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## TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES FOR PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

ENSINO DE LÍNGUAS ESTRANGEIRAS PARA FINS PROFISSIONAIS NO ENSINO SUPERIOR

ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS CON FINES PROFESIONALES EN LA ENSEÑANZA SUPERIOR

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**ABSTRACT:** In modern education, higher education institutions (HEIs) prioritize training specialists capable of integrating into professional environments and adapting to the global labor market's dynamic demands. Foreign language competence is a critical component of professional training, fostering the ability to address professional challenges. Teaching professionally oriented foreign languages in HEIs aims to enhance students' cultural development and equip them with essential skills, including mastering professional terminology, preparing documentation, and understanding technical nuances relevant to their fields. The study's objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching professionally oriented foreign languages in HEIs and assess students' ability to apply these skills in professional settings. Methods employed included comparative analysis, systematization, generalization, and surveys. Key findings underscore the need for tailored teaching approaches that address the specific needs of students across various disciplines, ensuring better integration into professional environments.

**KEYWORDS:** Professionally Oriented Foreign Language. Foreign Language Teaching. Foreign Language Communicative Competence. Methods of Teaching a Foreign Language in Higher Education Institutions.

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**RESUMO:** Na educação contemporânea, as instituições de ensino superior (IES) priorizam a formação de especialistas capazes de se integrar a ambientes profissionais e de se adaptar às demandas dinâmicas do mercado de trabalho global. A competência em língua estrangeira é um componente essencial da formação profissional, pois amplia a capacidade de enfrentar desafios na prática. O ensino de línguas estrangeiras com orientação profissional nas IES busca potencializar o desenvolvimento cultural dos estudantes e proporcionar habilidades fundamentais, como o domínio da terminologia técnica, a elaboração de documentos e a compreensão de nuances relevantes para suas áreas. Este estudo teve como objetivo avaliar a eficácia do ensino de línguas estrangeiras com orientação profissional e analisar a capacidade dos estudantes de aplicar essas competências em contextos profissionais. Os métodos utilizados incluíram análise comparativa, sistematização, generalização e aplicação de questionários. Os resultados reforçam a necessidade de abordagens pedagógicas ajustadas às especificidades de cada área para melhor integração profissional.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Língua Estrangeira com Orientação Profissional. Ensino de Língua Estrangeira. Competência Comunicativa em Língua Estrangeira. Métodos de Ensino de Língua Estrangeira no Ensino Superior.

**RESUMEN:** En la educación contemporánea, las instituciones de educación superior (IES) priorizan la formación de especialistas capaces de integrarse en entornos profesionales y adaptarse a las demandas dinámicas del mercado laboral global. La competencia en lenguas extranjeras constituye un componente esencial de la formación profesional, ya que favorece la capacidad de afrontar desafíos en el ámbito laboral. La enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras con orientación profesional en las IES tiene como objetivo potenciar el desarrollo cultural de los estudiantes y dotarlos de habilidades fundamentales, como el dominio de la terminología técnica, la elaboración de documentación y la comprensión de matices técnicos relevantes para sus áreas. Este estudio tuvo como propósito evaluar la eficacia de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras con orientación profesional y analizar la capacidad de los estudiantes para aplicar estas competencias en contextos profesionales. Los métodos empleados incluyeron análisis comparativo, sistematización, generalización y encuestas. Los resultados destacan la necesidad de enfoques pedagógicos adaptados a las especificidades de cada disciplina para una mejor integración profesional.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Lengua Extranjera con Orientación Profesional. Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras. Competencia Comunicativa en Lengua Extranjera. Métodos de Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras en Instituciones de Educación Superior.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the modern era of globalization and scientific and technological progress, there has been a significant increase in interest in learning foreign languages, which are a necessary component for gaining deeper knowledge in the fields of science, technology, business, education, and social life (Murotova et al., 2020). An important aspect of the educational process is the adoption of innovative approaches to teaching, particularly in teaching a professionally oriented foreign language, which plays a key role in training competitive specialists. Studying foreign languages in higher education institutions is essential for developing key competences in students, enabling them to solve problems effectively within their professional activities (Sermakhaj et al., 2017). Another crucial aspect of this process is fostering skills that allow students to adapt their language use to specific situations. This enables them to communicate effectively with foreign partners, negotiate independently without translators, and engage in productive professional communication, which, in turn, constitutes an important element of their training (Murotova et al., 2020).

