COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT
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ASSESSING COMPETENCY-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR LINGUIST TRAINING IN THE UK: BENEFITS FOR UKRAINE

Olena Dorofeyeva
ORCID ID 0000-0002-8913-806X
PhD in Philology,
Associate Professor of the Department of Foreign Language Education
and Intercultural Interaction, Khmelnytskyi National University
11 Instytutska St., 29016, Khmelnytskyi, Ukraine
elenadorofeyeva72@gmail.com

Olha Lapshyna
ORCID ID 0000-0001-7387-1729
PhD in Pedagogy,
Associate Professor of the Department of Foreign Language Education
and Intercultural Interaction, Khmelnytskyi National University
11 Instytutska St., 29016, Khmelnytskyi, Ukraine
olga1807komochkova@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article explores the evolution of competency-based education in the UK, particularly its implications for professional training of linguists. It begins by highlighting the necessity of enhancing students' cognitive abilities to foster engagement in shaping their educational and social environments. The article examines the shift from traditional academic evaluations to competency assessments promoted by the Bologna Process, emphasizing the need for interdisciplinary standards in education. It provides a historical overview of the UK's competency-based approach, tracing its origins in the 1980s and the development of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and national occupational standards. These frameworks, established through stakeholder collaboration, ensure that graduates possess the necessary competencies for their professional roles. The article further discusses the integration of digital skills and adaptability into competency frameworks, reflecting the demands of a rapidly changing labour market. By analysing the UK experience, this study offers insights into enhancing the training of future linguists in Ukraine, aligning educational outcomes with real-world demands while maintaining high standards of professional competency.
Keywords: *linguistics; competency-based approach; competency; competence; the UK.*

INTRODUCTION

Enhancing the cognitive abilities of students is crucial for developing their capacity to not only understand the world around them, but also to actively shape it.

This active engagement enables students to play a significant role in creating their educational and social environments, while fostering a deeper understanding of the significance of their academic and future professional activities. Such awareness drives self-development and the ability to regulate one's learning processes. In this context, today's higher education institutions focus on the implementation of competency-based training models, particularly for professionals in linguistics (Sysoieva & Mospan, 2019). The Bologna Process highlights the shift from traditional academic evaluation towards assessing the professional and social readiness of graduates, emphasizing the value of "competence" and "competency" as key educational objectives. This approach demands interdisciplinary and integrated standards in education, encouraging students to apply their knowledge to solve practical challenges.

Given these developments, it is essential to examine the UK's experience in applying a competency-based approach. This analysis can provide valuable insights for improving professional training of future linguists in Ukraine, ensuring that their education meets academic and real-world demands.

The Development of Competency-Based Approach in the UK: Past and Present. In the 1980s, the British government pioneered a new competency-based approach, focusing on aligning a specialist's performance outcomes with predefined standards (Knasel & Meed, 1994). This approach aimed to ensure that professionals could meet specific criteria in their respective fields. Today, this emphasis on competence is institutionalized through associations of managers who develop competency standards that are subsequently approved at the national level, ensuring consistency and quality across various professions.

It is important to note that the concept of competence, now a cornerstone of professional education and training in the UK, emerged from the "competence movement" of the 1980s-1990s (Lester, 2015). This movement was driven by the introduction of the New Training Initiative, which sought to integrate professional standards into the training of specialists across diverse fields (Department of Employment, 1981). By 1986, working groups had begun developing professional standards and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), initially focusing on skilled

trades but later extending to various professional fields. For roles requiring high levels of expertise, specialized frameworks were created to set out the minimum standards for practice. These standards define a professional's core roles through competencies, each comprising skills that meet specific criteria used for professional assessments.

John Raven's seminal work, "Competence in Modern Society" (1984), offered a comprehensive definition of competence, describing it as a multi-faceted phenomenon composed of various components, some cognitive and others emotional. These components contribute interchangeably to effective behaviour. Raven (1984) identified 37 types of competencies, such as "readiness" and "ability", as well as psychological attributes such as "responsibility" and "confidence". Early British models of competence assessment were rooted in functional competence, i.e., the ability to perform professional duties according to approved standards. This approach laid the groundwork for subsequent competency frameworks.

