

DIDACTIC FOUNDATIONS OF FORMING PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Urunova Shakhlo

Associate professor, doctor of philosophy in pedagogy (PhD) of
Andijan state technical institute

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20322641>

Abstract. In the context of internationalization and professional mobility, the formation of professional communicative competence (PCC) has become a central task of modern higher education. PCC enables specialists to perform effectively in foreign-language professional environments. This article provides a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the structure, didactic principles, stages, and participant roles in the formation of PCC within the framework of professional linguodidactics and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). A systematic literature review and theoretical synthesis were conducted, drawing on competence-based, communicative, and learner-centered approaches. Eight didactic principles (professional context-orientation, communicative orientation, functionality, integration, activity and consciousness, individualized approach, authenticity, competence-based approach) and a five-stage developmental model (preparatory, core, practice, reinforcement, assessment) are identified.

Keywords: Professional communicative competence, didactic principles, ESP, competence-based approach, intercultural competence, professional linguodidactics.

1. Introduction

The rapid globalization of professional fields, international collaborations, and cross-border employment have elevated the importance of foreign language proficiency not as a general cultural skill but as a core professional competency. In medicine, engineering, law, business, and education, specialists are increasingly required to communicate in a foreign language – most commonly English – within authentic professional contexts: writing reports, participating in meetings, negotiating contracts, presenting research, or consulting with international colleagues.

This demand has given rise to a distinct domain of applied linguistics: professional linguodidactics, which focuses on teaching foreign languages for specific professional purposes. At the heart of this discipline lies the concept of professional communicative competence (PCC).

1.1 Defining Professional Communicative Competence

Professional communicative competence is defined as “an individual’s ability to communicate effectively in a foreign language within the framework of professional activity, integrating language skills with domain-specific knowledge, professional values, and culturally appropriate behavior” (Khomutova, 2018, p. 45). Unlike general communicative competence, PCC is not abstract but tightly bound to the realities of a particular occupation.

As Hutchinson & Waters (1987) argue in their seminal work on English for Specific Purposes (ESP): “Tell me what you need English for, and I will tell you the English that you need” (p. 19). This learner-needs orientation is the starting point for understanding PCC.

The theoretical roots of PCC lie in the broader concept of communicative competence, first introduced by Hymes (1972) and later operationalized by Canale & Swain (1980) and van Ek (1986). Van Ek (1986) proposed a comprehensive framework including: Linguistic competence; Sociolinguistic competence; Discursive competence; Strategic competence; Sociocultural competence; Social competence.

However, as Hyland (2006) notes, “The general communicative competence model, while powerful, does not sufficiently account for the specialized language, genres, and interactional



patterns of professional communities” (p. 22). Therefore, PCC adapts and extends these components to professional domains.

1.2 Problem Statement and Research Objectives

Despite theoretical advancements, many educational programs continue to teach general foreign language courses without sufficient professional contextualization. Graduates often find themselves unable to write a business email, understand a technical manual, or participate in a professional discussion – despite having studied the language for years.

This gap between language learning and professional application reveals the need for a clear didactic framework for forming PCC. Thus, this article aims to:

- Systematically describe the structural components of PCC;
- Formulate and explain the key didactic principles guiding PCC formation;
- Outline the sequential stages of PCC development;
- Redefine the roles of teacher and learner in the PCC-oriented classroom.

2. Methods

2.1 Research Approach

This study adopts a theoretical and analytical methodology typical of foundational research in applied linguistics and didactics. The approach involves systematic synthesis, conceptual analysis, and model building based on existing theoretical and empirical literature.

2.2 Analytical Procedure

The analysis was conducted through a systematic and logically sequenced process consisting of four interrelated steps, each of which contributed to a deeper understanding of the structure and pedagogical implications of professional communicative competence (PCC). Initially, the stage of deconstruction involved a careful and critical examination of a wide range of academic and methodological sources in order to identify recurring structural elements of PCC. This step made it possible to reveal common patterns, components, and conceptual similarities across different theoretical frameworks, thereby establishing a foundation for further analysis. Following this, the synthesis stage focused on organizing and grouping the identified elements into coherent and meaningful components. Through comparative analysis and categorization, these elements were integrated into a structured model that reflects the multidimensional nature of PCC, including linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and strategic dimensions.

Building on this synthesized structure, the next step involved principle extraction, during which key didactic principles were derived from successful practices in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This stage emphasized the importance of context-oriented instruction, learner-centered approaches, authenticity of materials, and the integration of professional content with language learning. Finally, the stage modeling phase enabled the construction of a developmental sequence grounded in pedagogical logic.

