

Development Of Journalists' Professional English Communicative Competence Using Mass Media

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Abstract

Fluency in a foreign language, professional knowledge, skills, and abilities is becoming the essential qualities of modern journalists. This paper discusses the notion of English professional communicative competence of future journalists. The purpose of the research is to analyze the components of professional, and foreign communicative competence of future journalists. Also, it aims to determine the role of mass media developing professional English communicative competence. The process of research data is based on the developed technology of using mass media products in English classes. It proved the effectiveness of printed, audio-visual, audio, and electronic materials. According to this technology, levels of professional English communicative competence consisted of high, sufficient, average, and low. Experimental work confirms the significance and effectiveness of applied technology in achieving a high level of the research question. Obtained data proved that using mass media materials as learning tools made journalism education flexible, dynamic, exciting, and productive. It was more effective and provided better results in comparison with the traditional ones. The problem of using mass media in professional English communicative competence of journalists, subject matter specificity, and criteria for choosing media texts, forms, and training methods need further studies.

Keywords: communicative activities, foreign language communicative competence, journalism education, mass media, media discourse

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Introduction

The European orientation of Ukraine has led to an increase in foreign language roles of the journalistic profession. For a modern journalist, a foreign language, especially English, is an instrument of professional activity and knowledge. A foreign language helps to overcome the communicative barrier between local and international journalism. From this point, media education is crucial. It is determined primarily by the professionalism of a journalist who possesses flexible, professional knowledge, communicative skills, a sense of responsibility for the media product quality, great creative potential (Banda, 2013).

The professional development of journalists depends on the content and functions of professional activities. The ability to produce oral (reports, meetings, presentations) and written (essays, business correspondence) texts, to do spot interviews according to professional and communicative ethics, to control behavior and overcome conflicts in communication, to recognize other communicative values and norms not only in mother tongue but also in a foreign language are becoming the essential skills of modern journalists.

Objectives of the Research

The aims of the research are the following:

1. To analyze the structure of professional English communicative competence of future journalists.
2. To explain the criteria and indicators of professional English communicative competence of future journalists.
3. To definite the level of development of professional English communicative competence using mass media.

Literature Review

Professional English communicative competence of modern journalists involves communication in English in the professional field. We regard it as a purposeful education process that aims to gain knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience. The above stated should become objects of journalism education at English lessons. The analysis of scientific works has shown that the research question includes such points as the notion of professional competence and development of English (foreign language) communicative competence using mass media.

According to Mulder (2014), professional competence is:

"the generic, integrated and internalized capability to deliver sustainable, effective (worthy) performance (including problem-solving, realizing innovation, and creating transformation) in a certain professional domain, job, role, organizational context, and task situation. Competence consists of various competencies. A competency is a part of generic competence. It is a coherent cluster of knowledge, skills, and attitudes which can be utilized in real performance contexts" (p. 109).

In the monograph research, Isabek, Kabekenov, Myrzabek, and Kabylov (2015) analyze the theoretical model of professional competence developed by Jan van Eck that includes linguistic, sociolinguistic, discursive, strategic, social, and professional competence. While studying this

problem, Burganova, Abdugalina, and Shaiheslyamova (2016) have also identified the core professional competence of specialists. They considered it as a combination of communicative, analytical, reflexive, motivational, personal, and social skills and abilities.

Under foreign language communicative competence Sergeeva (2014) understands:

"the body of knowledge about native and foreign-language cultures and skills to understand and adequately use professional vocabulary speech, correctly apply knowledge about the culture of native speakers in professionally directed communication situations and the ability to participate effectively in professional intercultural interaction with foreign colleagues. It is a personal quality of the student, which is realized in receptive-productive foreign-language speech activity in the processes of verbal/ non-verbal communication" (p. 253).

In the research, Fahrutdinova, Yarmakeev, and Fakhrutdinov (2014) state that the levels of foreign language communicative competence correlated with the willingness of a student to use a foreign language for professional self-education.

From a communicative point of view, materials of mass media are efficient tools in facilitating English learning. Researchers (Becker, Vlad & Simpson, 2014; Guarda & Helm, 2017) prove the influence of foreign mass media on the development of professional English communicative competence of future journalists. They stress that this process will be more effective if the teachers use the whole range of printed, audio, audio-visual, and electronic media material. Media makes the journalism training innovative and informative, contributes to the development of media literacy (Batoš, Matić & Zakarija, 2010). In the modern scientific world, media education is a direction in pedagogy that studies mass media communication (press, television, radio, cinema, video, phones). The main goals of media education, according to Tyurina (2019) are: to prepare a new generation for life in a modern information society, to feel comfortable with modern media and to encourage its use in the academic environment, to perceive information from various sources, to understand the influence of mass media on person psychology, to master the ways of communication-based on nonverbal forms by technical means.

