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## RELEVANCE OF STUDYING A SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE BY MEDICAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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## АКТУАЛЬНІСТЬ ВИВЧЕННЯ ДРУГОЇ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ ЗДОБУВАЧАМИ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ МЕДИЧНИХ УНІВЕРСИТЕТІВ

**Abstract.** The article emphasizes the importance of studying a second foreign language by students of medical universities. Global changes in higher medical education, modernization, and technological advancements necessitate the training of highly qualified specialists capable of navigating a vast array of foreign-language professional information, medical scientific literature, and global medical research. The role of foreign-language professional communication is analyzed in the context of acquiring high-quality professional competencies in various types of speech activity (participation in physician exchange programs, internships abroad, international conferences, medical forums, and symposia), including perception, comprehension, and reproduction (oral or written). The study also examines the factors contributing to developing foreign-language communicative competence among future medical professionals.

**Key words:** professional competencies; foreign language training; second foreign language; student; medical university; communication skills.

**Анотація.** У статті зацентовано увагу на важливості вивчення здобувачами вищої освіти медичних університетів другої іноземної мови, адже глобальні зміни, які відбуваються у сфері вищої медичної освіти, процеси модернізації, технологізації зумовлюють підготовку фахівця високого рівня, здатного орієнтуватися в масиві іншомовної інформації професійного спрямування, у науковій літературі медичної галузі, світових медичних дослідженнях. З'ясовано роль іншомовного професійного спілкування задля отримання здобувачами вищої медичної освіти якісних фахових компетентностей у різних видах мовленнєвої діяльності (участь у проєктах обміну лікарів, стажування за кордоном, участь у міжнародних конференціях, медичних форумах, симпозіумах): сприйняття, усвідомлення, відтворення (усне чи письмове). Проаналізовано роль факторів, які сприяють формуванню іншомовної комунікативної компетентності майбутніх фахівців медицини.

**Ключові слова:** фахові компетентності; іншомовна підготовка; друга іноземна мова; здобувач вищої освіти; медичний університет; комунікативні навички.

**Introduction.** The readiness of students to study a foreign language for professional purposes is characterized by a system of personal abilities, including the ability to independently master a foreign language, understand the customs and culture of other nations, communicate with foreign specialists without an interpreter, pursue further education abroad, adapt to multilingual education trends, diversify foreign language options, and apply foreign language knowledge in practice when interacting with international colleagues [2; 12; 13].

The general strategy for teaching foreign languages at non-linguistic faculties of higher education institutions includes a requirement to develop foreign language communication skills in professional contexts. Studying more than one foreign language in educational institutions aligns with Ukraine's national policy interests. This demonstrates that proficiency in multiple languages is a valuable investment for future professionals in the context of a market economy.

**The Research Objective** is to substantiate the feasibility of studying a second foreign language by students of medical universities.

**Research Methods.** The primary research method used in this study is the survey method,

which involves collecting information through respondents' answers to a structured set of questions. The survey was conducted among the students of I. Horbachevsky Ternopil National Medical University enrolled in the "Medicine" program.

**Discussion.** Foreign language proficiency is an essential structural component of professional competence, a qualitative characteristic of a specialist's personality. It encompasses scientific-theoretical knowledge, practical skills in professional communication, experience in professional interaction, and a strong motivation for professional dialogue [1; 3]. Unfortunately, in non-linguistic higher education institutions, foreign language instruction is still largely separate from the formation of professional competence in future specialists [5, p. 25].

Professional communication in foreign languages among higher education students primarily manifests as the ability to engage in communicative speech behavior according to the requirements of hypothetical foreign language communication situations. However, foreign language learning often focuses on external, symbolic similarity rather than the holistic content of professional activities involving using a foreign language. As a result, the challenge of developing professional competence in non-linguistic higher education students, in which a foreign language component is organically integrated, remains unresolved [11, p. 12].

During higher education, professional identification and adaptation of future medical specialists occur, which is a crucial aspect of personal development in medical practice. As a result, learning a foreign language and a second foreign language gains personal significance in acquiring high-quality professional competencies [6, p. 87]. Speech competence is realized through different types of speech activity, including perception, comprehension, and reproduction (both oral and written).

Future medical professionals' study of foreign languages should be viewed through the lens of their future professional activities. An essential goal of learning both primary and second foreign languages is the development of specialized competence in professional and situational medical communication. This includes familiarity with professional medical literature, documentation, and medical research from foreign sources, participation in internships abroad or physician exchange programs, attending international medical conferences, and adopting best practices from leading global specialists in various fields of medicine [14, p. 109].

Therefore, foreign language communication should be considered in two dimensions: first, through the formation of linguistic, speech, sociocultural, sociolinguistic, discursive, and strategic competence,

and second, through the practical mastery of communication skills in typical situations at a level sufficient for foreign language interaction in the four types of speech activity: listening, speaking, reading, and writing [9, p. 6].

Given the importance of qualities contributing to the successful acquisition of foreign languages (both primary and second), foreign language instruction should focus on equipping students with independent learning strategies when mastering specialized lexical material. This includes teaching students to acquire various lexical structures systematically, act thoughtfully and consistently, and develop practical foreign language communication skills. Additionally, essential components are fostering professional competence, supporting personal growth through individualized learning tasks, encouraging active collaboration, and studying grammatical constructions. These skills will help students pass exams or communicate within academic and clinical settings and enable them to acquire modern medical knowledge continuously throughout their professional careers діяльності [10, p. 74].