Between 1996 and 1998, Cheetham & Chivers (1996) developed an integrated model comprising five categories of competencies: cognitive competence (theories, concepts, knowledge, understanding), functional competence (practical skills and "know-how"), personal competences (behavioural attributes), ethical competences (grounded in values) and meta-competences (critical thinking). This model remains influential today, offering a holistic perspective on professional development.

More recently, updates to these models have emphasized adaptability and digital skills, reflecting changes in the global labour market. The rise of digitalization and remote work has shifted the focus towards competencies such as digital literacy, problem-solving in tech-rich environments and the ability to adapt to evolving workplace technologies. This is especially relevant in sectors such as education and healthcare, where rapid technological changes have reshaped professional roles (Storey et al., 2018).

At the same time, the UK's approach to competence remains broader than that in the USA. In the USA, competencies are typically viewed through the lens of specific behavioural traits relevant to professional performance. However, in the UK, the

concept encompasses not only behavioural attributes but also foundational knowledge, critical thinking skills and value-based orientations. This distinction has become even more significant as UK institutions adapt their frameworks to include new skill sets such as cultural intelligence and global awareness, reflecting the increasingly interconnected nature of professional environments.

As perceived by the authors of this article, "competence" refers to the application domain of a specialist's knowledge, skills, and abilities, while "competency" represents the internalized set, namely, a foundational knowledge base of the individual. The term "competence" is used in two related senses: as didactic units that define the key knowledge and skills outcomes of the educational process, and as psychological characteristics that the educational process aims to develop. According to the Tuning project (2012), competences are "a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities" developed or obtained by the learner in the process of study. The competences fostered by an educational programme can be differentiated into the subject-specific and the generic, often referred to as "transferable skills" (p. 10).

In today's educational programmes, the language of competences is used to define academic and professional profiles. The Tuning project highlights how "competence language" provides a framework for describing common reference points across various subject areas, without prescribing specific methods. This flexibility has been crucial for institutions as they adapt to the increasing need for interdisciplinary skills and cross-cultural competencies. Today, "competences" encompass knowledge and understanding (theoretical insights in an academic field), knowledge as action (practical application in specific contexts) and knowledge as being (the integration of values into professional practice) (Goria et al., 2019).

Current literature continues to distinguish between subject-specific competences and general competences. Subject-specific competences remain vital for ensuring diversity in educational programmes, as they ensure that graduates are well-prepared for specific fields (Avis, 2017). Meanwhile, general competences, such as critical thinking, communication, and adaptability, have gained prominence, especially as employers seek candidates with a broad range of personal qualities. The Tuning project's list of general

competences, organized into instrumental, interpersonal and systemic categories, has become a reference for many universities. These competences are often further subdivided into specialized skills that students acquire throughout their studies (Bourn, 2018).

Consequently, professional competency today is seen as a complex integration of personal attributes, knowledge, skills and competences needed for effective professional performance (Brock, 2015). It encompasses both traditional skills and new digital abilities, such as data analysis and online communication. As a specific form of knowledge organization, professional competency reflects one's cognitive development, efficient information processing and creative problem-solving capabilities. It allows professionals to adapt to the demands of dynamic environments and solve complex tasks (Humburg & Velden, 2017).

Thus, while the core principles of the UK's competency-based approach remain grounded in the frameworks established in the late 20th century, recent adaptations reflect the needs of a rapidly changing professional landscape. Today's competency frameworks emphasize adaptability, digital skills and a holistic view of professional development, equipping professionals to thrive in a globalized and technologically advanced world.

RESULTS

In the UK, a fundamental component in designing professional competencies and skills of higher education graduates is the system of national occupational standards. These standards precisely define the expectations for specialists in their professional activities. Each professional standard, referred to as an "element of competence", describes two main aspects: 1) the outcomes that should be achieved and 2) the quality of processes and conditions under which these outcomes are attained (Loisy & Coulet, 2018).

