

UDC 378.147:811.124

DOI <https://doi.org/10.11603/m.2414-5998.2025.4.15859>

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## **THE CONCEPT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AS A COMPONENT IN THE TRAINING OF HIGHER MEDICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS**

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### **КОНЦЕПТ ІНШОМОВНОЇ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ ЯК СКЛАДНИК ПІДГОТОВКИ ЗДОБУВАЧІВ ВИЩОЇ МЕДИЧНОЇ ОСВІТИ**

**Abstract.** This article examines the theoretical aspects of foreign language communicative competence in students of higher medical education. The study analyses the concepts of «communication», «linguistic communication», «foreign language professional communication», and «foreign language communicative competence». It is emphasized that the development of medicine and national healthcare systems requires the application of advancements in medicine from other countries. In this context, proficiency in a foreign language and the ability to communicate with international specialists play a crucial role. Therefore, foreign language communicative competence is an essential component of the professional competence of future medical practitioners. Foreign language communicative competence is defined as an integrative personal and professional quality that determines a specialist's ability and readiness to creatively address practice-oriented and communicative tasks within their professional activity and foreign language professional communication. The foundation of foreign language communicative competence is foreign language professional communication, understood as a system of communicative norms, skills, and strategies that enables effective use of a foreign language for professional communicative activities, participation in international projects, continuation of studies abroad, and engagement in scientific research. Teaching foreign languages for professional purposes at higher medical education institutions ensures the development of the necessary communicative capacity in both oral and written forms of professional communication. It equips students with practical language skills across various types of speech activity to the extent required by professional needs and facilitates access to the latest professional information through foreign language sources.

**Key words:** communication; foreign language professional communication; foreign language communicative competence; foreign language; students of higher medical education.

**Анотація.** У статті розглянуто теоретичні аспекти іншомовної комунікативної компетентності здобувачів вищої медичної освіти, проаналізовано зміст понять «комунікація», «мовна комунікація», «іншомовна професійна комунікація», «іншомовна комунікативна компетентність». Зазначено, що для розвитку медицини та системи охорони здоров'я населення потрібно застосовувати здобутки у галузі медицини інших країн. Для цього важливу роль відіграють саме знання іноземної мови та можливість іншомовної комунікації із фахівцями з інших країн. Саме тому іншомовна комунікативна компетентність є необхідним складником професійної компетентності майбутнього працівника сфери медицини. Установлено, що іншомовна комунікативна компетентність – це інтегративна особистісно-професійна якість, яка визначає здатність та готовність фахівця до креативного вирішення практико-орієнтованих та комунікативних завдань у галузі професійної діяльності та іншомовного професійно орієнтованого спілкування. Основою формування іншомовної комунікативної компетентності є іншомовне професійне спілкування, яке охарактеризуємо як систему комунікативних норм, умінь і прийомів, яка дає змогу ефективно застосовувати іноземну мову для здійснення професійної комунікативної діяльності, брати участь у міжнародних проектах, продовжити навчання в одній із зарубіжних країн, займатися науковими дослідженнями. Навчання іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням у вищих медичних навчальних закладах забезпечує формування необхідної комунікативної спроможності у сферах професійного спілкування як в усній, так і в письмовій формі, навичок практичного володіння іноземною мовою в різних видах мовленнєвої діяльності в обсязі, що зумовлений професійними потребами, оволодіння новітньою фаховою інформацією через іноземні джерела.

**Ключові слова:** комунікація; іншомовна професійна комунікація; іншомовна комунікативна компетентність; іноземна мова; здобувачі вищої медичної освіти.

**Introduction.** Today, the healthcare sector and society as a whole face an increasing demand for specialists who possess foreign language proficiency and are capable of engaging in professionally oriented communicative activities within a professional environment, mastering the latest advancements in international medicine, and participating in joint scientific and practical research with colleagues from other countries. Medical practitioners, clinical doctors, and educators at medical universities often encounter specific challenges when processing professional information from foreign language sources or communicating with international partners to address medical issues. Consequently, foreign language proficiency is increasingly emphasized in higher medical education as a key means of fostering professional orientation. This underscores the need to focus on foreign language, professionally oriented training for students.