A significant role in addressing these tasks belongs to the faculty members, whose explanations and personal examples of purposeful work toward achieving the set goals are crucial. When teaching a second foreign language, several aspects should be considered:

- *the communicative focus of the teaching* (a model of maximum imitation of the foreign language environment);
- *intercultural and sociocultural aspects* of teaching (familiarizing students with the worldview, cultural traditions, and customs of the language's native speakers);
- *cognitively-oriented teaching* (purposeful mental and cognitive activity with motivation);
- *linguistic approach* (a systematic mastery of both the primary foreign language and the native language positively impacts learning a second foreign language).

These aspects contribute to creating an effective and holistic language learning environment, which supports the students' ability to integrate language skills with professional and cultural knowledge [4, p. 227].

Indeed, teaching a second foreign language in a medical institution serves, on the one hand, to provide not only the basics of communication, such as in everyday situations, but also to teach the "language of professional communication" [8, p. 186]. On the other hand, it aims to direct higher education students toward developing communicative competence in professional communication situations. It is well-known that teaching foreign language communication to medical students is easier when they already have a foundation in language preparation or a high level of proficiency

in the primary foreign language. This enables drawing analogies related to international medical terminology and grammatical or syntactical phenomena.

In this context, we also consider teaching effectiveness, as it largely depends on how closely the knowledge transfer process and developing skills and abilities align with real-world practical application situations. Another compelling factor is the participants' motivation in the learning process, with the most significant impact coming from the pragmatic goal of language learning for professional growth. This includes the desire to communicate freely with native speakers, especially specialists in the same field, a tendency to learn languages, and the satisfaction derived from the learning process.

**Research Results.** In 2024–2025, a survey was conducted in which 88 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students of I. Horbachevsky Ternopil National Medical University voluntarily participated. The survey focused on the importance of studying a second foreign language. The respondents' age groups were: 17–18 years – 53 students (60%) and 19–20 years – 35 students (40%). Regarding gender, 69 (78%) were female, and 19 (22%) were male.

Our study's results indicate that future doctors' knowledge of a second foreign language is significantly lower than that of their primary foreign language (English). Their language skills are characterized by a small lexical range, especially in terms of active vocabulary, and an inability to formulate thoughts correctly on everyday topics. This becomes even more pronounced when it comes to working with professional literature. In other words, learning a second foreign language for medical students is much more challenging, and the results are less noticeable than the outcomes of students learning their primary foreign language.

Of the respondents, 26 (29.5%) had studied a second foreign language in school. In comparison, 62 (70.5%) either did not study a second foreign language at all or had Russian as their second foreign language in the schools they attended.

It is worth noting that the instructional and methodological recommendations from the Ministry of Education and Science for the 2024/2025 academic year suggest that schools redistribute teaching hours in favor of the second foreign language, adjusting hours from other educational fields. However, these hours will not be counted toward the maximum limit set for the language and literature educational area. The model curriculum for grades 5–9 (which may be implemented in New Ukrainian School (NUS) classes) proposes studying the following foreign languages as second languages: German, French, Spanish, Polish, Modern Greek, and Hungarian, for no less than two hours per week [7].

When asked about the relevance and importance of studying a second foreign language in medical

higher education institutions, 58 (65.5%) respondents answered categorically “yes”, 21 (24.5%) expressed general approval, and 9 (10%) partially agreed but pointed out that there are many aspects to consider. It is worth noting that no future doctor gave a negative response. The results of our study indicate that most students have a positive attitude towards learning a second foreign language, as they understand the role of foreign languages and foreign language proficiency in preparing highly qualified professionals.

We also asked students about the criteria they used in selecting the discipline “Second Foreign Language (German)” and received several arguments:

- the significant role of foreign language knowledge in the formation of a medical specialist (access to international treatment protocols and clinical guidelines) – 71 responses;
- the ability to read professional medical literature, documentation, and research in foreign languages, which is particularly relevant in mastering evidence-based medicine – 68 responses;
- the development of a personality ready for cross-cultural dialogue – 43 participants;
- the formation of readiness for mutual understanding and finding compromises – 40 respondents.

When asked, “Why do you not choose the discipline “Second Foreign Language (German)”?” future medical professionals cited the following reasons:

- the difficulty of studying humanitarian subjects;
- doubt in their abilities;
- fear of making mistakes;
- inability to overcome psychological barriers;
- interlingual interference.

Regarding factors influencing the choice of the “Second Foreign Language (German)” discipline (multiple choices allowed), the respondents identified the following:

- reading medical literature related to their specialization, including international and local treatment protocols – 51 responses;
- familiarization with medical research from foreign sources – 43 responses;
- participation in doctor exchange programs – 39 responses;
- international internships – 26 responses;
- participation in international medical projects, forums, and symposia – 24 responses;
- communicative goals – 16 responses;
- development of intercultural communication skills – 13 responses.

**Conclusions and Prospects for Further Research.** Summarizing the survey results among 1st-year students, we believe it is essential to emphasize the need to enhance the motivational

component when teaching foreign languages in medical higher education institutions. Creating real-life situations that reflect practical applications of language knowledge is crucial. The level of foreign language proficiency should be considered an essential indicator of a modern doctor's successful activity, directly linked to the outcomes

of their education in higher education institutions. Furthermore, studying foreign languages plays a significant role in professional communication and influences communication effectiveness.

Prospects for further research include exploring the advantages and challenges of learning German after English and Latin.

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