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INTRODUCING FOREIGN COMPETENCE-CENTERED PRACTICE INTO THE LANGUAGE EDUCATION OF UKRAINE

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The present paper encompasses a number of issues relative to perceiving the foreign best practice of implementing the language learning competence-building strategies. It analyzes some positive aspects and negative cases in the competency-based approach assimilation in the higher school of Ukraine. The ways for competence-based language training optimal implementation are represented. The prospects for improving an innovative educational approach are designed.

Key words: competency-based approach, competency / competence, genesis, history, implementation.

В настоящей работе определен ряд вопросов, касающихся рецепции зарубежного опыта внедрения компетентностно-образующих стратегий языкового обучения. Проанализированы некоторые позитивные и отдельные негативные аспекты освоения компетентностного подхода в высшей школе Украины. Репрезентированы пути оптимальной имплементации компетентностно-ориентированной языковой подготовки. Намечены перспективы совершенствования инновационного образовательного подхода.

Ключевые слова: компетентностный подход, компетенция/компетентность, генезис, история, имплементация.

Лічман Л.Ю. ВПРОВАДЖЕННЯ ЗАРУБІЖНОЇ ПРАКТИКИ КОМПЕТЕНТІСНО-ЦЕНТРИЧНОГО НАВЧАННЯ У ЛІНГВОДИДАКТИКУ УКРАЇНИ

У даній роботі визначено низку питань, що стосуються рецепції зарубіжного досвіду впровадження компетентнісно-утворювальних стратегій мовного навчання. Проаналізовано деякі позитивні та окремі негативні аспекти освоєння компетентнісного підходу у вищій школі України. Репрезентовано шляхи оптимальної імплементатії компетентнісно-орієнтованої мовної підготовки. Намічено перспективи вдосконалення інноваційного освітнього підходу.

Ключові слова: компетентнісний підхід, компетенція/компетентність, генезис, історія, імплементатія.

The idea of competence-based learning is the basic structural element of the educational systems of the European Union and America. In the second half of the 20th century, the Western world faced a number of socio-economic and geopolitical challenges. In order to minimize global risks it made the consistent reconstruction of social institutions, including the educational ones, its policy. The analytical discussions and theoretical research yielded the concept of developing a learning model, which provided for building competences, corresponding in kind to the qualification rules of economy and culture. Thus, on the one hand, the problem of improving employees' professional competence was solved and, on the other hand, the mainstream development for the educational system in the future, requiring its scientific and practical expansion, was designated.

The purpose of this paper is aimed at interpreting some historical aspects of implementing / incorporating foreign competence-centered training best practice in the language education of the higher school of Ukraine.

The first published paper in education, focused on the problem of improving competences, was correlated by the researchers with "Motivation Reconsidered: the Concept of Competence", written by R. White in 1959 [1]; in that work the concept of competence was examined in the shadow of motivation theory. Afterwards, White's provisions were interpreted and developed by the commonwealth of scientists and educators in a variety of fashions, that caused a sort of competence-centered boom in many sectors of pedagogy, psychology, sociology, economics, etc. A new terminological unit – the competency-based approach – became part of the public mind. It was hardly surprising that as the new educational strategy built and developed, it encouraged increasingly greater attention of many foreign and national researchers (N. Chomsky, R. Boyatzis, J. Raven, D. McClelland, O. Ovcharuk, O. Pometun, O. Lokshina, O. Savchenko, A. Markova, N. Bibik, V. Demchenko, V. Luhovyi, L. Khoruzha and others). The high degree of intensive development and active promotion of the approach was confirmed by a lot of introduced



definitions for the concepts of competency and competence, whose content was often alternative and sometimes polar.

It must be assumed that the contradictions taken place in the Ukrainian educators and experts' formulation of the basic concepts were primarily caused by the ill-designated common and accurate foundations for the unified definition of the concepts of competency and competence in Western European scientific and pedagogical community as well.

