern World: a New Model of Skills", "Formation and Development and Softs Skills for the Implementation of Project and Research Activities in Teaching a Foreign Language"; Regional and University Competitions of Scientific-research Projects in foreign languages, University Seminar "Technologies for the Formation of Language Competence of Students of a Pedagogical University", gives us such definitions as: "the role of soft skills", "soft skills in education", "innovative technologies for the development of soft skills "language competence", "critical thinking", "cooperation", and "emotional intelligence".

Thus, soft skills are flexible skills and abilities, allowing a person to build joint activities successfully and productively with other people. The discipline "Foreign language" at the same time acts as the significant resource for the student's development of communicative universal actions uniting with soft skills. It is the development of communicative competence, which, itself, is one of the universal actions of the student according to the Federal State Educational Standard of Main General Education, and at the same time, is an integral and even the most important part of teaching the discipline "Foreign language". To the technologies and forms of work in seminars and tutorials, we include the following: project activities, training in

cooperation, case studies, and a rotational model of mixed learning. The usage of these technologies and forms helps the students in the acquisition of communicative competence in foreign language classes. That's why students are in a constant communication and interaction with each other, trying to find compromises, form the ability to listen to the others' opinions, and come to a consensus, which means soft skills.

Results

In the context of the development of trends in higher education and the active search for innovative forms of teaching foreign languages, focused on the student, a new image of the teacher is being formed. Today, the teacher at ASPU is not only the head of the educational process but also a consultant, educator, project manager, communicator, researcher, and an innovator.

Based on the FSBEI HE "Armavir State Pedagogical University", a scientific and educational laboratory "Theory and methodology of the development of 'soft skills' in the modern scientific paradigm" was created. The objectives of the laboratory are: the development of scientific-technical cooperation with educational, scientific, and project organizations; also, cooperation with business communities to strengthen the integration processes of education, science and production; the increase efficiency of research and innovation activities of the University; the implementation of scientific projects of a theoretical and applied nature; ensuring the integration of the results of scientific work in the educational process, to improve the quality of the educational process, creating opportunities for talented young people to participate in the research work of the University.

The objectives of the laboratory are to organize, conduct, and perform research and educational works on a contractual basis; create intellectual property objects; held scientific events: conferences, symposiums, seminars, etc.; carry on grant activities; provide scientific metric indicators of the Laboratory; participate in the implementation of federal and regional scientific programs, projects, in the development of scientific forecasts and scientific and technical expertise; preparation and testing of educational and methodological materials (training course programs) considering innovative technologies, including in the format of advanced training and additional educational services. The main areas of Laboratory activity are the following: "Formation and development of 'soft skills' of early and secondary school age children"; "Development of students 'soft skills' in the GME, SPE and HE programs"; "Language competence, critical thinking, cooperation and emotional intelligence"; "Theories

and methods of development of social and behavioral skills"; "Multilingual and multicultural communication"; "Theories and methods of cognitive skills development"; and "Cognition, thinking and language in the aspect of their interaction".

Considering the strategic goals and objectives of the society and the state development, the strengthening of Russia in the system of globalization, education, as the key to success in achieving these goals, must be taken to a new level and followed the requirements of the modern world in the students training. At Armavir State Pedagogical University, while teaching the discipline "Foreign Language", the teachers focus on the development of project and research activities. These activities improve the level of soft skills, develop information, and operational literacy, oral communication, the ability to make decisions independently, work in a team, show creativity and a positive attitude.

To project the optimal trajectory of soft skills development, a survey of 2nd-year undergraduate students of ASPU was carried out. The test "Student self-assessment of soft skills development" worked out by the teachers of the research and training laboratory. Theory and Methodology of soft skills development in the modern scientific paradigm based on FSBEI HE "Armavir State Pedagogical University" was used.

Table 1 - Testing "Student self-assessment of soft skills development"

No.	Statements	Has no soft skills	Has fragmentary soft skills	Has not fully soft skills	Has soft skills
1.	When communicating with people, I pay attention not only to what they say but also how they behave at the same time				
2.	It is difficult for me to coordinate the achievement of team goals and the decision of personal interests.				
3.	It is difficult for me to predict the reaction of others to my words or actions.				
4.	When I am told that something is "impossible", I start looking for ways to get over the limitations.				
5.	Others address me for real help in various life situations.				
6.	I consciously engage in professional social skills.				
7.	I compare my ideas about the interests and hobbies of others.				
8.	I train myself to develop my skills and competencies in oral and writing forms.				
9.	I work for the better conditions for myself in the negotiations by all possible means.				
10.	I offer several solutions to the problem at once.				
11.	I pursue a long-term cooperation in the negotiations.				
12.	I ask for specific help from others if I can't solve the problem alone.				
13.	My actions allow others to better understand their interests and needs.				

