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REQUIREMENTS TO THE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN BELGIUM

ABSTRACT

The concept of a teacher competence in the works of national and foreign scholars has been investigated in the article. The author describes the standards for English teachers in Belgium that is considered to be an inalienable element of the European education. The qualified training of the teachers is denoted as pedagogical, didactic and methodical knowledge mastering and obtaining research and practical skills. In Belgium vocational education in general and teacher training in particular are described as training of an educational specialist with vocational, organizational, communicative skills and high level of the competence.

Key words: *the competence of the foreign language teacher, European standards for teachers, communicative competence, occupational/vocational competence, pedagogical/teacher training education, teacher, educational specialist.*

INTRODUCTION

Today when we are leaving in the time of globalization and intellectual development of the society, of the educational revision it is necessary to pay attention to the importance of vocational experience, to the creation of the teaching competence. Continuity of vocational education is known to be a basis for finding the teacher of new generation. Teacher training means obtaining pedagogical and didactic knowledge, research and practical experience (Закаулова, 2012). The competence includes occupational qualification, even personal and vocational traits of a teacher, non-typical creative thinking, an ability to take appropriate decisions, to use the knowledge according to a working situation, aspiration for self-perfection.

Modern changes in political, economic, socio-cultural development of the society made a great influence on a foreign language education in the countries of the European Council. Pupils and students are supposed not just to learn the linguistic aspect of the foreign language but to use it in practice and to some extent create 'a map of the world' of the native speaker in their minds. The forming of sociocultural competence is a person's world view developing and preparing to learn history of the mankind, of the country, of the nationality.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the article is the English teacher competence in Europe in general and in Belgium in particular.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

There are many national and foreign scholars who have been researching the problem of the teacher competence. The works of S. Nikolaeva, O. Petraschuk, N. Braznuk, V. Redko in the sphere of vocational and methodical work of the foreign language teacher helps to denote the competence.



Y. Zakaulova regards competence as the correspondence of the given working task to the ability of a teacher to do it in the working situation (Закаулова, 2012). O. Nikolaev sees it as a degree of teacher's qualification which helps him to solve the given tasks successfully (Ніколаєв, 2012). N. Avdeeva denotes the competence as a marker that characterizes the preparedness of a person to live in a society (Авдеева, 2003).

Foreign searchers devote their works to the problem as well. M. Canale and M. Swain in "A Theoretical Framework for Communicative Competence" (1981) paid attention to the analysis of the theoretical base for creating communicative competence in future foreign language teachers. Davies Allan in "Communicative Competence as a Language Use" (1989) shared the idea of forming foreign communicative skills and experience.

The research methods we used are: theoretical analysis, synthesis, the method of studying educational and historical documents.

RESULTS

In the countries of the European Union and in Belgium as well vocational education and teacher training means bringing up a personality who obtains the potential of vocational creativity, organizing and communicative skills necessary for effective educational activity. A qualified teacher should possess substantial knowledge of the appropriate specialty and high level of the competence (Закаулова, 2012).

In order to denote the English teacher competence in Belgium it is important to check the standards for teachers in general and for foreign language teachers in particular.

Ukrainian scholar L. Puhovska having analyzed teacher training in Europe, distinguished four aspects of pedagogical education:

- academic and traditional aspect (the teacher has the role of knowledge 'transferor', the main purpose of the teacher training is getting the mastery in the field of the professional course);
- technological (the same role of the teacher but the aim of the training is obtaining the knowledge and skills of the vocational mastery);
- individual paradigm (firmly connected with the humanistic approach in education which denotes a person with the values, freedom and activity as the main part of the pedagogical process);
- research approach (one should form creative and critical mode of thinking, the experience of research activity, the retrieval of a personal mastery in a teacher).

She also describes the personal approach in teacher training which expands the sphere of creative knowledge mastering. The learning pays attention to the personality and is being completely changed by means of the motive functions in content appropriation (Puhovska).

Another scholar G. Kiltcherman explains personal theory of education as the knowledge complex personally made by a teacher which contains a curriculum, future tasks, teacher self-conception, conception about school, family etc. (Середа, 2003).

