

# Forming universal competencies in the course of teaching a foreign language at a nonlinguistic university

*Kseniya N. Antonova*<sup>1\*</sup>, *Galina A. Ilina*<sup>1</sup>, *Marina Y. Mironova*<sup>1</sup>, *Angelika O. Nasledova*<sup>1</sup>, and *Maria A. Suvorova*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Saint Petersburg State University of Economics, Department of English Language N 2, Saint Petersburg, Russia

**Abstract.** The labor market modernization and the transition to the digital economy have led to a revision of the requirements for a contemporary specialist, who, in addition to professional competencies, possesses a broad range of universal skills and personal qualities. The development of leadership skills can become a universal pedagogical basis for implementing the concept of continuous nationally oriented independent education at all stages starting from the preparation of applicants, secondary vocational education, bachelor's and master's degree programs, to postgraduate studies, including advanced training and additional education. The study aimed to identify efficient educational technologies aimed at forming universal competencies in the framework of disciplines "Foreign Language" and "Business Foreign Language" at various stages of training, both in academic and extracurricular activities. The basis for identifying efficient educational technologies was theoretical methods (literature analysis (active teaching methods, and mixed learning technologies), documentation analysis (Federal State Education Standard, FSES 3+++)), as well as empirical methods (observation, study, and generalization). The practical significance of the work consists in the presented model of forming universal competencies, which can be considered as a component of the professional education of a future graduate of a nonlinguistic university. The universal competencies formed within the framework of the disciplines "Foreign Language" and "Business Foreign Language" will allow the graduate to become a competitive specialist in the international labor market.

**Keywords:** university education, professional competencies, upbringing, training.

## 1 Introduction

The restructuring of the labor market in the context of contemporary civilizational changes has led to a revision of the wide range of personal qualities and interpersonal skills known as soft skills.

---

\* Corresponding author: [ksana-a@mail.ru](mailto:ksana-a@mail.ru)

The development of soft skills and leadership qualities can become a universal pedagogical basis for implementing the concept of continuous nationally oriented independent education at all stages starting from the preparation of applicants, secondary vocational education, bachelor's and master's degree programs, to postgraduate studies, including advanced training and additional education.

The economic and methodological prerequisites for implementing this proposal are the following factors:

1. Implementing the Federal State Educational Standard (FSSES) 3+++ for all areas of bachelor's degree program, which establish the following universal competencies: System and critical thinking (UC-1); Project development and implementation (UC-2); Teamwork and leadership (UC-3); Communication (UC-4); Cross-cultural interaction (UC-5); Self-organization and self-development (including health protection) (UC-6 and UC-7); and Life safety (UC-8) [1].

2. The need to implement new educational models within which a student will be able to change the field of study both after the bachelor's degree program and the 2nd year, which was declared by Russian President V. Putin in his address to the Federal Assembly in January 2020.

3. The law on strengthening upbringing in the education system, which interprets upbringing as "an activity that is aimed at personal development, creating conditions for self-determination and socialization of students based on socio-cultural, spiritual, and moral values, as well as the rules and behavior standards adopted in Russian society to the benefit of a person, family, society and the state", adopted on July 22, 2020, by the State Duma of the Russian Federation [2].

The research hypothesis is the assumption that the relationship between upbringing and educational processes together with research activities becomes a tool of professional communication, and contributes to the preparation of a competitive personality in any field of professional activity.

The purpose of the work is to analyze and identify efficient educational technologies aimed at forming universal competencies in the framework of disciplines "Foreign Language" and "Business Foreign Language" at various stages of training both in academic and extracurricular activities.

According to the stated goal, the following tasks were defined.

1. To summarize the accumulated experience of teaching the disciplines "Foreign Language" and "Business Foreign Language" at various stages of training at a nonlinguistic university.

2. To identify efficient educational technologies that would contribute to forming universal competencies.

3. To determine the relationship between academic and extracurricular activities in the framework of teaching a foreign language at a nonlinguistic university.