The issue of foreign language training in higher education, particularly with a professional orientation, has been examined by researchers such as L. Aleksieieva, A. Andrienko, O. Bykoni, H. Hryniuk, I. Zadorozhna, O. Kvasova, O. Konotop, H. Kravchuk, B. Labinska, L. Lychko, O. Maiboroda, Ye. Miroshnichenko, L. Morska, Ya. Okopna, O. Petrushchuk, O. Tarnopolskyi, O. Khomenko, V. Chernysh, D. Hymes, and others. The development of foreign language communicative competence in medical students through foreign language instruction has been discussed in the works of K. Mitrofanova, H. Arkhipova, and M. Frantsev. However, the conceptualization of foreign language professional communicative competence as a crucial component in the training of students in higher medical education remains insufficiently explored.

**The aim** of this article is to analyze the meanings of the concepts of «*communication*», «*foreign language communication*», «*linguistic communication*», and «*foreign language communicative competence*», and to elucidate the conceptual foundations of foreign language communicative competence in the training of future healthcare professionals.

**Theoretical framework.** Professional international communication and opportunities for internships abroad necessitate the development of future healthcare specialists with a sufficient level of foreign language proficiency to enable successful exchange of professional achievements, conduct foreign language communication with colleagues from other countries, and perform professional duties in a foreign language environment. Therefore, foreign language proficiency constitutes an essential component of the professional development of future medical practitioners, with the primary aim of language study being the formation of the specialist's foreign language communicative competence, and the desired outcome being the use of a foreign lan-

guage as an accessible means of communication and the enrichment of professional training experience.

This rationale underpins the inclusion of courses such as «*Foreign Language*», «*Foreign Language for Specific Purposes*», and «*Latin and Medical Terminology*» in the core curriculum of higher medical education institutions. These courses play a significant role in addressing a key task of higher education, i.e. providing conditions for the development of an adequate level of foreign language communicative competence in the professional sphere of interaction (Zahalnoevropeiski Rekomendatsii, 2003). The objective of foreign language instruction in higher education is both the acquisition of a foreign language as a communicative tool and the development of professionally oriented foreign language communicative competence to ensure successful future professional activity.

Research on the development of foreign language communication skills in the professional training of future healthcare specialists first requires clarification of the concept of «*communication*», as this term is polysemous and is employed across multiple scientific disciplines. It is known to derive from the Latin *communico*, *-are*, meaning «*to inform*», «*to connect*», or «*to unite*» (Churakova, 2009).

In a detailed study of the polysemous nature of the term «*communication*», Yu. Kosenko (Kosenko, 2011) highlights the prevalence of seven definitions in scholarly sources, which do not contradict but rather complement one another. Communication is described as the exchange of information between individuals sharing common beliefs, aspirations, and viewpoints; a means of influencing an interlocutor through language, signs, or symbols; a method of understanding among humans as social beings; the transmission of information, messages, beliefs, ideas, emotions, etc.; an act of interaction between people; the unification of individuals based on a shared language or a common system of signs; and a component of societal processes that performs a range of important functions, including reflecting social norms, exercising public oversight, allocating roles among communicants as members of society, and coordinating efforts to achieve common goals and objectives (Kosenko, 2011).

V. Bondarenko (Bondarenko, 2020) emphasizes that communication is not merely the exchange of information between a sender and a recipient, but a far more complex process in which participants, through both verbal and non-verbal means, not only construct social reality but also express their personal individuality, their unique «self».

