Development of professional-pedagogical competence in future English language teachers

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Abstract

The study examines the professional pedagogical competence of future English language teachers. The concept of "professional pedagogical competence" is increasingly relevant in Kazakhstan's higher education reform. It reflects teachers' pivotal role and professional qualities in achieving high-quality education and upbringing. Our literature review defines the professional pedagogical competence of future English language teachers as an integrative set of qualities that indicate their personal and socio-moral experience. It also reflects their capacity to foster motivational, cognitive, and operational aspects within their professional domain. The outcomes of their pedagogical endeavors evidence this. Our model of professional pedagogical competence for future English language teachers is a pedagogical system that includes four blocks: target, conceptual, content-procedural, and criteria-evaluative. The criteria and indicators of professional-pedagogical competence are communicative, cognitive, operational-activity, and motivational-value. The communicative dimension emphasizes foreign language as a means of personal and professional communication. The cognitive dimension emphasizes skills to solve non-standard lingua-pedagogical tasks. The operational-activity dimension reflects personality, professional development, and pedagogical activities. The motivational-value dimension emphasizes linguistic-cognitive motivation, professional self-awareness, the need for self-realization, and self-development. Our research findings contribute significantly to the discourse on teacher education in Kazakhstan. Our comprehensive model aligns with contemporary educational needs. It serves as a valuable guidepost for educational stakeholders and offers insights that can inform policy, curriculum development, and teacher training programs. Ultimately, it advances the overarching goal of enhancing the quality and impact of English language education in Kazakhstan.

Keywords: Aspects, Components, Functions, Model, Professional-pedagogical competence.

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1. Introduction

In the fast-paced contemporary environment, there is a growing demand for exceptionally skilled and proficient experts. The evolving educational paradigms are introducing fresh requirements for preparing future foreign language teachers, emphasizing their personal attributes and qualifications. The role of English language teachers has evolved beyond mere dispensers of linguistic knowledge to transformative facilitators of learning. The development of professional-pedagogical competence among future English language teachers is a cornerstone in ensuring the effectiveness and adaptability of educational practices. As the global demand for proficient English speakers continues to escalate, the responsibilities placed upon educators intensify, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of pedagogical strategies, linguistic theories, and the socio-cultural nuances inherent to language instruction.

The field of education is undergoing dynamic transformations, driven by evolving pedagogical theories, technological advancements, and the changing demands of the globalized world. Within this context, the development of professional pedagogical competence among future English language teachers emerges as a critical focal point. The concept interplay of linguistic, cultural, and educational factors that determine the landscape of language instruction today emphasizes this point. As we delve into the nuances of developing professional pedagogical competence among future English language teachers, it becomes imperative to explore the theoretical foundations that underpin effective language instruction. This exploration will not only shed light on the evolving nature of language education but also inform strategies for curriculum design, teacher training programs, and ongoing professional development initiatives. In this regard, the State Educational Standard of Higher Professional Education requires the Higher Pedagogical School to improve the training of a specialist who deeply knows his subject and is guided not only by the current trends and achievements in the field of foreign language education but also by the innovations of psychological-pedagogical science. Therefore, the primary objective of professional education in higher education is to equip individuals with the necessary skills and expertise, making them competitive, competent, and prepared for ongoing professional development and mobility. These attributes collectively fall under the umbrella of "professional competence." In our view, this concept serves as the foundation for shaping both the overall strategy of professional and foreign language education and the selection of approaches, methods, tools, and educational technologies. For several years, researchers have paid great attention to the teacher's general professional development, his professionally important qualities, and the personality itself, which determined the nature of pedagogical creativity and communication. The consideration of professional competence in the higher pedagogical school has been reflected in the research of such scientists as: Darling-Hammond [1]; Kymet [2]; Kunter, et al. [3]; Ayapova, et al. [4] and Dervenis, et al. [5]. As the literature review shows, scientists mainly turn to the study of individual aspects of the teacher's personality but not to the holistic, integrative study of his professional competence. The professional competence of future English language teachers as a psychological-pedagogical phenomenon hasn't been studied enough.