Methodology

In 2019 – 2020 years, we carry out the research that studied the levels of the development of professional English communicative competence at the Department of Journalism bases on the Faculty of Philology and Journalism at Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Ukraine. We developed the technology to accomplish the research objectives. It improved the professional English communicative competence of future journalists and created a clear structure of vocational training. Methods, techniques, forms, and means made the foundation for its development.

Technology implementation using mass media as a learning tool consisted of three stages according to different types of mass media (newspapers, journals, audio, audio-visual, and electronic media materials): preparatory, training, and creative. *In the first stage*, students got more in-depth insight into journalism issues (at the "Introduction to Journalism" course). *The training stage* included practical activities by involving mass media materials based on problem-solving and active learning methods. The use of some interactive methods (project-based learning,

snowball, brainstorming, role play, hypothesis method, dialogues construction, freeze-frame, sound and image, place and frame, critical analysis) stimulated students' creative activity, self-education, and practical skills development. All these methods also increased students' motivation and had a connection with the future professional sphere. *On the creative stage*, students communicated in English (interviewing foreigners, oral and written communication via the Internet) and prepared their media products (newspaper articles, TV- and radio interviews, publishing a newspaper).

We paid particular attention to the methods, forms, and techniques of journalism education using mass media. We consider media text the most essential to develop professional English communicative competence. They act as a model of national culture and speech behavior, which are logical and complete statements in communication. (Deuze & Prenger, 2019). Media texts became sources of stylistic varieties of a language such as aphorisms, allusions, neologisms, dialecticism, and archaisms. Thus, students worked not only with educational and artistic texts but with the whole genre and stylistic palette of speech.

Foreign language Internet publications and blogs are other useful informative and communicative tools for boosting journalism education (Zhovnych, 2016; Mykhayilychenko, 2015). The effectiveness of the development of journalists' professional English communicative competence depends on the use of electronic periodicals and Internet resources, including a web-based portal PressReader. It gives its users access to the latest issues of more than 3000 newspapers and magazines, mainly in English. Students of the Faculty of Philology and Journalism improved English skills looking through the electronic versions of the British and American publishers: "The Times," "The Guardian," "The Daily Telegraph," "The New York Times," "The Washington Post," "Los Angeles Times," "Daily Mail," "Forbes," and others. Foreign language sources contributed to the formation of a high level of student's English communicative competence (to receive clear and complete information, to improve written and oral skills, and to understand a foreigner).

Participants

Fifty-seven students of the Faculty of Philology and Journalism (aged between 17–19 years old) of the 1st and 2nd year participated in the experiment. We divided them into control (29 students) and experimental (28 students) groups.

Instruments

The instrument for measuring the level of journalists' professional English communicative competence was testing, which consisted of four blocks. The first testing block determined students' level of professional English communicative competence after the motivation criterion based on Rean and Yakunin's test "Diagnostics of the students' learning motivation" (Badmaeva, 2004). In the second block, we used the "Assessment of performance toward proficiency in languages" for testing the language criterion developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. The third block determined the professional criterion based on the "English for journalists" (Hicks, 2013). The last testing block evaluated the criterion of communication strategies and tactics based on Riakhovskiy's test "Assessment of the level of communicability" (Karelin, 2007).

Procedures

The research consisted of ascertaining and forming pedagogical experiments. Students of the experimental group went into media discourse. They analyzed the genre, thematic and compositional features of the English media products, identified the differences between English speaking and native means of mass media. Students got acquainted with journalistic terminology in English, socio-cultural, and sociolinguistic terms. Based on educational materials, they created communicative situations to solve tasks of their future professional activities (to interview somebody, to organize a press conference, a casting or an advertising campaign, write the reviews and articles on various topics, to shoot a film fragment, to record radio programs, to perform social network projects).

At the beginning and the end of the experiment, students passed tests for determining the levels of professional English communicative competence. Analyzing and processing data was under identical conditions using a unified methodology for diagnosing the level of professional English communicative competence.

Data Analysis

We consider mass media (printed, audio, audio-visual, and electronic) and their functions (informative, educational, development of cognitive interests, phraseological, monitoring) as means of a learning tool in the process of developing the professional English communicative competence. The use of mass media means influences on students' motivation, systematization, and extension of knowledge. It benefits the development of professional skills, memory, critical thinking, creative and communicative abilities, aesthetic perception, and analysis.

