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MODELING THE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER

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Abstract: This study addresses the timely issue of modeling the professional competence of a foreign language teacher within the context of contemporary globalization, the intensive integration of innovative educational technologies, and a pedagogical paradigm shift towards comprehensive communicative competence. The research's relevance is substantiated by increasing demands for foreign language-fluent specialists and the need for highly qualified educators capable of adapting to new realities. The paper analyzes the theoretical and methodological foundations of the competence-based approach and the specifics of a foreign language teacher professional activity, drawing upon national and international sources.

The essence of "competence" and "competency" is defined, revealing the integrative nature of professional competence. This encompasses cognitive, activity-based (practical), personal (motivational-value) components, and experience. The competence structure is systematized by levels (key, general professional, and specialized) and its interrelated components are detailed: linguistic/language, pedagogical/didactic, psychological, sociocultural/intercultural, communicative, information-digital, and self-development/reflective competence.

The methodological principles of modeling (systematicity, adequacy, goal-orientation, dynamism) are substantiated, and the most appropriate combined (integrative) approach to model development is identified. Sequential stages of model creation are outlined, and a system for assessing the formation of its components – based on cognitive, activity-based, and personal criteria – is proposed. Favorable conditions for effective professional competence formation and development are determined, including continuous pedagogical education, self-education, and the use of innovative educational technologies.

The developed model holds significant practical and theoretical value for enhancing the quality of future foreign language teacher training and their professional development. It also serves as a foundation for further scientific research into diagnostic tools, the specificity of modeling for various educational levels, the impact of new technologies (including artificial intelligence), and the international context.

Key words: professional competence, foreign language teacher, modeling, competence, competency, competence-based approach, educational technologies, communicative competence, linguistic competence, pedagogical competence, sociocultural competence, self-development, professional development.

Introduction

The modern world is rapidly changing, particularly in education, where **foreign language teachers** play a key role. Globalization and the widespread adoption of innovative technologies mean that the demands on their professional training are constantly increasing. This study focuses on **modeling the professional competence**



of a foreign language teacher, an essential step toward ensuring high-quality education and training specialists who can effectively function in an international environment.

Relevance of the Study

The relevance of this topic stems from several interconnected **factors** shaping the modern requirements for foreign language teachers [2, 10]:

- *Globalization and the rising demand for foreign languages.* As international connections deepen and global job markets expand, there is a significant need for professionals fluent in foreign languages. This, in turn, requires highly qualified teachers who can effectively educate students, considering these new realities.
- *Integration of innovative educational technologies.* The rapid growth of digital tools, online platforms, and multimedia resources is significantly transforming traditional education. A modern teacher must not only master classic teaching methods but also actively integrate these technologies, which substantially increases the demands on their **technological and methodological competence**.
- *Shifts in the educational paradigm.* The modern educational paradigm is moving beyond simply acquiring grammar and vocabulary. Instead, it focuses on developing comprehensive **communicative competence**, encompassing sociocultural, pragmatic, and interactive aspects. This requires teachers to be ready to cultivate complex language skills in students, essential for real-world communication.
- *Societal demand and the need for adaptation.* Society needs graduates who can communicate freely in foreign languages to successfully integrate into the global environment. This underscores the critical need for teachers to continuously improve themselves, update their knowledge and skills, and adapt to new educational standards and job market demands.

All these factors highlight the urgent need for a clear understanding of what constitutes **the professional competence of a modern foreign language teacher** and how it can be effectively modeled to train highly qualified specialists who can meet the challenges of the 21st century [11].



Analysis of Scientific Sources

The theoretical and methodological foundation for this study, which focuses on modeling the professional competence of a foreign language teacher, draws from the works of both national and international scholars. Analyzing these sources allows us to identify key aspects essential for developing an effective model.

In Ukrainian scholarly discourse, there is a strong focus on **the competency-based approach** as a fundamental principle of modern education. For instance, O.V. Ovcharuk [5] explores the global experience and Ukrainian prospects of this approach, highlighting its importance for educational policy reform. L.A. Bondar [1] and L.A. Martseva [3] provide a detailed analysis of the technologies and principles for implementing this approach within the higher and professional education systems. The works of S. Radul [8] and Yu. Panasiuk [6] apply this approach directly to the professional training of future foreign language teachers, emphasizing that competence is not merely a sum of knowledge and skills but the ability to apply them in real-world professional scenarios. O. Yakymchuk [11] examines the implementation of this approach within the Ukrainian context, which allows for the consideration of national specificities. V.O. Radkevych [7] and O. Rakoviets & S. Rakoviets [9] link the concept of professional competence to professional culture and mastery, underscoring their interdependence.