In support of this idea suffice it to analyze comparatively the opinions about key terms of competence offered by the experts of the European Union ("a capacity to apply knowledge and skills") [2, p. 6], UNESCO ("a coherent articulation of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes applied in daily-life situations") [2] or as particularly worded ("being able to use knowledge and skills efficiently and creatively in interpersonal situations – situations that include interacting with other people in social contexts as well as in vocational or subject-specific situations") [2, p. 6], the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance and Instruction (IBSTPI) ("a competency involves a related set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable a person to effectively perform the activities of a given occupation or function in such a way that meets or exceeds the standards expected in a particular profession or work setting") [3, p. 1]. The foreign best practice in identifying the competence-based educational paradigm is comprehensively analyzed, in particular, in O. Ovcharuk's work "Developing competency-based approach: the international community's strategic guidelines" [4, p. 5–14]. It stands to reason that the range of discrepancies in definitions and competency-based learning strategy is much broader upon the scientific and theoretical discourse.

It is also clear that the majority of national language educators, being the Western European or American theory and practice recipients, cannot reach common ground in general definitions for "competency" / "competence", setting aside using just a linguistic formulation in teaching. That's why, according to V. Kryvonosova, "the attempt to take a step closer to the adequate visions of the terms "competency" and "competence" has lasted for almost ten years" [5, p. 2]. In our opinion, the meaning of key definitions and their clear division have not been inclined to corporate unification till now.

Speaking about the need for distinguishing the concepts of competency and competence, V. Demchenko exemplifies the inconsistency in definitions: "...in the State Standard of General Secondary Education we

find such terms as "social, communicative, computer competence" and "building communicative and literary competence" used in the same sense. At the same time, the order of the MoES of Ukraine "On approval of criteria for assessing primary school pupils' achievements" provides that an educational competency is the total of the complementary conceptual orientations, knowledge, skills and activity experience of the pupil concerning the specific range of the realities of life, required for personal and welfare productive activity. Competency is a social norm, requirement, which is not an inherent personality characteristic. Competency settles into the personality characteristic under pupil's learning and reflection, evolving into competence" [6].

Yet in general, the national experts consider competence to be "total capacity which is based on knowledge, experience, values, abilities acquired through training. Thus, the concept of competence does not come down to knowledge and skills, but it is classified among the complex skills and qualities of personality" [7, p. 180].

In foreign linguistics and language education a new and original interpretation of "competence" was given by Noam Chomsky, American linguist and social activist, who created generative grammar; rested on W. von Humboldt's views, he proposed considering the innate ability for language acquisition to be the innate ability for language competence.

In Ukrainian language education, N. Chomsky's concept was developed, in our opinion, restrictedly and scholastically: the pedagogical community paid attention mainly to the form of defining the key concepts, but it was not aimed at integrating the American researcher's linguistic theory into the teaching theory and practice. Thus, there occurred a disparity between the development of the theoretical articulation of the concept of linguistic competence and the building of that competence during academic activities. Therefore, a pragmatic approach to building occupational linguistic competences, formed as part of social competences – social and cultural, cross-cultural, ethnic-tolerant, civil, environmental, etc., got the upper hand over the others in the national language pedagogy. The pragmatic approach aspects were presented in the vast number of national scientists' works.

Meanwhile, N. Chomsky's concept has both linguistic scientific and linguistic educational potentials. We believe, in particular, that the scientist's assumption of child's congenital mental mechanisms for very rapid language acquisition needs further interdisciplinary research, perhaps, at the confluence of such



disciplines as language teaching, neuroscience, genetics. We believe that the prospects of competency-based approach for language education, which is, as defined by academician L. Shcherba, on the way to becoming a science, will open subject to the actualization of N. Chomsky's works in propedeutics.

It should be emphasized that the idea of competency-based language training in Ukraine was inspired by European and American teaching traditions and trends, including socio-political factors. At the same time, the genesis of the competency-based learning strategy in Ukraine manifested itself internally – structurally and meaningfully – diverse; they were: the genesis of the theoretical acquisition, the genesis of actual use, the genesis of the regulatory framework, the genesis of understanding the problem of linguistic competence as such (the hermeneutic of competence), etc. Therefore, studying the history as well as typology of the genesis of building competency-based learning in Ukraine should be carried out in various chronological boundaries that meet a certain type.