The analysis of professional activities in the context of foreign language education helps to better understand labour market requirements and to develop the competences necessary for adapting to a rapidly changing information environment and modern technological processes (Sermakhaj et al., 2017). In this context, the study aims to determine the effectiveness of teaching a professionally oriented foreign language in higher education institutions for students' ability to integrate successfully into the professional environment. A survey will be conducted to assess the level of foreign language skills in the professional sphere.

## Literature Review

Ghaemi and Soltani (2023) point out that the main reason for communication failures lies in a low level of intercultural communication competence. They emphasise the importance of developing the knowledge and skills needed to navigate different cultural contexts effectively. Gözgenç (2019) adds that the language environment should promote successful intercultural communication to ensure healthy interaction in a globalised world. Lee et al. (2023) note that high language proficiency alone does not guarantee effective intercultural interaction, as understanding socio-cultural contexts is equally important. Therefore, developing intercultural competence should be a core element in teaching ESP in HEIs.

Modern researchers, both Ukrainian and international, usually define communicative competence in a foreign language (without directly linking it to professional activities) as an integrated structure that includes linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic components, a structure enshrined in the CEFR (2001), which laid the groundwork for this concept. However,

this list of components is not exhaustive, as several researchers propose an additional element—strategic competence—which enables individuals to employ various methods, tactics, and strategies of verbal and non-verbal communication to achieve mutual understanding in different socio-cultural contexts and specific communication situations (Ridel & Kyrychenko, 2020).

Some scholars view foreign language communicative competence as an adaptive process of language use, varying according to the specifics of the speech situation (Tynkalyuk, 2008). Others highlight the importance of developing compensatory skills and learners' capacity to handle typical communicative tasks (Kulichenko & Polyezhayev, 2020). However, this perspective appears rather general, as it fails to underline the specific aspect of professional foreign language communicative competence, which is a key focus in teaching professionally oriented foreign languages in higher education.

The scientific literature on ESP in higher education underscores the integration of new technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), into the educational process. Sumakul et al. (2022) point out AI's effectiveness in supporting foreign language teaching, noting its positive impact on the quality of learning resources and student motivation. Rusmiyanto et al. (2023) emphasise the development of communication skills through AI, while Schmidt and Strasser (2022) highlight its potential to transform language learning, especially through interdisciplinary collaboration. Huang et al. (2021) observe that tools like Duolingo and Grammarly are highly effective in fostering an individualised approach to ESP learning.

A review of the scientific literature confirms a paradigm shift in foreign language teaching, stressing the need for a balanced approach to linguistic and intercultural components. In this context, Ivenz and Klimova's (2022) assertion that "the linguistic part of foreign language teaching should be equal to the intercultural part of foreign language teaching" is both logical and justified. These new conceptual approaches offer a comprehensive understanding of language education, integrating intercultural awareness alongside linguistic skills. Such an approach meets contemporary requirements that recognise the insufficiency of linguistic knowledge alone for successful intercultural interactions, emphasising the need to develop students' abilities to navigate diverse language environments and foster meaningful connections in a globalised society (Oberste-Berghaus, 2024). Thus, while the development of students' capacity to learn a professionally oriented foreign language is rarely addressed in the form of practical research and theoretical studies, the topic remains highly relevant and open to further investigation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study aims to apply the following research methods: 1) systematization (to organize and classify data, allowing for the precise distribution of the information into specific

categories and aspects); 2) systemic and logical analysis, and the method of information synthesis (applied for a comprehensive study of the interrelationships between different elements of the ESP learning process); 3) generalization (to process and integrate the survey results, enabling the formulation of generalized conclusions about the main trends and challenges students face in learning a professionally oriented foreign language); and 4) comparison (to distinguish the study's aims and objectives and to compare the effectiveness of different approaches to teaching and developing language skills among university students).

