

## Methodological Approaches to University Instructors Professional Foreign Languages Competence Development

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### Abstract

Development of foreign language professional competence of university instructors requires use of approaches different from those traditionally applied when teaching younger students. Research was conducted to determine the combination of approaches that will be suitable to train university instructors. In the course of the research, teaching approaches used in various countries were compared in terms of their efficiency when applied to adult audience. Moreover, such factors as teaching educators, the roles of a trainer and a learner, increasingly international environment and the learning environment were considered. Finally, implications of using teaching approaches when training educators were analyzed and the ones with the higher potential to produce the desired outcomes were selected. As a result the authors suggest that androgogical, competence-based, environmental, dialogic and student-centered approaches should be used to maximize learning outcomes in adult learners.

**Keywords:** Methodological approaches; Foreign language professional competence; Andragogical approach; Competence-based approach; Learning environment.



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### 1. Introduction

Being a methodological category, methodological approaches in the scientific and pedagogical research perform the fundamental and integrating functions, define the essence, the philosophical vision of the unambiguous picture of the organization and conduct of both the theoretical and the practical part of the study. Accordingly, the purpose of this article is to justify methodological approaches to the development of the foreign language professional competence of the university's scientific-pedagogical staff.

The choice and justification of approaches to teaching foreign languages in general and to foreign language training in particular is constantly at the epicenter of the attention of scientists and practitioners. Thus it was in the main focus of the research of [Ainutdinova \(2012\)](#), [Artemieva \(2005\)](#), [Baramikova \(2013\)](#), [Tokmazov and Pankina \(2017\)](#).

### 2. Materials and Research Methods

We consider the work of I.A. Biletskaya to be interesting in this respect, where the scientist presents a retrospective analysis of approaches to the study of foreign languages in the United States. Among the methodological approaches popular in the US pedagogical practice, the author notes: structural (the language is viewed as a system of structurally related elements for the coding of certain meanings: phonemes, morphemes, words, structures and sentences, mastery of the language presupposes the mastery of these structures and the ability to unite these structures in own speech, both oral and written); cognitive (connected with the operation of educational material: repetition, grouping, deduction, note-taking, memorization of keywords, etc.); metacognitive (planning of the training, awareness of the learning process, self-evaluation of the results); hermeneutic (emphasis on

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the creative meaning of language, concretized link between lexical composition and morphological categories of language, language as an ethnic phenomenon and a collective, cultural vision of the world, peculiar for its speakers); group (creating conditions for joint language study); project (creating a language product as a result of studying a foreign language).

Such diversity of opinions of scientists is explained by the variety and specificity of the research conducted. Here it is impossible not to agree with the opinion of N.Yu. Fominykh, who argues that "modern teaching of foreign languages in a non-linguistic university should be based on a combination of various approaches, educational theories and the corresponding teaching methods. Also we consider as important the idea of the effectiveness of the educational process, based on combining the classical achievements of traditional science and pedagogical innovations". The researcher proposed the concept of foreign professional training of future specialists in the field of computer science and computer technology based on a combination of competence-based, environmental, vitagene, communicative approaches, as well as on the ideas of connectivism and constructivism (Fominykh *et al.*, 2016).

### 3. Results and Discussion

Thus, taking into account the above mentioned facts, we believe that it is advisable to implement the development of the foreign language professional competence of the higher educational institution staff on the basis of a combination of andragogical, competence-based, environmental, polysubject and learner-centred approaches. Let's justify this issue.

So, the choice of the andragogical approach is grounded by the subject of the research, which presupposes organization of training (advanced training, postgraduate education, self-study and self-development) for adults. Accordingly, it is the andragogical approach that we consider to be the main, determining and most significant in the context of our scientific and pedagogical research (Golubeva, 2017).

The works of such scientists as Burenko (2001). Vasilkova (2009). are devoted to a comprehensive study of the andragogical approach in pedagogy, testifying the need for a conceptual study of the adult learning process. The historical and comparative analysis carried out by V.M. Burenko, showed that the formation and development of the andragogical approach to adult learning has gone through five main stages, that are presented in the table below.