Thus, the following contradictions determine the topicality of this article:

1. The first contradiction lies between the increasing professional requirements of the modern schools for foreign language teachers and the insufficiently high level of their actual competencies.
2. The second paradox has to do with the need to create learning environments that help future foreign language teachers develop their professional pedagogical skills, even though these students don't get enough theoretical and practical experience.

Considering these conflicting aspects, the current research aims to assess the efficacy of a model designed to enhance the professional and pedagogical competence of prospective English language educators.

The article's purpose led to the formulation of the following research questions:
1) Are there significant differences between the pretest results of the control and experimental groups?
2) Is there a noticeable variance between the pretest and posttest outcomes of the control group?
3) Are there significant differences between the pretest and posttest scores in the experimental group?
4) Are there any significant differences between the post-test results of the control and experimental groups?

2. Literature Review

The concept of “competence” is widely used in many types of human activity and denotes the high quality of professional activity. The term “professional competence” began to be actively used in methodology in the 1990s of the last century. Professional competence, in the understanding of Slastionyn and Mischenko [6] is “the unity of theoretical and practical readiness and ability of a person to carry out professional activities” (p. 79).

Kolesnikova, et al. [7] distinguish the following components of professional competence: “personal-oriented skills; skills to perceive and act systematically in pedagogical reality; fluency in the subject; possession of modern pedagogical technologies; skill to integrate own activities with what has already been developed at the level of the world pedagogical science as a whole; skill to generalize and transfer experience to others; creative and reflexive skills.” (p. 16)

Grishina [8] considers professional competence “a unity of three “spheres”: motivational (motives, needs), operational-technical (knowledge, skills, professionally important qualities), and self-awareness (self-assessment).” (p. 29)

The problem of the professional-pedagogical competence of the teacher is considered by modern researchers in accordance with the tradition established in psychological-pedagogical science, through the analysis of the teachers’ properties that are significant for his successful professional activity, such as:
1) The ability to lead, teach, educate, and carry out useful actions to serve the various needs of learners.
2) Broad outlook.
3) Communicative culture.
4) Empathy ability.
5) The ability to observe.
6) Ability to solve non-standard tasks.
7) High degree of self-regulation skills.

There is abundant evidence suggesting that factors beyond mere knowledge play a crucial role in shaping the success of teachers. These factors encompass teachers' beliefs, motivation related to their work, and their capacity for professional self-regulation [9-11]. Currently, many researchers include in the concept of professional-pedagogical competence the diverse knowledge and skills necessary for implementing the multifaceted educational activities.

Cochran-Smith and Fries [12] include in the concept of professional competence all the characteristics of the teacher's personality that provide a high result in professional activity. She suggests that professional competence in teaching involves the teacher engaging in pedagogical activities and communication at a high level, expressing their personality, and leading to positive learning and developmental outcomes for students in school. (p. 45).


Additionally, we aim to explore the constituent elements comprising the professional competence of an English language instructor. This refers to the essential skills and abilities that enable them to operate efficiently and yield positive outcomes in their work. The most important component in the structure of professional competence of an English language teacher is considered by many scientists [14-16] to be possessing intercultural communicative competence, which means having the capability and readiness to engage in cross-cultural communication using a foreign language in real-world scenarios. Certainly, the professional competence of a foreign language teacher is not fully achieved without incorporating psychological-pedagogical, and general scientific competences into the component composition.

Psychological and pedagogical competence are important areas for professional consciousness of a foreign language teacher. Pedagogical consciousness is a way of thinking, expression of will, feeling, and motivation that has become a reference point and a tool for reflecting on and implementing pedagogical activity. This competence ensures the transfer of social experience contained in other competencies and consists of professional-psychological, professional-pedagogical, and methodological competencies. The combination of three competencies in a single area emphasizes the unity and continuity of academic disciplines that form the designated components in the process of professional training.