Thus, in its broader understanding, communication entails constructive human interaction within society. This is unsurprising, as communication is not merely a natural human capacity as a social being; it is also a fundamental mode of existence in the world,

with individuals spending approximately 70% of their time interacting with others (Kvit, 2008). Considering the above, communication can be interpersonal (involving two or more people) or intrapersonal (when an individual engages in internal dialogue with themselves). Moreover, communication occurs not only among individuals but also between various social groups, nations, and ethnicities. Consequently, mutual understanding and tolerance among participants are essential prerequisites for the effectiveness and success of any communicative process. It is argued that the most comprehensive definition of communication is offered by Yu. Kosenko: «Communication is a process, determined by situational and socio-psychological characteristics of the communicators, of establishing and maintaining contacts among members of a particular social group or society as a whole, based on the spiritual, professional, or other unity of the participants in the communication» (Kosenko, 2011). The scholar notes that communication occurs as a series of interconnected acts, which are intellectual, cognitive, emotional, and volitional in nature and are expressed through language as well as paralinguistic, psychological, and physiological means of influence (Kosenko, 2011).

Language serves as a key instrument of communication, and therefore linguistic communication constitutes a complex process encompassing various aspects of human verbal activity. Linguistic communication refers to the production, exchange, and interpretation of information by participants through language and extralinguistic codes, which are intended to influence the behaviour or cognition of the interlocutor in order to achieve a shared goal (Yashchenkova, 2010). I. Holter asserts that linguistic communication is a «purposeful lingvo-psychomental activity of the sender and recipient in the process of transmitting information, exchanging messages, and influencing the interlocutor (recipient) through the natural language code» (Holter, 2019).

Linguistic communication may occur in either a native or a foreign language. In the latter case, it constitutes foreign language communication. Considering the aforementioned conceptualizations of communication in general and linguistic communication in particular, foreign language communication can be defined as follows:

1. A process of transmitting information, messages, emotions, and feelings from the sender to the recipient through a foreign language. This definition emphasizes the transfer of information between participants in foreign language communication.

2. An interaction between two or more individuals using a foreign language (communication may occur between a native and a non-native speaker, or between non-native speakers). The outcome of such interaction is the exchange of thoughts, ideas, emotions, and information. From this perspective, foreign

language communication is understood as a bidirectional process, in which each participant influences the other through the use of the foreign language.

3. The construction of meaning in a foreign language, as the process of foreign language communication involves not only the transmission of information by the sender but also the reception and comprehension of that information by the recipient, through the use of language, symbols, gestures, and context.

4. A social process, reflecting communication and interaction through a foreign language within cultural, social, and institutional contexts. In this aspect, foreign language communication is seen as the interaction of individuals using a foreign language to co-construct meanings and establish social relationships.

5. A process of influence in the context of foreign language communication, where one participant seeks to affect the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, or behaviour of another. Consequently, foreign language communication may serve as a tool to achieve specific goals, such as persuasion, argumentation, or manipulation (Holter, 2019).

Scholars conclude that interpretations of foreign language communication predominantly focus on the communicative aspect of human interaction, which fulfils a range of essential functions. Among these, the key functions include informational (ensuring the transmission and exchange of information during the communicative process); cognitive (facilitating the accurate perception, understanding, and interpretation of the content of received information); expressive (serving as a means of self-expression); motivational (encouraging participants to act or engage in activity); coordinative (aligning the actions of participants in foreign language communication); and emotive (facilitating the exchange of feelings and emotions) (Levkivska, 2016).

Thus, foreign language communication can be summarized as interaction conducted through verbal means of a foreign language, encompassing the transmission, reception, and exchange of information, ideas, experiences, emotions, and modes of activity. Accordingly, a fundamental prerequisite for engaging in foreign language communication is the participants' knowledge of the foreign language as a medium of interaction. At the same time, proficiency in a foreign language does not guarantee absolute success in the communicative process; rather, it constitutes a necessary condition for the development of foreign language communication skills. It is posited that the development of foreign language communication skills is directly linked, and in some cases identical, to the development of foreign language communicative competence. Consequently, it is necessary to examine this scientific and pedagogical phenomenon in detail.

Attention is drawn to the concept of «competence», which has numerous interpretations in the scientific and pedagogical literature. This diversity stems from the fact that the issue of a competence-based approach to education in general, and the development of specific competences in particular, has been actively and intensively studied by scholars and continues to be a subject of research. To avoid potential misunderstandings, it is advisable to adopt the definition of «competence» provided in the Law of Ukraine *On Education*: «Competence is a dynamic combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, ways of thinking, attitudes, values, and other personal qualities that determine an individual's capacity to successfully socialize, engage in professional activity, and/or pursue further educational endeavours» (Verkhovna Rada Ukraine, 2017).