3. Results

3.1 Structure of Professional Communicative Competence

Discursive, pragmatic, intercultural, and professional knowledge competences together form an integrated and dynamic core of professional communicative competence (PCC), ensuring that language use in professional contexts is not only accurate but also meaningful, contextually appropriate, and effective. Discursive competence refers to the ability to produce and interpret coherent and well-structured professional texts, both in written and spoken forms. It encompasses an understanding of genre conventions specific to particular fields, such as medical case histories, business plans, legal contracts, technical specifications, and research articles. Mastery of coherence and cohesion is essential in this regard, as it enables individuals to logically connect ideas, use appropriate discourse markers, and construct texts that are clear and systematically organized. In addition, discursive competence involves the use of professional



discourse strategies, including argumentation, presentation, discussion, and negotiation techniques. As Bhatia (2004) emphasizes, professional genres are shaped by the communicative purposes, social relationships, and cognitive structures of a given professional community, which underscores the importance of genre awareness in effective communication.

Closely related to this is pragmatic competence, which focuses on the ability to use language strategically and appropriately to achieve specific communicative goals in workplace settings. This includes the use of professional speech acts such as requesting, ordering, suggesting, refusing, agreeing, and explaining, all of which must be adapted to the norms and expectations of professional interaction. Pragmatic competence also incorporates strategic competence, which involves the use of communication strategies to overcome linguistic limitations. These strategies may include circumlocution, clarification requests, and paraphrasing, allowing communication to continue even when language resources are insufficient. As noted by Canale and Swain (1980), strategic competence plays a crucial role in maintaining the flow of communication, particularly in challenging or unpredictable situations.

Intercultural competence further expands the scope of PCC by emphasizing the ability to communicate effectively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. In an increasingly globalized professional environment, understanding cultural differences in communication styles, negotiation practices, decision-making processes, and attitudes toward hierarchy and time is essential. Hofstede (2001) highlights how such cultural dimensions influence professional interactions, making it necessary for individuals to develop cultural sensitivity and adaptability. This includes the ability to accurately interpret the behavior of others, adjust one's own communication style, and avoid stereotypes while maintaining an open and respectful attitude. Byram (1997) argues that intercultural competence is grounded not only in knowledge but also in attitudes, particularly curiosity, openness, and a willingness to reconsider one's assumptions about both other cultures and one's own.

Finally, professional knowledge and skills represent the integration of language competence with domain-specific expertise, which is a defining feature of ESP-oriented PCC. Effective professional communication requires not only linguistic proficiency but also a solid understanding of key concepts, processes, and issues within a given field. For example, discussing financial matters in English necessitates familiarity with fundamental financial principles. Moreover, PCC involves the development of higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, which are applied through the medium of a foreign language.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) emphasize that ESP is not limited to teaching specialized vocabulary; rather, it involves enabling learners to participate in the discourse practices of their professional communities. Therefore, the integration of discursive, pragmatic, intercultural, and professional competences ensures a comprehensive and functional model of PCC, capable of supporting effective communication in complex and diverse professional environments.

3.2 Didactic Principles for Forming PCC

The formation of professional communicative competence (PCC) is grounded in a set of interrelated didactic principles that ensure a systematic, practice-oriented, and learner-centered approach to instruction. First, the principle of professional context orientation requires that all learning materials, tasks, and assessments be derived from authentic professional situations rather than abstract everyday topics; for example, learners engage with issues such as quality control in manufacturing or patient informed consent through case studies, technical documentation, and industry reports. Closely connected to this, the principle of communicative orientation emphasizes that the learning process should replicate real-life communication as much as possible, prioritizing interactive tasks such as role plays, simulations, debates, and problem-solving activities, including scenarios like business negotiations or professional



meetings. The principle of functionality further ensures that language is taught as a tool for performing specific communicative functions in professional contexts, for instance, using modal verbs to give advice, express obligation, or indicate possibility rather than treating them as isolated grammatical forms.

In addition, the principle of integration highlights that language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and language components (lexis, grammar, phonetics) must be developed together, reflecting how they naturally occur in communication; this can be implemented through complex tasks such as reading a professional text, discussing it, and producing a written response. The principle of activity and consciousness positions learners as active participants who consciously regulate their own learning by setting goals, selecting strategies, and engaging in reflection and self-assessment. At the same time, the principle of individualized and differentiated approach acknowledges learner diversity in terms of proficiency, needs, and interests, requiring flexible instruction through varied tasks, pacing, and personalized learning paths. The principle of authenticity reinforces the use of real-world professional materials, such as genuine reports, recordings, and correspondence, which help bridge the gap between classroom learning and actual professional communication (Gilmore, 2007). Finally, the principle of competence-based approach shifts the focus from mere knowledge acquisition to the development of practical abilities, where learners are assessed through performance-based methods such as projects, portfolios, and simulations, demonstrating their capacity to effectively carry out professional tasks in a foreign language.

4. Conclusion

Professional communicative competence is a complex, multidimensional construct that lies at the core of effective foreign language instruction for career purposes. This article has provided a comprehensive theoretical framework, demonstrating that PCC comprises six interrelated components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discursive, pragmatic, intercultural, and professional knowledge.

Forming PCC requires adherence to eight didactic principles: professional context orientation, communicative orientation, functionality, integration, activity and consciousness, individualized and differentiated approach, authenticity, and a competence-based approach. Development proceeds through five stages: preparatory, core, practice, reinforcement, and assessment. In this process, the teacher assumes multiple facilitative roles while the learner becomes an active agent in their own learning.

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