A pivotal reference is the textbook “Methodology of Teaching Foreign Languages and Cultures: Theory and Practice”, edited by S.Yu. Nikolaieva (2013) [4]. This comprehensive source addresses a wide range of foreign language teaching methodologies, providing the necessary theoretical and practical foundations for understanding teacher professional activities. It serves as a cornerstone for defining **the specific professional functions and competencies** to be incorporated into the model.

International sources, such as the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment” (CEFR) by the Council of Europe (2001) [2] and “Key Issues in Language Teaching” by Jack C. Richards (2015) [10], are critically important for understanding global standards and trends in foreign language teaching. The CEFR establishes pan-European frameworks for describing



language competence, which is indispensable for defining learning objectives and evaluating teacher professional performance. Richards' work, in turn, offers a broad perspective on key issues and challenges in contemporary language didactics, enabling the integration of global experience in competence modeling.

Our analysis of scientific sources revealed several key findings:

- The competence-based approach is the dominant paradigm in educational policy and practice, necessitating a re-evaluation of teacher training approaches [1, 3, 5].
- The professional competence of a foreign language teacher is a multi-component phenomenon, encompassing knowledge, skills, abilities, personal qualities, and the capacity for ongoing professional development [7, 9].
- A clear link exists between teacher professional culture and competence [7].
- Innovative technologies and shifts in foreign language learning objectives (specifically, the transition to communicative competence) demand new knowledge and skills from teachers [4, 10].
- International standards (CEFR) serve as a benchmark for developing national approaches to forming and evaluating linguistic and pedagogical competence [2].

Overall, these sources provide a robust foundation for developing a **comprehensive model of foreign language teacher professional competence** that considers both the theoretical underpinnings of the competence-based approach and the practical aspects of teaching amidst contemporary educational challenges.

The aim of this article is to develop and substantiate a structured and comprehensive model of foreign language teacher professional competence. This model aligns with the modern demands of globalization, the intensive implementation of innovative educational technologies, and evolving foreign language learning objectives. Ultimately, it seeks to enhance the quality of specialist training and professional development.

To achieve this aim, the following **objectives** were defined and addressed in this article:

- *Define the essence and structure of foreign language teacher professional competence, differentiating between the concepts of “competence” and*



“competency” within pedagogical research contexts. This includes outlining its integrative nature, encompassing cognitive, activity-based (practical), personal (motivational-value) components, and experience.

- *Systematize the structure of foreign language teacher professional competence by levels:* key, general professional, and specific (specialized) competencies.
- *Describe the key components of foreign language teacher professional competence* (linguistic/language, pedagogical/didactic, psychological, sociocultural/intercultural, communicative, information-digital, and self-development/reflective competence) and their interrelationships.
- *Substantiate the methodological principles of modeling professional competence* (systematicity, adequacy, goal-orientation, dynamism) and determine the most appropriate model type (combined/integrative approach).
- *Outline the sequential stages of developing a professional competence model* (defining the aim, analyzing sources, identifying components, developing the structure).
- *Develop a system of criteria for assessing the formation of each competence component*, including cognitive, activity-based, and personal criteria, and propose corresponding assessment methods.
- *Identify favorable conditions for the effective formation and development of foreign language teacher professional competence*, such as a system of continuous pedagogical education, self-education, and the use of innovative technologies.
- *Determine the practical and theoretical significance* of the developed model for enhancing the quality of future foreign language teacher training and the professional development of currently practicing specialists.

Research Methodology and Results

Theoretical Foundations of Foreign Language Teacher Professional Competence

In pedagogical research, **professional competence** is a central concept that requires precise definition and structuring. It's characterized as an integrative attribute



of a specialist, encompassing the knowledge, skills, abilities, experience, personal qualities, motives, and values essential for the successful execution of professional tasks [7, 9].