Based on the theoretical background (Batoš et al., 2010; Goodman & Steyn, 2017; Isabek et al., 2015; Tyurina, 2019), we determined motivation criterion, language criterion, professional criterion, and criterion of communicative strategies and tactics the most appropriate.

By the *motivation criterion*, we understand the need for English communication, possession of social attitudes, and value for further English learning. The *language criterion* includes understanding the texts of different styles, ability to determine the main topic and details, generalized received information, oral and written communication following English grammar, lexical, and spelling rules. Knowledge of the structure and features of professional dialogue, business correspondence, ability to select information from different sources necessary for solving practical problems, ability to construct own statements concerning facts, concepts, scientific concepts) belong to *professional criterion*. The *criterion of communicative strategies and tactics* determines the purpose of communication. It evaluates results and overcomes communicative failures.

Results

In the research, we use high, sufficient, average, and low indicators to determine the level of professional English communicative competence. The generalized data allowed us to divide students of the experimental groups according to the standards of their professional English communicative competence and compare them with the results of the control groups. Table One (data of ascertaining experiment) and Two (data of forming experiment) represent the overall data.

Table 1. Evaluation of levels of professional English communicative competence of future journalists in the ascertaining experiment

Levels	Groups	Ascertaining experiment							
		C1		C2		C3		C4	
		number of students	%	number of students	%	number of students	%	number of students	%
High	control	3	11	2	7	3	9	3	9
	experimental	3	10	4	14	2	5	3	10
Sufficient	control	6	19	8	28	6	22	8	28
	experimental	8	29	7	25	6	21	7	24
Average	control	10	35	9	31	10	34	11	39
	experimental	9	33	10	34	11	38	11	42
Low	control	10	35	10	34	10	35	7	24
	experimental	8	28	8	27	10	36	7	24

C1 – motivation criterion

C3 – professional criterion

C2 – language criterion

C4 – criterion of communicative strategies and tactics

Table 2. Evaluation of levels of professional English communicative competence of future journalists in the forming experiment

Levels	Groups	Forming experiment							
		C1		C2		C3		C4	
		number of students	%						
High	control	4	14	3	10	2	8	4	14
	experimental	6	21	11	39	9	30	7	23
Sufficient	control	8	28	9	31	9	32	8	28
	experimental	10	36	10	36	11	40	14	48
Average	control	12	41	9	30	9	32	12	40
	experimental	8	29	4	16	4	15	5	20
Low	control	5	17	8	29	8	28	5	18
	experimental	4	14	3	9	4	15	2	9

C1 – motivation criterion

C3 – professional criterion

C2 – language criterion

C4 – criterion of communicative strategies and tactics

We can see positive dynamics in the results of the forming experiment in comparison with the ascertaining one. The experiment was successful due to the growth of high and sufficient levels and the reduction of average and low ones.

Research showed that the results in the control groups are not sufficient and stayed almost at the same level. On the other hand, the results in the experimental groups had changed. The number of students with high and sufficient levels increased by 18% and 15% respectively. On the contrary, the number of students with average and low levels decreased by 17% and 13%. A comparative analysis reveals significant differences in the experimental and control groups based on four criteria. Figure One represents the average results.