In 1970-90s in European pedagogy there appeared a so called 'personalized' teacher training approach. It had been developed with the help of scholars and experts of pedagogical education all over the world. It denotes teacher training to be based on the necessity of the vocational self-consciousness and the development of vocational interests of future teachers. But in Belgium this paradigm developed and spread more. The Belgian scholars adopted the main statements of the 'personalized' teacher training approach to the modern conditions. They made their own 'personalized' approach of the teacher training:

1. The opportunity for a student to show his professional interests.
2. Student responsibility for their own studying.



3. Differential support.
4. The support directed to the development of the professional interests.
5. Early involving in the teaching reality.
6. Teaching activity during the first year of studying.
7. The situation of success during the first teaching experience.
8. Differentiation of standards in preparing for lessons.
9. Specific orientation in theoretical teacher training.
10. Methods used in theoretical training.
11. Cyclic character of the training (Пуховська).

Having analyzed the educational documents and scientific works we found that some scholars and associations of teachers (the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the American Association of Teachers of French, the National Council of the English Language Teachers etc.) had been trying to denote and develop standards for foreign language education. They found the five goals of foreign language education (so-called “five C’s”) and the standards to follow them (see table 1).

Table 1

The ‘Five C’s’ and the Standards to Follow Them

Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – students are engaged in conversations, provide and obtain information, express their opinions; – understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics; – present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics
Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture
Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – students reinforce their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language; – acquire the information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures
Comparisons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – students demonstrate understanding of the language through comparisons of the language studied and their own; – demonstrate understanding of the culture concept through comparisons of the culture studied and their own
Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – students use the language both within and beyond the school setting; – show the evidence of becoming lifelong learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment

Belgium having carried the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages denotes personal behavior, motives, values and ideals as the main object of personal and methodical development of the future foreign language teacher.

The document defines the norms for the foreign language teacher to follow.

For speech:

- clarity of pronunciation;
- ambient noise (trains, aircraft, ‘static’, etc.);
- interference (crowded street, markets, pubs, parties, discos, etc.);
- distortions (poor telephone lines, radio reception, public address systems);
- weather conditions (wind, extreme cold, etc.).

For writing: poor reproduction of print; difficult handwriting; poor lighting, etc.



The foreign language teachers (including the English teachers as well) should also remember the number and familiarity of interlocutors, relative status of participants (power and solidarity, etc.), presence or absence of audience and social relationships between participants. It is necessary to remember preparation time for speeches, reports, etc., limitations on time allowed (e.g. by rules, expense, competing events and commitments, etc.) for turns and interactions (Language Policy Unit).

The teacher is supposed to have the below mentioned communicative competence. Teacher training and the English teacher competence should be directed to obtain the cognitive, linguistic, phonetic, semantic and manual skills which will help them to prepare children for linguistic situation:

- plan and organize a message (cognitive and linguistic skills);
- perceive the utterance (auditory phonetic skills);
- formulate a linguistic utterance (linguistic skills);
- articulate the utterance (phonetic skills).
- hand-write or type the text (manual skills) or otherwise transfer the text to writing.
- understand the message (semantic skills);
- interpret the message (cognitive skills).

Sociolinguistic competence also includes the ability to recognize the linguistic markers of, for example: social class, regional provenance, national origin, ethnicity and occupational group.

Pragmatic competences are concerned with the teacher's knowledge of the principles according to which messages are:

- a) organized, structured and arranged ('discourse competence');
- b) used to perform communicative functions ('functional competence');
- c) sequenced according to interactional and transactional schemata ('design competence')

(Language Policy Unit).

The concept of 'teacher', 'lecturer', and 'instructor' is of great importance in Belgium and needs deep investigation since competent lecturers and instructors give future teachers sound knowledge and practical skills in the specialty. The reforms which have been recently carried out in the educational sphere are giving teachers an opportunity to spend more time in a working environment and to put their knowledge into practice, to use it working with children.