As concerns the beginning of the first – theoretical – stage of the competency-based language learning model implementation in higher educational establishments of Ukraine, it runs from the date of N. Chomsky's books publication in the Soviet Union [8], [9], respectively, from 1962 and 1972. These very dates indicate the chronology of the beginning of the national scholars' initial visions of the competency / competence concept in its modern interpretation. Since the end of 80's – 90's the competence approach has come to the academic common use through such educational paradigms as a learner-centered learning, activity and communicative approaches, the ones, identified with the competence education strategy in the western world, for example, in America. Since the mid 90s, and especially the beginning of the 21st century, the theory of competency-based learning has been massively updated in the scientific and educational literature, defined the subject of Ph.D. and doctoral theses, it has been of civil society' great interest, which causes the corresponding interest of the pedagogy historians. It is small surprise that in recent decades there have been many works dealing with the theory and history of the competency-based approach in Ukraine and abroad. As I. Mashkova has aptly noted: "Over the past three decades studying the concepts of "pedagogical skills", "competence", "competency-based approach" has been the subject of many works written by both foreign and national scientists. It has been affirmed that the language of competencies is more appropri-

ate to assess the results of education, at that, the competencies themselves are interpreted as a common language for describing academic and professional profiles. The research universities tendency to improving the old and creating new competency-based approach curricula shares some scholars' view that, in fact, there is a transformation to a new education paradigm"[10, p. 39].

Thus, since the early 90's the competency-based education strategy, as the core concept of the educational system, has gradually become the educational dominant and enshrined in the appropriate legal documentation.

At the same time, focusing on the competency-based approach resulted in the situation where the educational system of Ukraine, in particular, the language education, adopted all the advantages and disadvantages of the European implementation of competency-based knowledge model.

Indeed, if the genesis of implementing the idea of competency-based learning is considered to be part of the Western educational tradition, it should be stated that in Ukraine the new doctrine establishment process was of secondary importance in all comparative parameters. The point at issue is that the national educational linguists perceived the original competence model, proposed by the Western scientific and expert community, at that, it was often done by the instrumentality of Russian studies. Suffice it to note that the majority of works on the issue of building linguistic / foreign linguistic competence appealed to the works of both European or American scientists and the Russian ones. On the one hand, doing so was quite useful because the expansion of scientific data attested to the extent of the author's scientific maturity. However, on the other hand, such a tradition raises some doubts about the advisability of resorting to the secondary interpretations of the competency-based approach subject-matter assuming that one could go to the fountainhead. In our opinion, focusing on building the national competence-centered model, of course, applying the other advanced findings of researchers and methodologists from different countries, would have been far more productive.

The complexity in assimilating the ideology of competency-based education in Ukraine is caused, primarily, by two factors: 1) searching an educational concept that would meet the European integration development strategy; 2) the semantic energy of the very concept of competent personality formation – the energy of the activity, individualized, collectivist, but always labile, plan for human life support.



The conception clearly articulates the obvious advantages of the commitment to the accelerated introduction of competency-based learning strategy. Among the indisputable advantages of the latter we can note the following:

- the relevancy of receiving the new high potential educational model to be developed in Ukraine;
- the compliance of the model with the socio-economic system, which determines the structure of the required competencies;
- the rapprochement of the developed national-based competencies with the world cultural, economic and educational reality;
- orientation towards the pragmatic status of education.

It is beyond argument that the mentioned advantages of the competency-based foreign language learning strategy are very important. After all, a doctrine, which defines the prospects for the formation of the educational process, is potentially productive, as it significantly expands the scope of educational excellence.

Indeed, implementing the competency-based learning concept and practice into the Ukrainian higher school language pedagogy has manifested many benefits. For example, focusing on the economic branch building of a linguistic / foreign linguistic competence (the language training of metallurgists, surgeons, chemists, mining specialists, etc.) is quite promising, as it involves ensuring professional success. The focus seems to contribute to the development of the cultural and economic potential of the state.