Methodological competence holds a prominent position within the professional skill set of a foreign language teacher. Its cultivation is crucial for addressing professional tasks during the pursuit of goals in foreign language education, particularly those associated with fostering intercultural communicative competence, as well as the education, upbringing, and overall development of students.

General scientific competence includes cognitive and research competencies.

The basis of cognitive competence is the activity of processing various sources of information: about the universal values of native as well as foreign language cultures and information about a general scientific plan about how the process of cognition is carried out. Research competence encompasses the understanding and proficiency in carrying out investigations within the realm of language and literature, considering both their contemporary status and historical evolution. This involves the ability to plan and execute methodological and pedagogical research. It appears that the ongoing professional growth of a foreign language educator is unattainable in today's context without possessing research competence. Personal competence serves as a controlling factor for personal accomplishments, the exploration of personal significance in interactions with students, self-regulation, self-awareness, professional advancement, enhancement of expertise, meaningful engagement, cultivation of reflective skills, and the evolution of a unique teaching style. Personal competence finds its practical expression in pedagogical reflection, which is based on the control and assessment of readiness to carry out educational activities. All these competences of professional-pedagogical competence are closely intertwined, forming a complex structure that designs an “ideal model” of a specialist, defining his personal-activity characteristics, since competence manifests itself only in the course of activity and can be evaluated only within a specific profession. Thus, professional-pedagogical competence of an English language teacher is an integrative set of qualities of a specialist, reflecting the level of his personal, social, and moral experience, his willingness to develop and improve professional activity, and his conscious possession of linguistic means of expressing semantic relations.

The professional-pedagogical competence of an English language teacher can be illustrated through three interconnected components: motivational-value, cognitive value, Operational-activity.

Figure 1 illustrates the form of three interrelated components.
The development of the motivational-value component directly depends on the motives of the future foreign language teacher. The following are used as significant motives: cognitive need, interest in the learning process of students, love for children, and striving for a positive result of activity. So, motivational-value component of a teacher’s professional-pedagogical competence allows identifying and then forming positive motivations for future teachers to work productively.

2. **Cognitive component** represents the scientific-theoretical foundations of pedagogical science, the completeness of implementing one’s own actions, and the degree of awareness of these actions’ implementation. In our opinion, cognitive component is characterized by the following criteria: the availability of relevant integrated knowledge, the ability to continuously improve it, creative activity, flexibility, and critical thinking, to carry out effective analysis and synthesis of information, to manage the educational activities of students. The cognitive aspect signifies an individual's capacity to utilize linguistic expertise for effectively articulating ideas, persuading, debating, substantiating claims, analyzing, rendering judgments, conveying both rational and emotional information, fostering interpersonal relationships, aligning personal actions with those of peers, selecting the most suitable communication style for diverse scenarios, and orchestrating and sustaining dialogues.

3. **Operational-activity component** of the teacher’s professional-pedagogical competence is formed on the premise of subject activity. It includes the use of heuristics and current trends in methods and techniques that develop students’ creative skills. It is evident in the capacity to actively influence the outcomes of personal growth and accomplishments, including creativity, initiative, collaboration, and a proclivity for self-reflection. The operational-activity component serves as a guide for personal achievements, the exploration of personal significance in social interactions, self-control, and as a driver for self-awareness, professional advancement, skill enhancement, and the identification of one’s unique working approach.

Based on the above, we identify the functions of the professional-pedagogical competence of the future English language teacher, which, in our opinion, most fully reflect its content:

1. **The constructive-informative function** is linked to establishing essential information exchange during collaboration, shaping the evolution of socially significant connections within the team. This function encompasses the ability to articulate ideas clearly, engage in effective communication, and convey both rational and emotional information;

2. **The analytical-prognostic function** guarantees the attainment of the expertise required for carrying out a specific activity, as well as the capacity to evaluate situations and make informed decisions;

3. **The organizational-activity function** is in charge of making sure that managerial decisions are carried out and that the right social, psychological, and educational conditions are in place so that people can do their jobs well and uphold societal values.