**Table-1.** Formation and development of the andragogical approach

Period	Prerequisites for development
1918 – early XX c.	intensive and consistent elimination of illiteracy in the country
mid 30s. – beginning of the World War II	reorganization of the system of institutions for the eradication of illiteracy, the transition to learning on the basis of a seven-year school
1945 – end 50s.	ensuring the further development of distant (extramural) and cram (night) higher education institutions, as well as secondary specialized educational institutions, general education schools for the in-service training of working citizens, the creation of a proper educational and material basis
60s – 90s.	the system of night education becomes more flexible, the development of distant education, in particular the humanities profile in higher education institutions
Late 90s. – early XX c.	development of the system of postgraduate education and retraining of teaching staff

We believe that the the current period is the most significant for development of androgogical approach, as it is the period when priorities in education are being shifted. Despite the fact that during almost the whole history of humankind, theorists, researchers and practitioners in the field of pedagogy and psychology used to focus on organisation of official and institutional education, in modern conditions self-development and self-education of teaching staff are becoming the key point in professional development of educators, as well as distant learning, studying by correspondence and external studies.

Thus, the essence of androgogical approach in terms of our research is brought down to studies in the fields of life-long stimulation, upbringing, retraining, self-perfection, self-development and self-organisation of an adult (in terms of our research - of an educator).

Basing on the abovementioned statement, we can claim that androgogical approach includes individual, creative and personality-oriented approaches. Table 2 provides comparative characteristics of application of a traditional approach to teaching foreign languages to adults and an androgogical approach to development of foreign language professional competence of teaching faculty at a university.

**Table-2.** Comparative characteristics of traditional and androgogical approaches

<b>Approach</b>		
<b>Components of an educational system</b>	<b>Traditional education</b>	<b>Androgogical approach</b>
Educational goal	To provide students with a certain volume of knowledge (of a foreign language) and a set of skills required to prove their professional qualification	To direct independent acquisition of knowledge, development of skills and competences, basing on existing knowledge, social, personal and professional experience of an educator; acquisition of new approaches to using existing methods and solving professional tasks.
Tasks	Correspond to the goals and provide an opportunity for acquisition of new skills and knowledge in accordance with the curriculum.	Provide possibility for independent determination of study parameters; personalisation involving setting clear personal goals for each student; self-development and self-perfection based on psychological characteristics and existing experience of an adult.
Prevailing methods	Verbal Visual Practical Reproductive Inductive Deductive Declaratory Illustrative Dogmatic Informative	Group work Activities (projects, cases, portfolio, expert evaluation) Games (role-plays, didactic games) Reflexive Integrated Fundamental Systematic Conceptual Irrational Creative and constructive Computerised Problem- and research-oriented
Forms of learning	Lectures Seminars Practical classes	Projects Group activities (corporate education) Anecdotal presentations Self- and mutual-education Individual consultations Distant forms of training (webinars, on-line education, videolectures, on-line testing) Blended learning
Technologies	Traditional education in conformity with existing standards	Rational training Developing training Projects Personality-oriented training
Relations between participants of educational and training process	Subject-Object Authoritative Conservative	Subject-Object Dialogue-based Polylogue-based Activity-based Creative Democratic

Comparative characteristics of traditional and androgogical approaches.

Comparative data from Table 2 illustrates competitive advantage of of an androgogical approach (in its integrated conception) to teaching a foreign language to adults over a traditional approach. We consider the following as principles of androgogical approach: *self-education, electiveness, cooperative activities, personalisation, consideration of personal experience and self-realisation.*

Thus we have determined the main features of implementation of androgogical approach to development of foreign language professional competence of teaching faculty as follows:

- organisation of self- and mutual-education based on active forms of teaching and learning;
- cooperation, provision of connection between personal and professional development of teaching staff at university;
- formation of modern thinking in educators;
- generalisation of existing personal and professional experience of educators;
- development of higher level of empathy, tolerance, mutual understanding and aspiration to self-perfection;
- design of individual training trajectories for each trainee.