14.	I do more than what formal relationships require of me in order to gladden surrounding people and thereby create a good mood for myself.				
15.	People around me often emphasize my creative approach to solving problems.				
16.	I take part in projects to develop my skills and give me the opportunity to express myself in the professional sphere.				
17.	It is easy for me to consciously move from one meaningful topic of communication to another.				
18.	I formulate professional and career goals for myself.				
19.	I check the truthfulness of new information in various ways.				
20.	I deal with the consequences of my decisions independently.				
21.	The people always receive support on professional issues from me.				
22.	I actively participate in the common search for solutions to team problems.				
23.	I practice exercises to develop a creative approach to solving problems from various spheres.				
24.	Most often, my mistakes in solving problems are related to the inflexibility of views.				
25.	I clearly understand my role in the team solution of the problem.				
26.	I consciously expand the area of my professional knowledge into related spheres.				
27.	I use self-regulation techniques under high cognitive and emotional pressure/in stressful situations.				
28.	I use various approaches, including interdisciplinary ones, to analyze the problem.				
29.	I adapt quickly to changes in plans.				
30.	The people around me confirm that I exactly understand their emotions and states.				

Source: Devised by the authors

Table 2 – "Levels of competence ownership and their significance"

%	Level	Meaning
100-90	Has fully soft skills	It involves a special high degree of competence development. The student with proper knowledge of the competence shows it both in standard and in new, complex situations. The student helps other people to demonstrate their competence effectively.
80-70	Has not fully soft skills	The student successfully uses the competence to solve standard work tasks. In new, non-standard situations, the competence is not fully reflected. There are no manifestations of the initial level of competence development. The student clearly understands the essence of the competence, demonstrates behavioral models confirming it.

60-50	Has fragmentary soft skills	The student has a fragmentary competence, in the form of individual elements. Competence manifests itself in simple or familiar situations. Competence does not manifest itself in unfamiliar, complex situations.
от 40 и ниже	Has no soft skills	The student do not has the competence. The student rarely demonstrates the behavioral manifestations and models characteristic of the competence or does not demonstrate at all, in addition, the student demonstrates negative behavioral models. The student does not understand the importance of competence, does not try to apply and develop it.

Source: Devised by the authors

The results showed that most students are characterized by "not fully" proficient (70%) in competencies such as tolerance, critical thinking, teamwork skills, creativity, emotional intelligence, logical connections, cognitive flexibility, development of communication culture, empathy, and professional self-determination.

Table 3 - Test results "Student self-assessment of soft skills development"

Test results		
No.	Competencies	%
1.	Tolerance	60
2.	Critical thinking	70
3.	Creativity	70
4.	Teamwork skills (collaboration)	70
5.	Logical connections decision making	70
6.	Emotional intelligence	60
7.	Cognitive flexibility of communication culture development	70
8.	Empathy	70
9.	Professional self-determination	60

Source: Devised by the authors

Based on the data obtained, the main ways of solving problems for the development of insufficiently formed soft skills were identified. In particular:

* The usage of a technological approach in the practice of teaching foreign languages (technologies for the development of critical thinking, problem-based learning, project activity, learning in collaboration, case study, web quest, gamification);

* The usage of the extracurricular activity (organization of Olympiads in foreign languages, creative competitions, research projects, etc.);

* Experimenting with learning formats, in particular, using various models of blended learning (STAKER; HORN, 2012), primarily the Rotation model, a variation of which is now the well-known Flipped-Classroom model ("inverted classroom").