4. **The formative-developing function** involves actively shaping and influencing the developmental process, both in terms of personal growth and the cultivation of valuable social characteristics in teachers. It also encompasses effectively channeling creative potential during pedagogical activities.

Thus, the structure of professional-pedagogical competence as a unity of its components includes the following criteria:

- Focus on future professional activity as a means of personal and professional communication;
- Application of professional knowledge and skills in solving educational problems;
- Reflexive skills are needed to assess the quality and result of the designed professional activity and their own level of professional-personal development.

Thus, based on an in-depth literature review on the research topic, we came to the conclusion that professional-pedagogical competence of English language teachers is an integrative set of qualities of a specialist that reflects the level of his personal, socio-moral experience, the capacity to foster the growth of motivational, cognitive, and operational aspects within the professional domain of knowledge, as evidenced by the outcomes of pedagogical endeavors.

3. **Methodology**

3.1. **Research Design**

A quantitative research design for obtaining and analyzing quantitative data was adopted in this study. Since the purpose of this study was to examine the cause-and-effect relationship of a model proposed for developing future English teachers’ professional pedagogical competence, the most appropriate method is to use an experimental design [17]. A true experimental research design with the conduct of pre- and post-tests is used with a control and experimental group in this study. As the name implies, in this study, an experimental group that receives extra training and a control group that provides a baseline for comparison exist. A true experiment is described as a study with at least one independent variable that is experimentally manipulated and with at least one dependent variable [18]. Experimental group in the process of treatment was exposed to the classes based on the development of language learners professional-pedagogical competences, while the control group’s traditional method was implemented on the basis of lecture-based instruction. The researcher conducted the classes herself for both groups. The lessons were held according to the curriculum offered by the department of Teaching Foreign Languages. Supplementary materials, including PowerPoint presentations and audio-visual elements, were prepared for the experimental group according to their level of proficiency, which was C1 advanced level.

3.2. **Participants**

The participants were selected according to the convenience sampling method, based on their availability. Those groups were chosen, in which the researcher had lessons. The experimental and control groups were chosen from the Teaching
Foreign Languages department at Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University in the autumn semester of the 2021-2022 academic year.

The participants of the experimental group were students in their last year of university, taking the course “The Methods of Teaching English” during that period. The number of participants in the experimental group comprised 15 students, of whom eleven were females and four were males. Similarly, the representatives of the control group were 16 students, all of whom were females.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

The study involved 31 participants, and data was collected through a questionnaire administered before and after the treatment. To evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed model, the Teaching Competences Self-Assessment Tool by Fer [19] was utilized as a pre-test and post-test instrument. The observing supervisor completed a practicum assessment grid in the original form of Fer’s tool. However, in this study, the tool was modified by changing the items to “can-do” statements, as used in Yüksel [20]. The tool consists of 38 items that assess future teachers’ perceived capabilities in the domains of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. The items were presented as statements such as “I am able to identify misunderstandings and misconceptions in student learning (pedagogical content knowledge)” and “I can manage disruptive student behavior (classroom management).” The participants rated each item on a 5-point scale ranging from totally disagreeing to totally agreeing. This tool was found to be the most appropriate for assessing the advancement of English language teaching (ELT) student’s professional-pedagogical competence based on the proposed model.

The scale was administered twice to both groups, before and after the treatment.

Communicative (focus on foreign language as a means of personal and professional communication), cognitive (skills to solve non-standard lingua-pedagogical tasks), operational-activity (reflection of a personality, professional development, and pedagogical activities), and motivational-valuable (lingua-cognitive motivation, professional self-awareness, the need for self-realization, and self-development).

3.4. Data Analysis

The number of participants was found to be appropriate to use parametric tests in this research study, since sample sizes were greater than 30 or 40. However, it is supported by Elliott [21] that the violation of the normality assumption of the data should not cause serious problems, and a parametric test can be used as well, even if the data are not normally distributed. The data collected through a survey using the Teaching Competences Self-Assessment questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS version 23.0 software for data analysis. An independent samples t-test was used to identify similarities between the two groups as proposed in the first research question. Paired samples t-test was used to compare the results of the pre-test and post-test of each group, and an independent sample t-test was performed to compare the control and experiment group’s post-test results.