It's crucial to distinguish between the terms "competence" and "competency". **Competence** is defined as a set of knowledge, skills, abilities, and modes of activity that represent a standardized requirement for a learning outcome or the effective performance of a specific action. For instance, "communicative competence" signifies a potential readiness for effective communication in a foreign language.

In contrast, **competency** is an integrative, personal characteristic that includes the presence of competences, motivation, value orientations, experience, and the ability to independently solve problems. It represents the realized capacity for successful professional activity. Thus, competence is an external requirement for an outcome, whereas competency is an internal characteristic of the subject that ensures the achievement of that outcome [5].

Professional competence is integrative in nature and comprises:

- **Cognitive component.** This includes subject-specific, methodological, psychological-pedagogical, and linguistic knowledge.
- **Activity-based (practical) component.** This involves the skills and abilities to apply knowledge in practice, solve professional tasks, and utilize appropriate methodologies.
- **Personal (motivational-value) component.** This encompasses personal qualities (responsibility, initiative, creativity, empathy, tolerance), professional values (professionalism, ethics), and motivation for continuous professional growth.
- **Experience.** This is acquired through professional activity, enabling effective action in non-standard situations.

The integration of all these components ensures a high level of professionalism and teacher effectiveness. For example, a teacher might possess profound knowledge of a foreign language (cognitive component) and be proficient in teaching methodologies (activity-based component), but without adequate motivation or the ability to connect with students (personal component), their competency would remain



incomplete.

The structure of a foreign language teacher's professional competence can be systematized by levels [1, 3]:

- **Key competencies.** These are the most generalized, cross-cutting competencies essential for any professional activity and for successfully functioning in modern society, developed throughout one's life. They include: communicative competence, information-digital competence, social competence, civic competence, entrepreneurial competence, and self-development and self-education competence.
- **General professional competencies.** These are necessary for successful activity in a specific broad field, regardless of particular specialization. They include: psychological-pedagogical competence, methodological competence, and research competence.
- **Specialized (professional) competencies.** These are specific to the profession of a foreign language teacher, defining its uniqueness. They include: linguistic competence, language-didactic competence, sociocultural/intercultural competence, and communicative competence in the context of a foreign language.

The professional activity of a foreign language teacher is multifaceted, combining the roles of **a linguist** (deep knowledge of the language and its structure), **a pedagogue** (mastery of didactics and teaching methodology), **a psychologist** (understanding students' age and individual characteristics, fostering motivation), and **a culturologist** (familiarity with the culture of native speakers and developing intercultural communicative competence). This multifaceted nature demands broad erudition from a foreign language teacher, the integration of knowledge from various fields, and a constant readiness to switch between these roles within a single lesson or throughout the entire educational process.

Furthermore, the professional activity of a foreign language teacher necessitates **continuous self-improvement and adaptation to changes** driven by language dynamics, the evolution of teaching methodologies (communicative approach, CLIL, hybrid learning), innovative educational technologies (online platforms, AI, VR/AR),



changes in curricula, and increasing demands on graduates (development of “soft skills”). The capacity for self-regulation is crucial for preventing professional burnout.

The professional competence of a foreign language teacher consists of several interrelated **components** [4]:

1. Linguistic/Language Competence. This involves a fundamental and profound mastery of the foreign language across all language activities (listening, speaking, reading, writing), as well as deep knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and phonetics.

2. Pedagogical/Didactic Competence. This refers to the ability to effectively organize the educational process, including knowledge of learning and teaching theory, proficiency in various foreign language teaching methodologies, and the ability to apply modern information and communication technologies (ICT) and interactive methods.

3. Psychological Competence. This focuses on the psychological aspect of interaction, encompassing an understanding of students’ age and individual characteristics, fostering motivation for learning, and creating a comfortable educational environment.

4. Sociocultural/Intercultural Competence. This emphasizes the cultural aspect of teaching, including deep knowledge of the target language countries’ cultures and the ability to foster intercultural communicative competence in students.

5. Communicative Competence. Viewed more broadly than just language proficiency, this is the ability to interact effectively in the professional environment (with students, colleagues, parents, and teamwork skills).

6. Information-Digital Competence. This refers to proficiency in information and communication technologies for educational and professional activities, including the use of educational platforms and digital literacy.

7. Self-development/Reflective Competence. This is the teacher’s ability for continuous self-improvement, encompassing self-analysis, self-assessment, and planning for professional growth.