Figure 3 –Key competencies model (Soft skills)



Source: Devised by the authors

Teachers of the Department of Foreign Languages and methods of teaching, Institute of Russian and Foreign Philology (IRFP) ASPU actively use extracurricular activities, including annual Olympiads of various levels: the regional Olympiad in English "ALTERNATIVE-2021" (among students of grades 9-11), the regional Olympiad in English "Perspective-2021" (among students of grades 3-4), "Level Up-2021" (among students of grades 5-6), the regional Olympiad in English "Armavir Achievement Test (AAT)" (among students of grades 7-8). The students of the Institute of Russian and Foreign Philology were the expert's assistants during the Olympiads. The aim of students' participation is the formation and development of professional self-determination, self-realization, self-expression, foreign language communicative competence and its components - speech, language, socio-cultural, compensatory, educational and cognitive, organizing and conducting independent and objective monitoring of the level of skills formation and abilities in various types of speech activity.

Participation of ASPU students in annual regional and university research projects competitions of foreign languages contributes to the formation of flexible learning skills in cooperation; educates students in mutual assistance, desire and ability to empathize, improves the overall culture of communication and social behavior in general; forms creativity and activity while learning the subject. In general, the usage of project method allows both to improve the communicative competence and to solve a number of important tasks, namely: 1) increase motivation for the language you are learning; 2) teach students to apply the acquired interdisciplinary knowledge and skills in practice while solving problems; 3) to navigate in the information space; 4) develop a communicative culture, empathy, tolerance, critical and creative thinking; teamwork skills; and 5) to master analytical skills, the ability to establish causal relationships, predict the results and possible consequences of various solutions of the problem.

Project activity is aimed at the formation of such key competencies as: scientific, presentational, communicative, searching, informative, which contribute to the individual development in the educational process. The teaching staff of the Department of FL and MT of ASPU carries out the innovative approach to the students participation in research activity, including annual international, all-Russian, national scientific and practical conferences, regional and university round tables, the All-Russian festival "Science 0+", "Science Week of ASPU", scientific seminars with publication of articles as the result of their research activity, develops students' abilities for communication, leadership, diplomacy, building relationships; the formation of team, public skills of creative thinking, the ability to present their ideas, make decisions and creatively approach for the solution of open problems. Mastering these competencies creates conditions for the manifestation of educational initiatives in all types of activities, as well as for determining a person's educational trajectories based on healthy competitive relations, forms innovative competence in order to maintain the stability, integrity and effectiveness of language training, determines the success of future professional students' activities, helping them successfully realize themselves in a rapidly changing world.

Project activity, involving a wide range of topics and the active use of ICT technologies, clearly demonstrates the possibilities of implementing students' individual educational routes. The essence of the project methodology is to stimulate interest in certain problems, the solution of which involves the certain knowledge and the practical application of existing and acquired knowledge in practical activities. Modern education is influenced by the globalization processes of integration, standardization and digitalization: in Russia, there is a tendency to include the

so-called "soft skills" in the professional training system at the same level as traditional and distance learning.

Self-independent work in the distance learning system leads to the expansion of the information field while the students are working on the project and the formed flexible learning skills in cooperation foster in them such moral values as mutual assistance, desire and ability to empathize; improve the general culture of communication and social behavior in general, form creative abilities and activity in the development of the subject. These universal, meta-subject skills are: creativity, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, communication skills, self-organization, cooperation, etc. They are the key competencies of the 21st century.

Discussion

In the domestic and foreign literature, various definitions of the concept of "soft skills" are presented. In the theoretical developments of Russian and foreign researchers on this topic, you can find the following content analysis of the definition of "soft skills": "people skills", "non-professional skills", "skills for social progress", "life skills", as well as "soft competencies", "soft skills" or "flexible skills". To concretize and more accurately describe the selected concept, we would like to give a few modern definitions. From the point of view of the specialist professionalism in any field, L. Abashkina (2010) believes that soft skills are "human qualities, without which even the best professional will not be able to achieve a good result [...]".

O. Sosnitskaya (n.d.) defines the concept of flexible skills as unified skills and personal qualities that increase the efficiency of work and interaction with other people. If we consider the category of motivation, O. Ivonina considers soft skills as

a social and labor characteristic of a set of knowledge, skills, and motivational characteristics of an employee in the field of interaction between people, the ability to competently manage their time, the ability to persuade, negotiate, leadership, and emotional intelligence (IVONINA; CHULANOVA; DAVLETSHINA, 2017, p. 90).

Batsunov (2018, p. 15) emphasizes that "[...] soft skills are unified skills and personal qualities that increase the efficiency of work and interaction with other people: development management, competent management of your time, the ability to convince [...]".