To identify specific features, effectiveness, and the ability of students at the Stepan Gzhytskyi National University of Veterinary Medicine and Biotechnology of Lviv to master a professionally oriented foreign language, a study was conducted using descriptive statistics. Data for the analysis were collected through a survey administered via the MS Forms Pro platform, which ensured the collection of accurate and reliable responses. The survey aimed to determine students' language skill levels and assess the difficulties they encounter when learning a foreign language for professional purposes. Conducted online from 20 May to 30 November 2024, the survey gathered responses from 1,530 students. These participants provided insights into their learning experiences, motivation, expectations, and overall satisfaction with studying a professionally oriented foreign language.

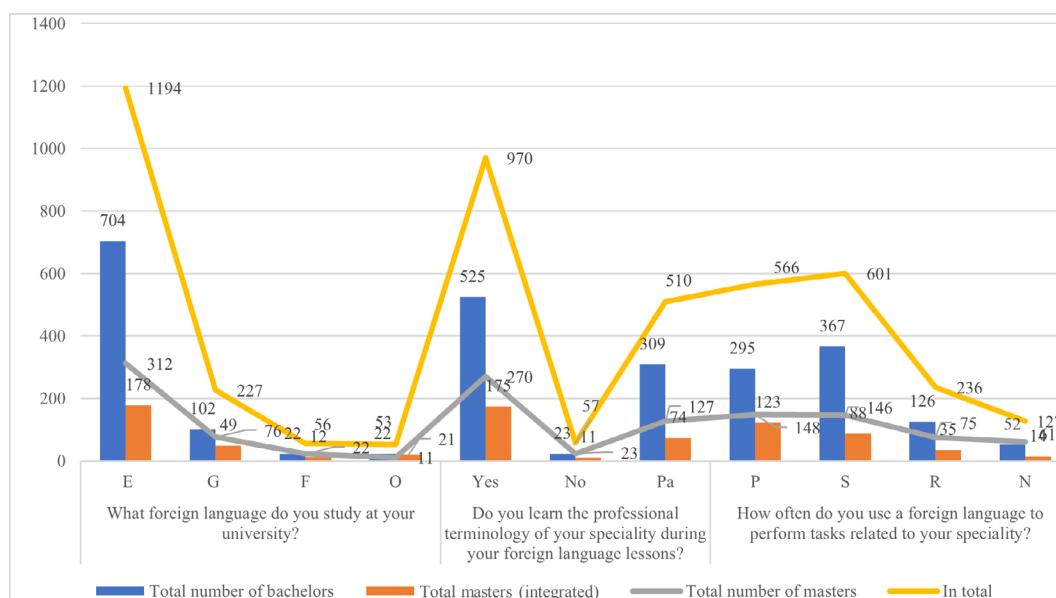
## RESULTS

The survey results include responses from students of the Stepan Gzhytskyi National University of Veterinary Medicine and Biotechnology of Lviv enrolled in programmes such as adult education, physical education and sports, management, marketing, law, biotechnology, ecology, and pharmacy. Respondents' answers reveal a significant interest in and need to study a professionally oriented foreign language as part of their professional training. Notably, more than 85% of students in bachelor's and master's degree programmes reported studying a foreign language within their professional curriculum. However, the terminology used in professionally oriented foreign languages varies by specialization.

It was found that students in fields such as management, marketing, and law exhibit the highest level of professional terminology usage (over 70%), indicating a strong interest in mastering a professionally oriented foreign language. In contrast, students in technical and natural sciences, such as biotechnology and ecology, reported a lower level of usage of such terminology (approximately 50-60%). The survey also shows that most students use a foreign language only partially in their professional tasks, with 45-55% of respondents stating they regularly use a foreign language in professional contexts (Figure 1).