The harmonious combination of these components ensures high effectiveness in the professional activity of a foreign language teacher.



Methodology and Stages of Professional Competence Modeling

Developing a well-grounded model of a teacher's professional competence relies on a set of **methodological principles** [1]:

- *Systematicity* implies viewing competence as a holistic, interdependent system of components (linguistic, pedagogical, psychological, etc.), which prevents a fragmented description.
- *The principle of adequacy* requires an accurate reflection of the essential characteristics of the research object, ensuring the model's completeness and functionality.
- *The goal-orientation* of modeling lies in developing a model to solve specific problems, such as forming curricula or evaluation criteria, with a focus on practical application.
- *The dynamism* of the model is critical because a foreign language teacher's professional competence is a variable category that evolves under the influence of educational technologies and globalization processes. Therefore, the model must be adaptable to changes in pedagogical practice and scientific research.

The choice of model type determines how **the research object** is represented:

- **A structural model** describes the object's composition, its elements, interconnections, and hierarchy. In the case of professional competence, it would show its main components (linguistic, pedagogical, psychological, etc.) and subcomponents, as well as the relationships between them. It answers the question, "What does it consist of?"
- **A functional model** reflects the purpose and modes of operation of the object, as well as the functions performed and processes involved. For professional competence, this would illustrate the tasks a teacher solves and the actions they perform using their competencies. It answers the question, "How does it work?"
- **A dynamic model** reflects changes in the object over time, its development, and the stages of its formation or transformation. In the context of competence, it can show levels of its development, trajectories of a teacher's professional growth, or how competencies evolve over a certain period. It answers the question, "How



does it change/develop?"

For modeling the professional competence of a foreign language teacher, the most appropriate is a **combined (integrative) approach**. This approach synthesizes elements of structural (for defining components), functional (for demonstrating their manifestation in activity), and dynamic (for reflecting development and levels of formation) models [1].

The development of a model is a sequential process that includes the following stages:

1. **Defining the purpose and objectives of modeling.** Clearly formulating goals to ensure the process is purposeful.
2. **Analyzing regulatory documents and best practices.** Collecting and analyzing information from state standards, scientific literature, and successful pedagogical practices to determine current requirements.
3. **Identifying key components and their criteria.** Pinpointing the main components of professional competence and developing criteria and indicators for their formation.
4. **Developing the model structure.** Creating a visual and textual representation that reflects the overall framework, components, their interrelationships, and levels of formation.
5. **Testing and correcting the model.** Verifying the model in real-world conditions (pilot studies, expert surveys) and further refining it based on feedback to ensure maximum effectiveness and adequacy.

Adherence to these principles and stages is key to creating a well-founded, holistic, and practically significant model of a foreign language teacher's professional competence.

Model of Foreign Language Teacher Professional Competence

The structure of such a model represents its "skeleton", reflecting the interaction of its elements. Its **core/foundation** consists of worldview qualities and values that define the teacher's professional stance, ethical principles, and the direction of their activity. These include openness to intercultural dialogue, critical thinking, humanism,

professionalism, responsibility, empathy, tolerance, love for the profession, and the value of lifelong learning. This core serves as a filter through which the teacher perceives the world and interacts with students.

Arranged around this core are **the main blocks/components**, which are distinct yet interconnected:

- ✓ *Linguistic/Language Competence*
- ✓ *Pedagogical/Didactic Competence*
- ✓ *Psychological Competence*
- ✓ *Sociocultural/Intercultural Competence*
- ✓ *Communicative Competence*
- ✓ *Information-Digital Competence*
- ✓ *Self-development/Reflective Competence*