The role of a trainer in terms of development of foreign language professional competences for teaching staff is dramatically modified when androgogical approach is implemented, and its main directions include the following:

- provision of conditions for self-development of a trainee's personality on the basis of their experience;
  - needs analysis of each member of teaching staff;
  - selection of the most appropriate educational strategies, methods and forms of teaching and learning process in order to satisfy interests and educational needs of the adult audience as a whole and of each trainee in particular.
- Comparative characteristics of traditional and androgogical approaches.

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The subject of the study is justified by selecting the competence-based approach as the basis for teaching a foreign language to the academic staff in universities. The competence- based approach in education has been the focus of academic research of such scholars as [Abakumova \(2007\)](#), [Bolotov \(2003\)](#), [Shestakov et al. \(2017\)](#), [Verbitskiy \(2004\)](#). and others.

It is commonly agreed that the competence-based approach is one of the key conceptual provisions of mainstreaming the educational content formed on the principle of result-orientedness and overall improvement of the quality of education. Following ([Matuhevskiy et al., 2009](#)). we believe that the competence-based approach is a set of paradigm, methodological and structural components aimed at the formation of skills and competences based on a well-balanced correlation between theoretical knowledge, skills, and capabilities relevant for a selected profession and personality characteristics which provide for a successful preparation of a specialist or professional expert with an adequate understanding of professional activity.

Summarizing the findings of the above mentioned works and authors and taking into consideration our own experience of teaching in universities, we have defined the key principles of the competence-based approach as the methodological basis of the current research:

- Professionally oriented
- Continuous professional development
- Academic mobility
- Adapting to the fast-changing social realities and demands, and as a result, the requirements of the higher education system and the conditions in the labour market for academic staff.

So, we believe there are the following characteristics of the competence-based approach to developing competences and skills for the academic staff:

- Providing close relationship between linguistic skills and practical speaking skills of the teaching staff
- Professional focus in the education process with the goal of developing skills and competences to allow the the teaching staff to cope with communicative tasks in a foreign language
- The internationalization of the professional and teaching activity of the academic staff
- Developing the academic skills of making research, analysis, synthesis and systemizing the relevant information in a foreign language; processing paperwork in a foreign language in their professional areas.
- Organizing efficient professional communication of the academic staff in a foreign language;
- Professional versatility, ability to adapt and change the areas of communicative activity for academic staff in a foreign language

Given the current realities, if the education process goes beyond the limits of a classroom, school or even a town or a country ([Bolotin et al., 2017](#)). We believe it appropriate to apply the environmental approach as the methodological basis in the process of developing professional competences of the academic staff in a foreign language.

The choice of the environmental approach is justified by a range of objective factors: intensive development of alternative media of communication based on using ICT; teacher's seeking balance between work and leisure time; changes in the principles of labour organisation in the information society (distant work).

The fundamental research of the environmental approach can be found in the works of [Manuylov \(1997\)](#), [Mengue \(1999\)](#) and others. According to their findings, the members of the education process based on the

environmental approach are the teacher, the student/learner and the environment. Moreover, the results and success of learning depend on the level of coordination and joint effort of the teacher and students in creating and developing the environment and the mutual benefit of all members of the education process.

The environmental approach to developing ITC (Information and Communication Technologies) for academic staff is regarded here as the theory and technology of an indirect management of the learning process where the main focus is placed on involving the internal activity of the learner, their self-learning, self-education and self-improvement, while the learning environment is a pre-requisite condition and parameter of the success or failure for the learner.

Traditionally, the following principles of the environmental approach in pedagogy have been regarded as the main ones: 1) the differentiation of the educational environment; 2) the dialectical relationship between the developing and forming functions of the learning environment (Y.S. Manuylov).

According to Y.S. Manuylov, the principles of the environmental approach whose implementation allows for the environment control, its transformation and adjustment in a required direction, are the following: the principle of trend factor, indirectness, variability and feasibility. (Y.S. Manuylov).

The learning environment is considered as a set of opportunities for the development and education of the students. Such environment gives access to all educational resources in a foreign language, offers an opportunity for organizing all types of learning activity and integrates into the area of international education.