The use of a foreign language in professional activities is more common among students of economics, management, and law, whereas students in natural sciences and sports report lower rates. When analyzing the formation of educational trajectories in higher education, it is essential to focus on key aspects of ESP learning. The survey results highlight the main priorities, particularly expanding vocabulary (500 respondents among bachelor's students of English) and increasing communication practice (550 respondents from the same group). These indicators represent 33.3% and 36.7% of the total participants, respectively.

**Figure 1.** Identifying the peculiarities of using foreign languages for professional tasks



Notes. E – English language, G – German language, F – French language, O – Other languages, P – Permanently, S – Sometimes, R – Rarely, N – Never, Pa – Partially.

Source: authors' calculations based on the survey.

In addition, the survey results show that students with a high level of motivation (e.g., “very motivated” – 400 bachelor's students of English) make up the majority of the study sample, highlighting the importance of developing applied language competences. It was found that the most effective educational format is practical classes (300 bachelor's students of English), representing 20% of the total number of respondents. This approach aligns with the principles of modern pedagogy, as these classes prioritize interactive teaching methods that promote high student engagement and enhance the level of professional language training.

Based on the analysis, it was observed that the dominant needs of higher education students shape the key aspects of ESP teaching. Table 1 presents the results of students' assessments regarding the effectiveness of different foreign language teaching methods, as well as their preferences for pedagogical approaches in professionally oriented language learning. The results of the statistical analysis show no statistically significant differences between the

groups. Specifically, when comparing bachelor's and master's students in the cross-cutting programme, the t-statistic was 1.44 and the two-sided p-value was 0.200, exceeding the significance level of 0.05. Similarly, for integrated master's and master's students,  $t = 0.91$  and  $p = 0.396$ ; and for bachelor's and master's students,  $t = 1.44$  and  $p = 0.200$ . These figures indicate that there are no significant differences in the mean values of teaching method effectiveness between the groups.

**Table 1.** Analyzing the Effectiveness of Foreign Language Teaching Methods in Higher Education Institutions Using the T-Test

Groups for comparison	Mean value	Variance	Observations	Critical T value for A Two-Tail Test	T-statistics	P T<=T Two-Tail
Bachelor's vs. Master's degree programmes	223.5	43270.33	4	2.4469	1.44	0.2
Masters of the integrated programme vs. Masters	66.5	4353	4	2.4469	0.91	0.396
Bachelor's vs. Master's	223.5	43270.33	4	2.4469	1.44	0.2

Source: create by the authors..

It is also important to note the high variability of the data, especially among bachelor's students, where the variance is significantly higher than in other groups. This may indicate heterogeneity in the sample, which could negatively impact the accuracy of the statistical analysis. Therefore, the t-test results suggest that there are no statistically significant differences in the average effectiveness of foreign language teaching methods among the groups studied, underscoring the need for more robust and comprehensive approaches, such as broader surveys, to assess the effectiveness of educational methods in higher education institutions.

The survey revealed that respondents consider practical exercises (35% of the total responses), audiovisual methods (28%), and discussion of thematic issues (25%) to be the most effective. In contrast, the grammar-translation method (12%) and listening to specialised materials (15%) were considered less effective. Overall, the data show that interactive methods significantly outnumber traditional ones, confirming the need to integrate them into curricula to enhance the professional training of university students and to adapt educational methods to meet the needs of learners who, according to the survey, prefer practical and communicative approaches.

The analysis of the survey results identified key challenges faced by students at different educational levels, which directly impact learning effectiveness. In particular, the most common issues are related to grammar and syntax (19% of responses), as well as difficulties with pronunciation and accent (18%). Among bachelor's students, the most pressing problems include an insufficient level of teaching and a lack of practical classes, which limit opportunities

to develop essential skills and adapt to the language demands of the professional sphere. For integrated master's students studying in English, the most significant challenges involve grammar and syntax. These difficulties may stem from the high standards of language training at this stage, which requires deeper mastery of complex structures and specific terminology typical of professionally oriented programmes.