D. Golulman, by giving life examples, states that "[...] the effectiveness of a person in professional activity directly depends on the level of soft skills development, which, in his opinion, distinguish successful specialists from unsuccessful ones [...]" (GOLEMAN, 2009, p.

118; GOLEMAN; BOYATSI; MCKEE, 2008, p. 61). E. Gaiduchenko, A. Marushev (n.d.) define soft skills as skills that help "[...] to find a common language with other people, to establish and maintain contacts with them, to be able to convey their thoughts".

Nowadays, education is being transformed into a connected ecosystem in which a variety of educational elements will coexist, from large hubs to small centers. It can also include online courses and forums, mobile apps and devices, additional reality apps, mass games, and many other educational formats. There are three areas of the educational ecosystem. The first one is global (online) educational platforms that will become the main providers of knowledge and content. So far, online education exists in parallel with official full-time education, but in higher educational institutions more and more, mixed (blended) educational programs are being created, in which online and offline organically complement each other. With the introduction of mixed forms of education, the emphasis in the work of teachers changes from the transfer of knowledge to other goals (for example, cross-disciplinary and meta-skills, the development of the emotional sphere).

The second one is the development of mobile educational platforms, which will simplify the educational process outside institutes and universities and help integrate with education taking place in various urban areas.

The third one is practice communities, a group of people who are united by a common interest and support each other in improving and transferring skills in the field of their interests.

In 2016, at the International Economic Forum in Davos, a list of competencies that will be in the most demand in 2020 was presented. The leading positions are occupied by such skills as: the ability to solve complex problems, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork skills, and emotional intelligence. Speaking about the skills needed in the future, P. Griffin (n.d.), founder of the Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ATC21S) research project and director of the Assessment Research Center at Melbourne University, noted that "each country has a different set of [skills], but it always has to do with the skills needed in the 21st century: critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills, creativity, and digital behavioral skills". Skills of the XXI century are also called 4 C's: Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication, Critical thinking (KIURU; POPOVA, 2018; POPOVA, 2019). These four skills, according to many experts, are the basis for the life success of an individual student and the possibility of progressive development of the society.

The study of a foreign language involves a wide and diverse usage of interdisciplinary relations, and is characterized by multilevel, multifunctional, humanitarian orientation, focus

on personal development and its social adaptation to the conditions of a rapidly changing multicultural and multilingual world (CHECHEVA, 2018).

The linguist Antonella Sorace, in her works on the multilingualism and bilingualism study, notes that speaking and reading in a foreign language contributes to the effective development of a person's communicative competencies. She claims that bilingual learners have improved language skills, a better understanding of other point of view, and excellent mental flexibility in dealing with complex situations, compared to monolingual ones (SORACE; LADD, 2004).

According to A. Sorace (n.d.), when applying for a job, employers should give preference to multilingual candidates or those who speak at least one foreign language, because employees with knowledge of a foreign language communicate better, cooperate successfully, negotiate and come to a compromise.

In many foreign language educational programs, the training of flexible skills: communication, teamwork, and presentation is paid much attention. We examine flexible skills such as leadership and time-management.

During normal teamwork, there is a constant distribution of roles, and strong students inevitably become leaders, which contributes to the formation of such a skill as leadership, which develops students' confidence in negotiating, presentation, and communication skills, the ability to navigate quickly in a large flow of information, to see, and choose the main and suitable one.

Much attention is paid to the formation of time-management skills, which implies the ability to set tasks and distribute working time. It is necessary, while learning foreign languages, to help students learn how to manage their own time. The developed ability to competently manage your time, quickly find the necessary information - this is one of the distinctive indicators of a good specialist.

These types of soft skills development should be characterized by the usage of texts, vocabulary, closely related to the field of future specialists' activity in English, as well as contain information about personal growth, motivation, for the implementation of the goals of professional students' education and personal growth. Undoubtedly, the sources of articles and materials should correspond to the novelty and rely on modern data. Thus, we see that foreign languages are a good platform for the development not only specialized knowledge but also the soft skills that are in demand today.

The problems that can be found while training soft skills can be quite obvious: on the one hand, the complexity of evaluating the results achieved, and on the other hand, the weak

level of interaction between the teacher and the students. Besides, there is a question about a new form of certification of a future specialist, the level of formation of his flexible skills, both in the educational programs overall, and in the individual disciplines in particular. A separate question is if the teacher is willing to take responsibility for the formation of students' flexible skills, because, he/she must have them and understand how to achieve a particular result by any effective methodological techniques.