Thus, considering the above mentioned, the principles of implementing the process of developing ITC skills for the teaching staff in universities, based on the environmental approach are the following:

- The variability and openness of education
- Blended learning
- Dynamism
- Co-development of all members of the learning process (teacher, student and environment).

We believe the characteristics of the process of developing competencies in a foreign language for the teaching staff based on the environmental approach are the following:

- building their own system of professional networking and communication in a foreign language, establishing and maintain contacts with professional organizations and associations with educational institutions and their respective professional communities.
- organizing the process of developing ITC skills for teachers and academic staff as an open, dynamic, self-forming, non-linear system based on the application of the ICT tools and devices.
- in case of absence of the real foreign-language environment, creating a virtual language environment in online scientific communities and professional groups
- providing maximal educational and learning opportunities for the students
- apart from the passive consumption of the ready made knowledge, the students take part in creating a learning environment
- being the reflection of the real foreign-language communicative environment, the learning environment is a dialogic personal space of learning and development where every learner is developing in accordance with their own characteristics.

This typical characteristics of the implementation of the environmental approach naturally results in the necessity of applying the dialogic approach as the methodological basis for developing professional foreign-language competencies for the academic staff in Universities.

In pedagogy, the dialogic approach is traditionally viewed as the methodology justifying organizing the learning process as an experience in a liberally formed learning process of two equal subjects – student and teacher. (Z.A. Kargina, N.A. Sokolova). We suggest broadening that view on the matter –teaching based on the dialogic approach implies not only establishing a dialogue between a teacher and a student but having a polylogue between all members of the learning process based on the voluntary principles and mutual benefit, as well as joint creative and learning activity (Musaeva, 2017).

The principles of the dialogic approach are the following:

- Equal rights (Parity)
- Facilitation
- Liberality
- Social activity

In the course of developing the ITC skills for the academic staff in universities the dialogic approach reveals conditions, patterns and principles of the interaction between the objects of a learning environment.

And finally the choice of learner-centred approach is justified by the following.

The basics for the learner-centred approach are laid in the works by B.G. Ananyev (Annaniev, 2008). (Vygotskiy, 2005). Leontiev (1975). where a person is regarded as the object of an activity which provides for the person's communication and development in the course of this activity.

Supporters of the learner-centred approach define it in terms of the unity of the personal and action-related components (Zimnaya, 2004). Zeer *et al.* (2011). Yakimanskaya (2000), regarding the personality of the learner as an active object of the learning activity where the learner develops his personal potential (capabilities). The personal component of the afore mentioned approach to developing competences for the academic staff suggests having the learner's personality with their personal demands, interests, goals and motivation at the core of the learning process. The action-related component includes the training and development of the teaching staff in the social professional

and communicative activity in a foreign language which in itself results to be the target, the expected result and the method of training.

We believe the principles of the student-centred approach to the development of the teachers' competences in a foreign languages are as follows:

- Freedom of creativity and cooperation/interaction
- Contextual learning
- Differentiation and individualization in the midst of increasing globalization
- Self-organization of the learners

The main characteristics of the process of developing the ITC competencies for teaching staff in universities based on the student-centred approach are as follows:

- Boosting inner resources of the teacher's personality in order to reach the aims of foreign-language communication
- Guiding students towards creating a written or oral project in a foreign language, bearing personal significance
- Finding implementation for learning activity and communication goals of the learners by including them into communication activities in a foreign language
- Giving priority to learner's autonomy and reliance on self-study
- Involving teachers in productive foreign-language activities in order to develop their skills of critical, productive, rational and creative thinking, including discourse and self-study skills.

## 4. Conclusion

To sum up the above mentioned, we shall conclude that the conducted theoretical research with the aim of justifying the androgical, competence-based, environmental, dialogic and student-centred approaches to the development of foreign-language professional competences for teaching staff indicates that the afore mentioned approaches represent a system at the heart of which lies the andragogical approach in its integrative concept.

Therefore, outlining the methodological basis of organizing the process of development of foreign-language professional competences for teaching staff naturally leads us to the next stage of our scientific-pedagogical research – the simulation of the described process- which we will examine in the next part.

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