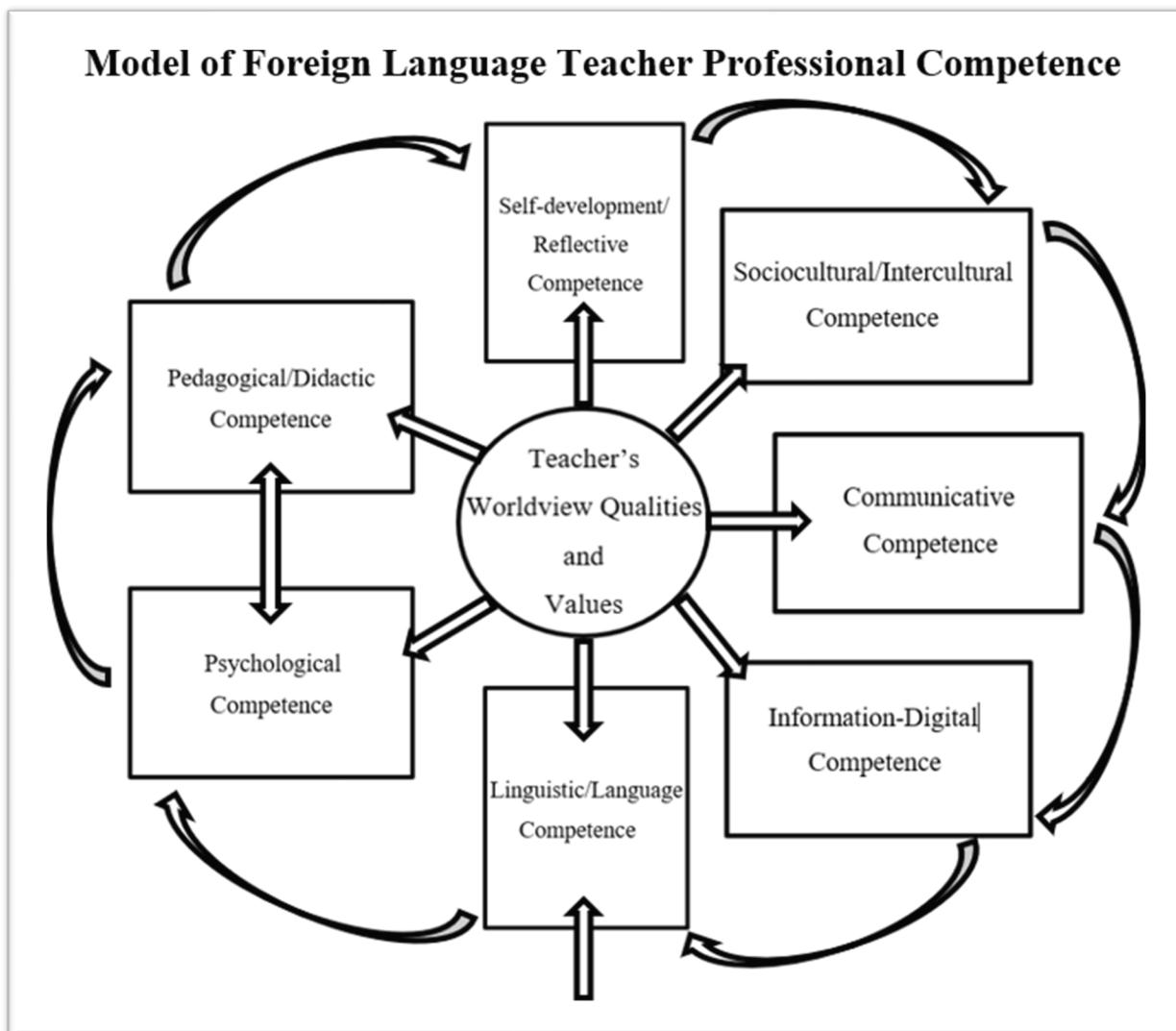


Figure 1 – Model of Foreign Language Teacher Professional Competence
Developed by the author.



These components form a complex system of hierarchical and interdependent relationships. The core permeates all elements, linguistic competence is foundational, pedagogical and psychological competencies are complementary, communicative competence functions as cross-cutting, information-digital competence is instrumental, and self-development competence acts as a meta-competence ensuring continuous improvement [2, 4]. Visually, the model can be represented as a circle with a central core and radiating blocks.

To ensure the model's practical applicability, we have developed a system for assessing the formation of each component based on three main **criteria**:

1. **Cognitive criterion (knowledge, awareness)**. This evaluates the foreign language teacher theoretical preparedness. **Indicators** include the depth, completeness, relevance, and systematic nature of their knowledge in linguistics, methodology, pedagogy, psychology, and culturology, as well as an understanding of terminology and overall erudition. **Assessment methods**: testing, interviews, analysis of lesson plans, project defense.