3.5. Treatment

Training of future English language teachers aimed at their professional-pedagogical competence mastery is possible if a certain model of the object under study is constructed.

In modeling the process of professional-pedagogical competence, we took into account its complexity, multi-aspects, and continuity.

The model was applied to the course for six weeks. The class hours offered in preparatory school were 3 hours a week, 1 hour lecture, 2 hours seminar classes. The researcher was the lecturer and seminar teacher of both experimental and control group students. During the treatment process, teacher provided the experimental group students with some additional materials, such as videos created by the teacher herself, different kinds of PowerPoint presentations, and audio-visual aids, whereas the control group students followed the materials presented in the lecture.

The model proposed for the professional-pedagogical competence development of future English language teachers is based on competency-based, communicative, and student-centered approaches.

In the structure of the model of professional-pedagogical competence of future English language teachers, we have identified the following components: target, conceptual, content-procedural, and criterion-evaluation blocks.

The target block is represented, first of all, by the purpose of teaching. Our purpose is to prepare future foreign language teachers with a high level of professional-pedagogical competence.

The conceptual block includes: approaches (competency-based, communicative, and professionally-oriented); components (Motivational-value component, Cognitive component, Operational-activity component) and functions (Constructive-informative, Analytical-prognostic, Organizational-activity, Formative-developing).

Aspects, modules, stages, and techniques are put into the content-procedural block of the model.

The linguistic aspect of professionally-oriented training of English language teachers includes: 1) special professionally-oriented texts (newspaper and magazine publications, fiction texts, interviews); 2) topics discussed in the context of professionally-oriented training.

The psychological aspect of professionally-oriented training of English language teachers consists of skills that contribute to implementing the professional-pedagogical functions.

The methodological aspect of professionally-oriented training of future English language teachers is aimed at using various techniques and methods of educational activity necessary for successful pedagogical activity, namely: 1) problem-
solving professionally-oriented situations and cases; 2) CALL materials (movies, videos, pragmatic materials); master classes, discussions, and problem-based learning (PBL).

Besides, this block is implemented through the stages of teaching (Preparatory, Search and didactic, Integration-reflective). In the process of forming the professional-pedagogical competence of future foreign language teachers according to the proposed model, various forms of educational interaction are used. Group work is preferable during the general discussion of professionally-oriented cases. To understand the development of professional-pedagogical competence in prospective foreign language educators during their preparation for teaching, it is essential to establish criteria for assessing their readiness for the teaching profession. Each criterion comprises several indicators that highlight the most important and essential aspects of the evaluated quality (Table 1).

Table 1. Indicators and standards of professional-pedagogical competence of future English language teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td>Focus on foreign language as a means of personal and professional communication. Foreign language (FL) acquisition and knowledge of communication strategies. Ability to communicate in a foreign language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Knowledge of methods of teaching, psychology, pedagogy. Skills to ELT. The ability to design an educational process aimed at the student’s personality. Skills to solve non-standard lingua-pedagogical tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Operational-activity</td>
<td>Reflection of a personality and professional development. Reflection of pedagogical activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Motivational-valuable</td>
<td>The presence of socially significant motives for choosing a teacher’s profession and pedagogical ideal. A sense of professional duty, affiliation to teaching and pride in profession.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence, a constructed framework for enhancing professional-pedagogical competence development of English language teachers is characterized by integrity (all its components are interconnected and aimed at the final result), functionality (serves to implement the designated functions), and pragmatism (serves as a method for organizing practical actions with the aim of achieving desired outcomes). The completed construction of the model is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2.
A framework for the cultivation of professional and pedagogical competence in aspiring English language educators.