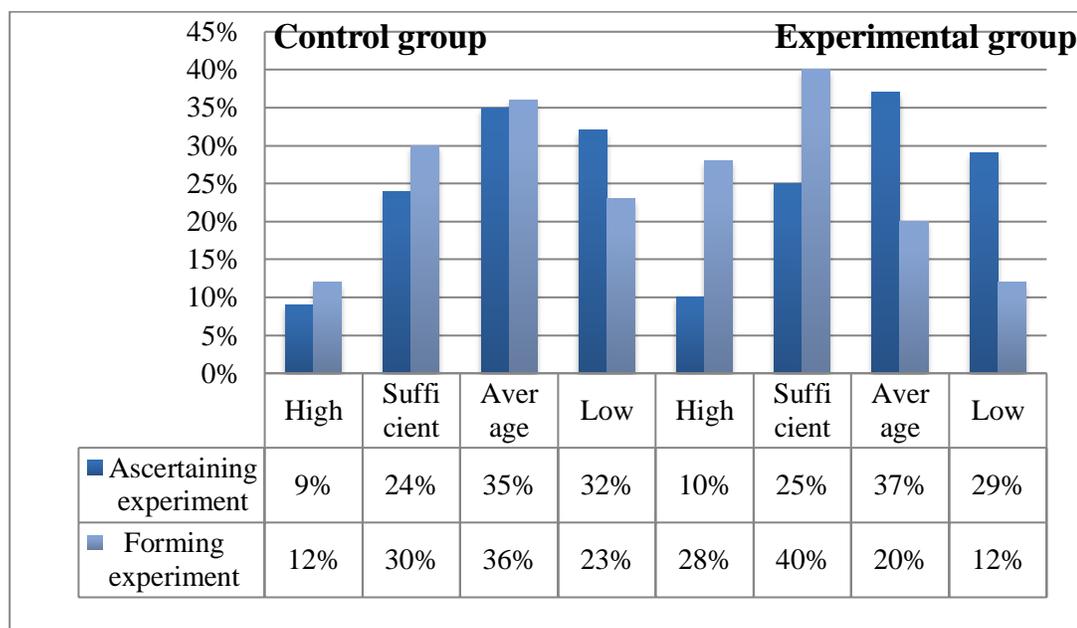


Figure 1. Dynamics of levels of journalists' professional English communicative competence

To verify and confirm the effectiveness of the experimental work, the Student T-coefficient was applied and calculated by the formula:

$$Tst = \frac{D}{\sqrt{\frac{p1q1}{n1} + \frac{p2q2}{n2}}}$$

D - the absolute value of the difference in % between number of students in experimental and control groups with high and sufficient levels; **p1, q1, n1** - data of control group; **p2, q2, n2** - data of experimental group; **p** - number of students whose levels of professional English communicative competence are high and sufficient; **n** - absolute value of respondents; **q** - 100-p

$$Tst = \frac{D}{\sqrt{\frac{p1q1}{n1} + \frac{p2q2}{n2}}} = \frac{D}{\sqrt{\frac{p1(100 - p1)}{n1} + \frac{p2(100 - p2)}{n2}}}$$

We calculated the Student T-coefficient for each criterion separately. If $Tst > 2$, we can talk about the effectiveness of the pedagogical experiment. Substituting the relevant data from Table One and Two, we got the following results.

1. $Tst1$, according to the data of motivation criterion:

$$Tst1 = \frac{24}{\sqrt{\frac{21(100-21)}{29} + \frac{27(100-27)}{28}}} = \frac{24}{\sqrt{127}} = \frac{24}{11} = 2.18$$

2. Tst2, according to the data of language criterion:

$$Tst2 = \frac{45}{\sqrt{\frac{22(100-22)}{29} + \frac{32(100-32)}{28}}} = \frac{45}{\sqrt{133}} = \frac{45}{12} = 3.75$$

3. Tst3, according to the data of professional criterion:

$$Tst3 = \frac{31}{\sqrt{\frac{20(100-20)}{29} + \frac{28(100-28)}{28}}} = \frac{31}{\sqrt{127}} = \frac{31}{11} = 3.75$$

4. Tst4 based on the data of criterion of communicative strategies and tactics:

$$Tst4 = \frac{31}{\sqrt{\frac{23(100-31)}{29} + \frac{31(100-31)}{28}}} = \frac{31}{\sqrt{137}} = \frac{31}{12} = 2.58$$

Besides, we determined the average relative quantitative index by the formula:

$$P = \frac{Tst1 + Tst2 + Tst3 + Tst4}{4}$$

P - is the average indicator, which reflects the number of students with high and sufficient levels. **Tst** is a coefficient of a certain level of professional English communicative competence according to the results of each criterion.

$$P = \frac{2.18 + 3.75 + 2.81 + 2.58}{4} = 2.83$$

The obtained results of the pedagogical experiment confirmed that $P > 2$.

Conclusions

We consider mass media a valuable content-based foundation for developing professional English communicative competence to stimulate students' communicative activities. The research proved that using mass media materials as learning tools makes journalism education more flexible, dynamic, exciting, and productive. Specific features of printed (multidisciplinary, multi problems, accessibility, material efficiency), audio-visual (multi-genre, high dynamic, presence effect, emotionality, and visibility), audio (free access to publications, the convenience of use, low cost), and electronic (interactivity, multimedia, virtual reality) materials allowed to enhance the English language training at the Department of Journalism to a new level.

The problem of using mass media in journalists' professional English communicative competence, subject matter specificity, and criteria for choosing media texts, forms, and training methods need further studies. Our research suggests solving this problem based on systematic, multidisciplinary, technological, and competency-based approaches. The interdisciplinary approach focuses on the correlation of all studied courses. The technological approach pays attention to the development of a methodology that involves the use of mass media. The competency-based approach focuses on students' acquisition of competencies as a result of the study. The systematic approach addresses professional training as a unity of content, structure, and functions.

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