One must pay attention to the fact that the main task of the teachers in Belgium doesn't include the paper work, the work with the curricula and the lesson plans but the work with a class directly. In the sphere of education the humanization and personalization of the education are very important. They distinguish personally oriented approach in English teacher training that means to teach the future educators how to be responsible, to respect the national and multicultural appliance, to be ready for self-denial, for reflexive studying, long vocational development (Закаулова, 2012).

A foreign scholar Canagarajah says that most of the world's English teachers are not native speakers of English, and it is not necessary to have a nativelike command of a language in order to teach it well. Some of the best language classes he observed had been taught by teachers for whom English was a foreign or second language. Conversely some of the worst classes he knew had been taught by native speakers. So the issue is, how much of a language does one need to know to be able to teach it effectively, and how does proficiency in a language interact with other aspects of teaching (Richards, 2011).

To answer the first question we need to start by considering the language-specific competencies that a language teacher needs in order to teach effectively. These include the ability to do the following kinds of things:



- to comprehend texts accurately;
- to provide good language models;
- to maintain use of the target language in the classroom;
- to maintain fluent use of the target;
- to give explanations and instructions in the target language;
- to provide examples of words and grammatical structures and give accurate explanations (e.g., of vocabulary and language points);
- to use appropriate classroom language;
- to select target-language resources (e.g., newspapers, magazines, the Internet);
- to monitor his or her own speech and writing for accuracy;
- to give correct feedback on learner language;
- to provide input at an appropriate level of difficulty;
- to provide language-enrichment experiences for learners.

Medgyes considers learning to carry out these aspects of a lesson fluently and comprehensively in English to be an important dimension of teacher learning for those whose mother tongue is not English. There is a threshold proficiency level the teacher needs to have reached in the target language in order to be able to teach effectively in English. A teacher who has not reached this level of proficiency will be more dependent on teaching resources (e.g., textbooks, reference books) and less likely to be able to engage in improvisational teaching.

For teachers who are native speakers of English, other discourse skills will also need to be acquired. These discourse skills relate to the following dimensions of teaching: to be able to monitor one's language use in order to provide suitable learning input; to avoid unnecessary colloquialisms and idiomatic usage; to provide a model of spoken English appropriate for students learning English as an international language; to provide language input at an appropriate level for learners (Richards, 2011).

The important mean to value the quality of results for individual foreign language learning is European language portfolio. Foreign language competence standards may be organized in form of professional portfolio for the future teacher which contains vocational competence to be obtained during the studying. The aim of this qualification is formation and development of the professional competence. The main principle of the vocational training is the close development of a competent personality and the training of an active and responsible teaching staff.

Portfolio has a great importance in the development of inner reach and creative personality. This approach helps to realize the next of the higher educational system organization: the bilingual principle that means the constant attention to students' activity in the process of studying, their ability to take an active part in work, to change one speaking language for another; of self-development – forming of the conditions for supporting the natural curiosity of students; the principle of integrity that includes foreign language vocational competence (communicative, philosophic, psychological, pedagogical and information); of valuating teaching activity results of future teachers according to the certain criteria (Тадеева, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS

The vocational competence of the future foreign language teachers in Europe in general and in Belgium as its inalienable part contains competence different in aim and content which studies motivational, emotionally resolute and evaluating components. They are connected with the cognitive and behavioral elements.

Having analyzed the investigations of prominent scholars we drew the conclusion that the competence approach in teacher training causes the organization of the training



when a qualified teacher has a field for adaptation and self-development of several characteristics which form a block of professional teaching qualities of the new generation.

We define several characteristics for a successful foreign language teacher. The English teacher training in Belgium is directed to instruct the following: communicative competence; sociolinguistic competence; sociocultural competence; methodical competence; pragmatic competence.

The teachers for whom English is a foreign language should also obtain the language-specific competence. The norms for the teachers with English as a native and as a foreign language are different: the teachers should have skills that enable them to manage classroom discourse so that it provides maximum opportunities for language learning.

One must always improve vocational features of the future English language teacher by means of the English language self-learning. The important part of vocational foreign language teacher competence is the methodical competence of the future teachers. That is a characteristic of the education in the European Union.

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