However, the following shortcomings of competence-centered language learning paradigm implementation should be pointed out:

- the competency-based learning terminological system is ambiguous and discrepant;
- the competency-based language learning concept is semantically unperfected and uncompleted, especially while comparing it with the other widely used educational approaches, for example, the activity, KSCs (knowledge, skills, competences), communicative ones, etc.
- the equivocal principles and criteria for assessing the level of expertise, referring to the teacher's performance.

Thus, analyzing some advantages and disadvantages of the competence approach implementation in the language education makes it possible to conclude in support of: a) the critical acceptance and introduction of the various competence-centered models of language education; b) the full development of the national paradigm of building linguistic competence, which requires the consolidated

efforts of the scientific and expert community and the state. In fact, common sense, the logic of events and international experience guide us to suppose that the very actualization of the national didactic segment opens the possibility for the coherent perception of a competence-building concept: "The results of the EU experts' years of work in this regard are indicative of the fact that for any country it is useful to compare the national and international best practices concerning both the educational system development in general and the opportunities for introducing a competency-based approach in particular; the absolute imitation of any educational models and phenomena of the other countries is counterproductive; the national educational models should be developed according to the national needs and peculiarities [11, p. 16].

As for the main directions of the perception and directly practical use of the competency-based linguistic education strategy, one should focus on theoretical aspects and take meaningful steps to turn theory into substance, to begin with. In this case, not taking into account the definite differences between theory and science, we go along with the view, according to which "the issue of building the competencies of educators is the phenomenon of three areas: theoretical, practical and scientific. In the theoretical area, we should withdraw from the polemical character of the issue in the modern national and international pedagogical science and present our own understanding of terms and definitions for the notion of competency and competence. (...). In the practical area, we should offer the effective and high-performance forms and methods for implementing a competency-based approach and building professional competencies. (...) In the scientific area, the process of implementing competency-based technologies should be accompanied by scientific research and experiments" [5].

One has to agree with those researchers who postulate the total and intensive implementation of the competency-based learning project complimented by the historical processes of the modern times. In this case, it should be referred to the competency-based training within the framework of postmodern theory as a concept sphere of the present time with the characters of liquidity, acceleration and the information polymorphism of knowledge and attributes. Such understanding of "time-spirit" assumes that introducing foreign competence-building best practices in Ukraine should be conformed with the demands and conditions of the present and the future in the context of divisive tendencies – on the one hand, globalization and, on the



other hand, the socio-cultural, linguistic isolation. In any case, it must be recognized that "One of the arguments in support of the introduction of a competency-based approach is the need for the global educational systems harmonization with the view of enabling young people to become integrated into different communities, adjust to the actualities of life. In this case, both the formal procedures for structuring educational results and the content and process of education should be coordinated. The overarching issues are manifested not only in the way of the presentation, but also in the content of education. It is bound up with the huge acceleration of all social and cultural changes. (...) As rightly the founder and president of the Club of Rome, Aurelio Peccei said: "The truth of the matter is that people need more time to gear their culture to the changes introduced by them into this world, and the reasons of this crisis lie inside, but not outside of a human being. It was precisely the technological progress which resulted in the deformation of education, as it requested the subject of action, but not the subject of spirit (the meaning of life)" [12, p. 48–49]. The statement underlines that, firstly, the theory of a competency-based approach involves ontological and technological intellectual resources simultaneously, secondly, this theory and its practical application is absolutely congruent with the phenomenon / character of man as the object and subject of socio-cultural and ontological space.

Thus, the treatment of the certain points of introducing the foreign best practices of competence-centered training into Ukrainian higher school entitles us to believe that since 1991 by now, the educational system of Ukraine has undergone a paradigm shift towards the strategy of building competencies / the structural unity of competences. The prospect for the productive development of the transformations is in implementing linguistic innovative educational technologies, which would completely get in line with the competence concept sphere content for training specialists by reference to the national interests.

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