4. Findings
Independent Samples t-test was computed as an initial step in analyzing the data to answer the first research question in terms of recognizing differences between control and experimental groups pretest results. The findings are displayed in Table 2.
As it is seen from Table 1, the outcomes of the independent sample t-test suggested that there is no statistically noteworthy distinction in the pretest scores between the control and experimental groups (t = 0.394; p = 0.696). Both groups mean values were almost identical (control group X̅=1.70; experimental groups X̅ = 1.68).

The second research inquiry focused on examining the discrepancy between pretest and posttest outcomes within the control group. To address this, a Paired Samples t-test was employed. The findings are presented in the Table 2.

According to the results, the difference between two means of control group pretest and posttest scores indicated no statistically significant difference (X̅ = 1.70; X̅ = 1.73). The level of significance was found to be 0.57 (p<0.05).

Similarly, the paired samples t-test was conducted on the data gathered from the experimental group to discern any distinctions between the pretest and posttest outcomes within the group. Table 3 presents the results.

The results of Paired Samples t-test revealed that the difference between the mean scores of pre-tests (X̅ = 1.68) and post-test (X̅ = 4.12) is statistically significant (t = 42.56; p =0.000).

The last analysis was done by performing an independent sample t-test on the samples of both the control and experimental groups to determine the difference between the control and the experimental groups’ posttest results. The findings are presented in Table 4.

The data in Table 5 reveals that the p-value is .000, signifying a statistically significant distinction between the means of the experimental group (mean = 4.12) and the control group (mean = 1.73).

5. Discussion

The objective of this study was to assess the impact of a newly developed model for enhancing the professional and pedagogical competence of English language teachers. At the initiation of the treatment procedure, a pre-test was administered to both groups, and the findings did not reveal any statistically significant distinctions. 15 ELT students in the experimental group were instructed for six weeks through the professional-pedagogical competence development model, which reverses the traditional classroom. Meanwhile, the control group continued to take traditional lecture-based classes. Following six weeks of instruction, a post-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups to assess distinctions between the groups and within each individual group. To examine the data collected before and after the tests, both independent samples t-tests and paired samples t-tests were utilized. The findings indicated a statistically significant disparity in professional-pedagogical competence knowledge between the control and experimental groups. This suggests that, following the intervention, participants in the experimental group demonstrated a higher level of competence compared to those in the control group. This significant difference highlights the effectiveness of the professional-pedagogical competence development model, considering the improvement of ELT students’ professional-pedagogical competence. It is clear from the results that the methods of teaching English are not enough to improve ELT students professional and pedagogical competence.

6. Conclusion

Theoretical analysis and experimental research led to the following conclusions:

1. The psycho-pedagogical and methodological literature review indicates that addressing the issue of the professional-pedagogical competence of prospective English language educators stands as a pressing goal within higher pedagogical education.
2. In accordance with the goals and objectives highlighted in this study, we have comprehensively studied the problem and defined the concept of “professional-pedagogical competence of English language teachers” in the conditions of higher pedagogical education. In the research, professional-pedagogical competence acts as an essential and inseparable component of professional competence and can be identified as “an integrative set of qualities of a specialist that reflects the level of his personal, socio-moral experience and the capacity to foster the growth of motivational, cognitive, and operational aspects within professional domain of knowledge, as evidenced by the outcomes of pedagogical endeavors.”.

3. The process of professional-pedagogical competence in future teachers’ development is impossible or difficult to implement without a structurally well-thought-out and experimentally tested methodological model of teaching, proposed by us, which includes such components as: target, conceptual, content-procedural, and criterion-evaluation blocks. Professional-pedagogical competence as an integrative property of a personality makes it feasible to ascertain its composition, encompassing the coherence of three elements: motivational value, cognitive value, and operational activity.

4. One of the effective tools for improving the process of professional-pedagogical competence development is training modules such as: “intercultural communicative competence,” “introduction to pedagogical activity,” “professional-methodological activity of the future English language teacher,” conducted by means of problem-solving techniques.

5. The conducted experiment and the obtained positive data allow us to state the effectiveness of the methodological model we have created.

References