## **2 Results and discussion**

Communicative and personality-oriented educational technologies, which have long been used by foreign language teachers, allow not only developing students' abilities for efficient intercultural professional communication but also forming skills of systematic and critical thinking, self-organization and self-development. To do this, teachers use active and interactive teaching methods in their teaching practices, such as game technologies or simulations (simulation, role-playing, and business games), case technologies, and cooperation-based training.

The discipline "Professional Foreign Language" is aimed at forming a foreign language communicative competency that allows a future specialist, executive to solve problems in

various areas of their professional activity in a foreign language. When implementing the goal of the above-mentioned discipline, foreign language teachers pay special attention to the development of students' abilities to carry out professional communication through various types of speech activities in the framework of the special topics, namely, "Leadership", "Human Resource Management", and "Culture" (herewith, students acquire not only general information about the culture of countries but also the main behavior strategies when doing business in Europe and Asia). At the end of this course, the students should be able to fulfill their potential through communication, i.e., establish contact, explain their ideas and solutions, understand their associates, subordinates, executives, as well as offer constructive solutions in the event of conflict situations.

For this purpose, teachers use various forms of intercultural professional communication, such as correspondence, business conversations in person and by phone, meetings, and conferences held not only in-person but also using digital technologies, negotiations, and presentations, as well as everyday communication with foreign associates.

Forming a multilaterally developed intellectual personality aimed at continuous improvement of professional and personal qualities, is an important component of the training of master's degree students.

The study of the discipline "Business Foreign Language", which aims to develop foreign-language communicative socio-cultural competencies, not only forms the ability of master's degree students to express their thoughts, structure the material presented but also allows them to expand horizons, form a respectful attitude to the spiritual and material values of other countries and peoples, improve the culture of thinking and speech, moral personal qualities, analyze current situations, set priorities, be persistent in achieving the goal, become popular, successful, and competitive in the labor market.

The development of foreign language communicative competency involves forming speech, language, socio-cultural, compensatory, and educational-cognitive competencies.

They allow the master's degree student to use the studied language functionally as a means of communication and cognitive activity, to plan their speech and nonspeech behavior taking into account the specifics of the communication situation, to master new language means according to the communication spheres. Forming language abilities and skills of oral and written speech, as well as translation skills (of both popular scientific and specialty literature) allow developing and improving the levels of formedness of linguistic and communicative competencies.

This is largely facilitated by a variety of educational technologies, both traditional and interactive, such as translation and analysis of professional texts (rendering), combined reading, project reading, multilevel tasks, business games, and presentations, which allow undergraduates to improve themselves in the professional field and a foreign language to continue education and self-education.

Teaching a foreign language at the postgraduate level is aimed at developing the scientific and personal potential of future scientists. The universal competencies defined by the FSES of the Russian Federation are aimed at the development and improvement of soft skills. These include universal competencies, such as the ability to think critically, conduct research in interdisciplinary fields, evaluate modern scientific achievements, adapt to work in Russian and foreign research teams, communicate in an academic environment in Russian and foreign languages, as well as acquire professional and scientific self-improvement skills.

When considering the development and improvement of scientific foreign language communicative competence as the goal of studying the discipline "Foreign Language" at graduate school, two main modules are included in the program:

- Features of the scientific style of presentation of information in a foreign language. Academic writing.
- Skills of presentation and discussion of scientific research in a foreign language.

Both modules maintain continuity in forming skills of reading foreign-language scientific literature, academic writing, and speaking (public speaking and scientific discussion), formed in the course “Business Foreign Language” of the master’s degree program.

Along with the basic linguistic skills of grammatical, lexical, and stylistic design of scientific statements in foreign and Russian languages, the first module includes a system of tasks for developing the skills of writing an abstract of an article and a critical summary. This should allow students to evaluate and select scientific articles and texts in their specific scientific research area, as well as critically comprehend the results of other scientific research, and write a reasoned resume on what they have read.