Insufficient attention in English seminars and tutorials to the development of soft skills, the practical skill of which still belongs to the hard skills group, can lead to many questions related to the fact that this development is the personal responsibility of each student, although a significant part of such skills is implicitly part of the general cultural and professional acquired competencies of the student (YARKOVA, 2016).

Different professions have a variable ratio of hard skills and soft skills, which are divided into three groups:

1. Professions in which hard skills prevail over soft skills: employees who have professional skills, but do not know how to work in a team;

2. Professions in which both types of skills (hard and soft skills) are equally required: these professionals require a set of professional skills, as well as sociability, organization, patience, and goodwill;

3. Professions in which soft skills prevail: specialists who have professional skills, but the ability to communicate, speak publicly, listen, win over the interlocutor are dominant (BIKKULOVA, 2020).

Summing up the above-mentioned, we can note that soft skills are the competencies of the future, and among two specialists, the more successful will be the one with more developed competencies.

Conclusion

Nowadays, there are many models of "soft skills", but they have not only differences but also similarities. Many researchers consider communication skills, decision-making, and time management to be the main elements of the model. The influence of the formed "soft skills" and "hard skills" and their continuous development for successful achievement of the set goals, competent use of skills, knowledge and abilities in professional activity and for achieving competitiveness in the labor market remains unquestionable. Unformed "soft skills" can destroy the career of any specialist who perfectly possesses professional skills.

We have been examined the question of the discrepancy between the traditional way of teaching and the needs and expectations of the modern generation of students and employers. The analysis of studies on the soft skills formation while teaching foreign languages at the university, the conditions for the soft skills formation associated with overcoming the main contradictions of the traditional way of teaching allows us to make several conclusions. While learning foreign languages, the individual nature of training prevails, rather than frontal forms of work that hinder the development of communicative competencies. The most popular soft skills that determine the professional success of a university graduate are given: communication skills, teamwork, and critical thinking are among them.

During the analysis of various forms of classroom and extracurricular activities as an effective tool for the formation of soft skills, such types of work as All-Russian, national, international, regional, and university scientific and practical conferences, regional and university scientific seminars carrying out at the All-Russian festival "Science 0+", round tables, regional and university competitions of research projects in foreign languages, regional Olympiads were revealed by the teachers of the research and training laboratory "Theory and Methodology of the "soft skills" development in the modern scientific paradigm".

Teachers use problem-based, heuristic, and research methods to involve students' creative search activities in solving the new problems. The most effective methods of active learning used by teachers are technologies for developing critical thinking and problem-based learning, project activity, collaborative learning, case studies, a rotational model of mixed learning, working in small groups, brainstorming, training quests, role-playing and business games, and "inverted classes". In the process of training, students actively experiment and apply "soft" skills in solving cases, participating in role-plays, debates, dramatizing situations, and performing project work.

The approach to teaching and implementing soft skills development can be applied in the integration of such disciplines as "Foreign language", "Foreign language in the professional sphere", "Business foreign language" and non-formal education, paying attention to teaching these discipline and curriculum. The occasional use of various modern educational and interactive technologies can help in the implementation of effective communicative interaction between students. It may be important for future specialists to develop an individual development plan, which describes the development goals, the algorithm of actions and various measures leading to the achievement of the goals in the form of the development of flexible skills (PLATONOVA; MIKHINA, 2018; KARPOV, 2020). Every person today is experiencing

anxiety about how to be successful in a new fast-developing and changing world. New needs in society and the economy show us that changes must also occur in educational approaches.

It was revealed that according to the Federal State Educational Standard for Higher Education (3++), the main goal of training is the university students' formation of a certain set of competencies. After analyzing some titles, it can be argued that most soft skills are implicitly included in the group of general cultural, general professional and professional competencies.

The formation of both general professional and general cultural competencies that are included in the tasks of implementing of disciplines such as "Foreign language", "Foreign language in the professional sphere", "Business foreign language", will contribute to the development of flexible skills.

Summing up, we can affirm the formation of soft skills during professionally oriented teaching of foreign languages at the university give the teachers opportunity to draw the students attention to the role of personal, professional and interpersonal abilities for the implementation of effective professional activities.

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