The results indicate that the most severe difficulties occur in groups where students have insufficient basic language training—particularly in bachelor's programmes (especially in English)—with grammar and syntax being the main obstacles. In master's degree programmes, the challenges are mainly linked to complex language structures, pronunciation, and professional terminology. Nevertheless, there has been notable progress in students' ability to organise and participate in professional negotiations, engage in reasoned discussions, and communicate effectively within professional environments. A critical factor is their ability to understand and interpret specialised literature and materials written in a foreign language, which is essential for professional activities in international contexts.

Mastery of professional terminology, specific phraseological expressions, and oral and written communication techniques creates opportunities for effective interaction with foreign colleagues and partners in international projects and business processes. Developing intercultural competence through these acquired skills enables students to successfully adapt to global economic conditions and evolving labour market demands. Thus, the analysis suggests that learning a professionally oriented foreign language not only ensures high language competence but also serves as a crucial factor in students' professional development, enhancing their competitiveness internationally and supporting their integration into global economic, social, and cultural processes.

## **DISCUSSION**

The survey findings underline the importance of adapting curricula to meet learners' specific needs, considering their educational level and language proficiency. Given the various challenges related to grammar, syntax, and pronunciation, it is advisable to incorporate innovative teaching methods, such as communicative tasks, audiovisual technologies, and role-playing activities. These approaches significantly improve listening and speaking skills while increasing students' confidence in using a foreign language.

The findings of Ghaemi and Soltani (2023) regarding the low level of intercultural communication competence as the leading cause of communication failures are confirmed in the context of our research. Indeed, practical engagement in different cultural contexts requires not only solid linguistic knowledge but also well-developed intercultural skills, which enable

learners to adapt to the specificities of professional communication in a globalized world. Furthermore, aligning our findings with the arguments of Gözgenç (2019), who emphasizes the importance of the language environment for facilitating intercultural communication, we can affirm that the language environment in higher education institutions should promote the integration of intercultural aspects. This approach will positively influence students' professional mobility and their ability to communicate effectively in international contexts, reinforcing the need to establish a linguistic and cultural infrastructure within universities to foster intercultural competence.

Comparing our results with the statement by Lee et al. (2023) that a high level of language proficiency alone is insufficient for effective intercultural interaction, we confirm the relevance of sociocultural contexts in professional communication. The development of intercultural competence must therefore be an integral component of the educational process, as it contributes not only to successful professional growth but also to students' practical adaptation to the demands of international business and economic environments. In the face of globalisation challenges, there is a pressing need to strengthen intercultural competence and the capacity to adapt to different sociocultural settings, which calls for continuous enhancement of both language and professional skills. Consequently, teachers and students alike are challenged to adopt modern teaching methods, ensuring advanced communication training and fostering effective intercultural interaction in times of global change.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The study's results underscore the crucial role of foreign languages in professional communication, particularly in mastering specialized terminology and developing analytical and critical thinking skills essential for future professional activities. At the same time, the findings highlight the need to improve methodological approaches to foreign language teaching, notably by increasing the number of practical classes aimed at developing language skills in real professional contexts.

The practical relevance of this study lies in the fact that the conclusions and recommendations proposed by the author can inform enhancements to curricula in higher education institutions, support the development of new methodological approaches to teaching professionally oriented foreign languages, and expand the provision of practical classes. Such measures will better prepare students for actual working conditions in international environments.

Future research in the field of vocationally oriented foreign language teaching could focus on an in-depth analysis of the impact of emerging information and communication technologies on language training processes. This includes exploring the effectiveness of interactive

learning platforms, mobile applications, and other digital tools that may significantly enhance foreign language acquisition in professional training contexts. Additionally, it will be essential to study and compare different methodological approaches and strategies that facilitate the integration of foreign languages into specialized educational programs, addressing the needs of specific professional sectors and labor markets.

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