The second module (public speaking and discussion) is aimed not only at developing speaking skills but also at working on the skills of managing the audience’s attention, composing the text of the speech depending on the intended audience (speaking at a scientific conference, and speaking to a nonprofessional but interested audience, for example, investors, grant-givers), the ability to demonstrate enthusiasm, master body language, take into account the cultural context of the presentation, as well as answer questions depending on the type of question and the communicative intention of the opponent [3]. Scientific discussion, in turn, requires participants to understand the importance of tolerance and respect for other people’s viewpoints.

Thus, the situations of modeling professional scientific communication offered in foreign language classes allow postgraduate students to develop not only foreign language communication skills but also behavioral skills, cognitive skills, and interpersonal professional communication skills.

Forming a multilaterally developed intellectual personality aimed at the continuous improvement of professional and personal qualities, is possible only at the close relationship of the educational process with research activities.

Such an approach can be achieved through the Student Research Society (SRS). In the course of joint activity of the teacher and the student, assistance is provided in preparing presentations and papers for a scientific conference, speech planning, practicing presentation skills as a form of communication, and improving the skills of analyzing scientific information.

The SRS helps students to develop and unlock their potential, improves motivation to achieve success and professional growth in the future, develops systematic and critical thinking, teamwork skills, as well as organizational skills of participants. The manifestation of these personal qualities in future professional activities provides the prerequisites for creative transformations in all spheres of society.

### **3 Conclusion**

The awareness of the need for continuous professional growth and development should become an important aspect of successful professional activity. Lifelong learning is an important tool for building the human potential of the innovative economy of the future.

Traditionally, the university offers courses of extended education and retraining, as well as expands the possibilities of remote access to these courses. The discipline “Foreign Language” provides an opportunity to offer a variety of courses on the development of soft skills for different audiences of students. A good example is the pilot online educational project “Vitamin Znaniy (Vitamin of Knowledge)” [4], implemented by graduate chairs, general education chairs, employers, and business partners of the Saint Petersburg State University of Economics.

The upbringing and developmental potential of soft skills in the lifelong learning system allows for professional training aimed at cooperation, creativity, innovation, critical and

analytical thinking, and the ability to solve emerging problems unconventionally and effectively to the benefit of national development.

## References

1. Federal'nyy gosudarstvennyy obrazovatel'nyy standart vysshego obrazovaniya – bakalavriat po napravleniyu 40.03.01 – Yurisprudentsiya [Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education - Bachelor's degree in the direction of 40.03.01 - Jurisprudence] (2020). Accessed on: December 02, 2020. [Online]. Available: [http://fgosvo.ru/uploadfiles/FGOS%20VO%203++/Bak/400301\\_B\\_3\\_07092020.pdf](http://fgosvo.ru/uploadfiles/FGOS%20VO%203++/Bak/400301_B_3_07092020.pdf)
2. Federal'nyy zakon ot 31.07.2020 № 304-FZ “O vnesenii izmeneniy v Federal'nyy zakon “Ob obrazovanii v Rossiyskoy Federatsii” po voprosam vospitaniya obuchayushchikhsya” [Federal Law of July 31, 2020 No. 304-FZ “On Amendments to the Federal Law” On Education in the Russian Federation “on the Issues of Education of Students”] (2020). Accessed on: December 03, 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://unecon.ru/distant/vitamin-znaniy> <https://rg.ru/2020/08/07/ob-obrazovanii-dok.html>
3. L.R. Gazizulina, Vestnik of Lobachevsky State University of Nizhni Novgorod. Series: Social Sciences, **4(56)**, 275–279 (2019)
4. Educational online project “Vitamin Znaniy” (n.d.). Accessed on: October 30, 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://unecon.ru/distant/vitamin-znaniy>