When analyzing the term «*foreign language communicative competence*», contemporary researches offer several interpretations:

- as an integrative personal formation with a complex structure, representing the interaction and interpenetration of linguistic, sociocultural, and communicative competences, the level of which enables a future specialist to engage effectively in foreign language, and thus interlingual, intercultural, and interpersonal communication (Kukhta, 2010);
- as a multilevel integral personal quality that allows for the effective resolution of problems and performance of tasks of varying complexity within the context of foreign language communication (Chorna, 2021, p. 84);
- as a set of knowledge, skills, abilities, values, attitudes, initiatives, and experience in communicative interaction necessary for understanding and interpreting others' and generating one's own «programmes of speech behavior» relevant to the purpose, context, and situation of communication (Biduk, 2012, p. 160);
- as a complex of knowledge, skills, and abilities, together with experience in their application, which enables a future specialist to use a foreign language effectively and productively in professional activities (Ivanov, 20220).

Foreign language communicative competence thus emerges as an effective means of shaping the personality of the future specialist. This type of competence fosters the development of personal qualities, enhances motivation to master a foreign language, engages not only cognition but also feelings and emotions, and enables the successful use of a foreign language in both professional activities and self-education and personal development. Foreign language communicative competence is understood as the ability and readiness for foreign language interaction with native speakers, perception and comprehension of interlocutors, and the appropriate and timely expression of one's own thoughts (Cherniuk, 2017, p. 359).

In the education of future medical professionals, the study of a foreign language facilitates the use of foreign language communication in subsequent professional activities, as scholars identify communicativeness as the priority component of foreign language learning. Communicativeness represents the ultimate goal of instruction, encompassing the development of learners' abilities and skills to engage in foreign language communication in specific contexts (Pukhovska, 2000).

In accordance with new educational standards, the aim of foreign language instruction in higher education is shifting towards the development of communicative competence, comprising linguistic, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, strategic, social, and discursive components. This approach emphasizes mastery of a living language rather than mere acquisition of grammatical structures (Bezkorovaina & Moroz, 2012). Foreign language communicative competence thus defines a learner's readiness for active foreign language interaction and their ability to resolve complex communicative tasks.

The necessity of developing foreign language communication skills in future medical professionals is also dictated by the fact that translators with only basic language training are often unable to ensure interlingual communication when working with highly specialized medical texts. Furthermore, medical institutions increasingly require the study of international experience in healthcare development and cooperation, the expansion of specialized medical literature in foreign languages, and the acquisition of knowledge necessary for contemporary medical practitioners (Zahalnoevropeiski Rekomendatsii z movnoi osvity, 2003). Consequently, higher medical education institutions are implementing innovative methodologies aimed at preparing future medical professionals by fostering their professional culture with due consideration of foreign language communication in both general and professional contexts. Mastery of foreign language communication is stipulated by higher education standards within the field of «Health Care and Social Welfare», as well as by educational and qualification characteristics (EQC) and educational and professional programmes (EPP) for medical training. According to these requirements, to perform typical professional tasks, a specialist at the corresponding level of educational qualification must possess proficiency in at least one foreign language for professional purposes (e.g., translation with a dictionary, preparation of abstracts or reports) and everyday communication, and must acquire the following skills: reading, responding to questions, summarizing general scientific or technical information in a foreign language, conducting conversations in social, cultural, and professional domains, developing practical skills for professional foreign language communication, and achieving proficiency in written

forms of the language (Osvitno-kvalifikatsiina kharakterystyka spetsialista, 2003). Therefore, the development of foreign language communicative competence in future medical specialists should be regarded as an essential component of professional training in the contemporary global context (Khvalyboha & Palasiuk, 2023).