2. **Activity-based criterion (skills, abilities, methods)**. This evaluates the teacher's practical ability to apply knowledge. **Indicators** cover the ability to plan the learning process, develop materials, use information and communication technologies, manage the classroom, motivate students, assess their knowledge, solve pedagogical situations; fluent command of language activities, use of interactive methods, and work productivity. **Assessment methods**: lesson observation, analysis of documentation and didactic materials, practical tasks, case studies, and student surveys.

3. **Personal criterion (qualities, attitudes, motivation)**. This evaluates the teacher's personal characteristics influencing professional activity. **Indicators** include responsibility, initiative, creativity, empathy, tolerance, stress resistance, pedagogical tact, leadership qualities, positive attitudes, motivation for growth, emotional intelligence, and reflexivity. **Assessment methods**: psychological testing (personality questionnaires), self-assessment, peer assessment (colleagues, students), interviews, expert evaluation methods, and portfolio analysis.

The effectiveness of a foreign language teacher professional competence



model depends on creating favorable conditions for its formation and development:

- **System of continuous pedagogical education.** This includes high-quality initial and postgraduate education, institutional forms like seminars, trainings, and master classes, and active participation in professional communities. This system must be flexible and responsive to current needs.
- **Self-education and professional development.** Teachers play an active role through systematic independent study of new information (e.g., scientific articles, webinars, MOOCs), participation in formal and informal programs, reflective practice, and maintaining a professional portfolio.
- **Use of innovative technologies in teaching and self-development.** This involves actively implementing interactive platforms, multimedia tools, AI, and virtual reality to boost lesson effectiveness. For self-development, it means using online courses, webinars, educational portals, and creating one's own digital educational environment (e.g., a bank of electronic resources, online courses, a professional blog).

The comprehensive provision of these conditions significantly contributes to the effective formation, development, and improvement of a foreign language teacher professional competence.

Conclusions

This study summarizes key findings, highlighting the significance of the developed model for foreign language teacher professional competence. This model offers a structured, systematic, and comprehensive vision of the essential aspects for an effective contemporary specialist, holding substantial practical and theoretical value for enhancing educational quality and teacher professional development.

Significance of the Developed Model

Implementing the developed model significantly **improves the quality of training for future foreign language teachers**. It serves as a clear guideline for developing and modernizing curricula in higher pedagogical institutions, ensuring the formation of a full spectrum of necessary knowledge, skills, and personal qualities. The model contributes to standardizing requirements for philology graduates, allows for



better adaptation of learning content to the real needs of the profession, and provides a basis for developing objective criteria for assessing students' competence levels across cognitive, activity-based, and personal criteria.

For **currently practicing foreign language teachers**, the model serves as a foundation for developing effective professional development and retraining programs, aiding in the identification of competence gaps. It's a valuable tool for **self-diagnosis and self-development**, motivating teachers towards continuous self-education. Furthermore, the model can become the basis for transparent attestation and certification procedures, which will boost teacher motivation and foster a unified professional culture, thereby raising the prestige of the profession and the overall quality of pedagogical activity.

Thus, the developed model is **a key instrument for a systematic approach** to forming and developing foreign language teacher professional competence, ensuring their qualifications align with the modern demands of a globalized and technological world.

Prospects for Further Research

The developed model of foreign language teacher professional competence opens up broad prospects for further scientific and practical research:

- *Development of diagnostic tools.* It's crucial to create valid and reliable methodologies (tests, questionnaires, case studies, practical tasks) for objectively measuring the level of formation of each competence component. This includes developing automated assessment systems and tools for tracking the dynamics of competence development.
- *Specificity of competence modeling for different educational levels.* Future research should focus on the unique characteristics of foreign language teacher competence for preschool, primary, secondary, higher, and non-formal education, considering the specific requirements of each level.
- *Impact of new technologies.* Investigating the impact of artificial intelligence development on the role and necessary competencies of a foreign language teacher is particularly relevant, as is an in-depth study of the competencies



required for effective work in hybrid and distance learning environments.

- *International context.* A comparative analysis of the developed model with similar foreign language teacher competence models in other countries would be valuable for identifying commonalities and unique aspects.

These research directions will not only deepen the scientific understanding of foreign language teacher professional competence but also enable the creation of practical tools for further enhancing the quality of linguistic education in Ukraine.

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