To develop skills in foreign language professional communication, instructors of foreign languages should cultivate all types of language activities in higher education students, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They should employ authentic language materials, both domestic and international textbooks, and contemporary audio, video, and multimedia resources, while conducting assessment of students' knowledge at all stages of learning. From the first year of study, students' specializations should be taken into account to facilitate effective acquisition of the vocabulary relevant to their future profession, particularly when reading and translating specialized texts, considering both lexicological and linguistic aspects. Special attention should be given to international terminology, polysemous technical terms, and abbreviations, which are common in specialized literature. To this end, lexical material is selected with regard to the student's future professional field, and mini-dictionaries, methodological guidelines, and subject-specific manuals are developed to support their learning.

One of the objectives in developing foreign language communicative competence through the creation of communication situations is the formation of a foreign language communicative mindset, which is based on the following factors: cultivating the habit of using the foreign language predominantly during lessons; employing authentic materials in class (texts, audio, and video recordings that vividly reflect the cultural features of the target language country); and engaging students in playful activities within the context of establishing a foreign language communicative mindset (Kaniuk, 2015).

The key conceptual foundations of foreign language communicative competence are as follows:

1. Professional orientation. Language instruction should be tailored to the specific needs of future medical practice, including clinical vocabulary, diagnosis and treatment, as well as communication in emergency situations.

2. Integration into the educational process. Foreign language training should be an integral part of the curriculum, enabling students to apply the language in real clinical scenarios, simulations, and practical exercises.

3. Development of intercultural competence. Future medical professionals must understand the cultural characteristics of patients from different countries, which is essential for effective diagnosis, treatment, and building trust.

4. Use of modern technologies. Digital resources should be actively employed in teaching, including online platforms, medical databases, scientific journals, and mobile applications that provide access to the latest knowledge and research.

5. Emphasis on practical skills. Particular attention should be paid to developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, so that future medical professionals can communicate fluently with patients and colleagues and access medical literature without language barriers.

6. Continuous professional development. The concept presupposes the creation of conditions for ongoing learning and improvement of language skills throughout the professional career, given the continual advancement of medical science.

7. Access to international knowledge. Foreign language communication enables medical professionals to stay informed about the latest scientific achievements, clinical guidelines, and innovative treatment methods, thereby enhancing the quality of healthcare delivery.

8. Globalization of healthcare. In the contemporary world, medical professionals increasingly encounter foreign patients and work in international teams, making proficiency in foreign languages indispensable.

9. Professional advancement. Knowledge of foreign languages allows medical professionals to participate in international conferences, internships, and continuing education programmes, thereby supporting their professional growth.

**Conclusions and Research Prospects.** Thus, the development of foreign language communication skills is impossible without knowledge of a foreign language, which, in turn, constitutes both a prerequisite and a condition for the success and effectiveness of any communicative act in a foreign language environment. Within the context of our study, we conclude that the formation of foreign language communication skills is realized through the development of foreign language communicative competence. Based on an analysis of the scientific and pedagogical literature, we have synthesized the concept of «foreign language communicative competence» as an integral qualitative characteristic of an individual, encompassing a system of knowledge, abilities, skills, attitudes, and value orientations necessary for successful communicative interaction, appropriate to the context, timing, and purpose of communication in a foreign language setting, and enabling the performance of various activities related to everyday life, education, scientific research, and the execution of professional tasks and responsibilities.

Foreign language professional competence constitutes an essential component of the professional competence of medical practitioners, as it facilitates communication in a foreign language environment to address

specific professional, business, and scientific challenges within an international context. The effectiveness of professional communicative training for future medical professionals will be significantly enhanced if theoretical and methodological foundations are developed; pedagogical conditions for professionally oriented communicative training are identified and ensured, taking into account the specific characteristics of medical university education; the content of professionally ori-

ented communicative training is aligned with fundamental academic disciplines and optimally integrated with applied and professional subjects, considering the essence and particularities of the learning process; and personal development is promoted through the activation of independent and research-based learning activities. Prospects for further research lie in examining the specific features of foreign language professional training for future specialists in the medical field.

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Стаття надійшла 04.10.2025

Статтю прийнято 08.11.2025

Стаття опублікована 30.12.2025