The development of professional standards involves several key stages: 1) researching (conducted by experts and consultants to determine professional roles and functions); 2) justifying (formalizing these functions into standards); 3) discussion

(engaging practitioners from various industries to refine and validate the standards) (Quality Assurance Agency, 2004).

Another critical component in the British approach is the national vocational qualification (NVQ). Each NVQ includes a set of national occupational standards that correspond to specific job activities. NVQs are structured with several competency units (ranging from 6 to 15), each containing relevant national occupational standards. Thus, professional competency becomes the primary focus of standardization, with each competency serving as an element of a particular NVQ (Kogan Page Editorial, 2019).

The UK's technology for designing professional competencies encompasses three basic concepts: 1) standards (what a specialist should be able to do); 2) training (how they can learn these skills); 3) assessment (how it can be determined and formally assessed that they can perform these skills) (Quality Assurance Agency, 2004).

These interconnected concepts characterize not only the British higher education system but also reflect similar frameworks in other countries, albeit with different terminologies. For instance, in the UK, a standard exclusively refers to what a specialist should achieve professionally, while in other countries (e.g., Germany), the entire model is often termed a standard.

As can be seen, the British practice emphasizes the necessity of a productive dialogue between the labour market and the higher education sector. This interaction is essential for developing the professional competencies and skills of graduates (Kogan Page Editorial, 2019). However, experience shows that this dialogue does not always yield positive outcomes, as each sector has distinct priorities, values and goals. A more effective approach is to "transform" labour market needs into specific demands for specialists that the higher education sector can address. For employers, understanding the following is crucial: 1. What should employees be able to do? 2. How should they perform these tasks. 3. What level of professionalism is expected?

These considerations define "labour market outcomes", which are the focus of professional standards. In contrast, higher education typically operates using the language of educational programmes, curricula, courses, teaching methods and assessment strategies. Therefore, it is vital for higher education representatives to know:

1. What should specialists learn? 2. How will they learn this? 3. How will the content and quality of education be assessed?

Establishing "feedback" between both sectors starts with formulating learning outcomes, which specify what graduates will be capable of after completing their educational programmes (see Fig. 1).

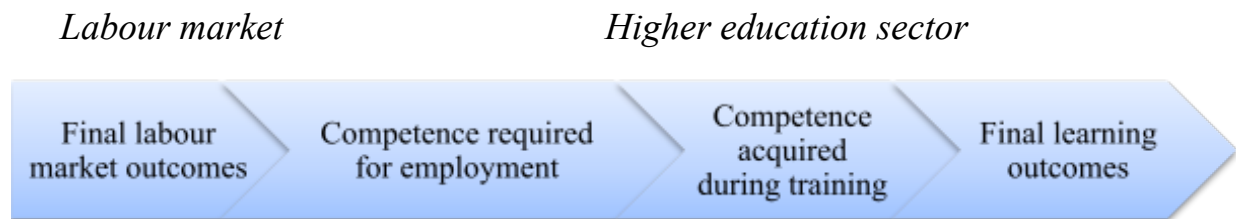*Labour market*   *Higher education sector*

Figure. 1. Transforming labour market competence requirements into higher education sector standards

Thus, the transformation of competency requirements from the labour market into educational requirements represents a critical stage in the British approach to designing professional competencies and skills for higher education graduates.

This transformation can be summarized as follows:

1. A professional education and training standard comprises two parts: outcomes and processes. Labour market outcomes are aligned with the outcomes defined in the professional education and training standards. Labour market requirements significantly influence learning outcomes and define them through a range of competencies. In contrast, the processes included in the professional education standard are determined independently by educators, as labour market requirements do not dictate the learning outcomes.

2. In both sectors, there are corresponding components (labour market outcomes and professional education outcomes) and non-corresponding components (other requirements). The labour market is primarily interested in the competencies acquired during education that can be transferred to employment. Other educational requirements may be influenced by legal standards and the education system's infrastructure; however, they do not directly impact professional education standards. Conversely,

non-academic requirements from the labour market, such as work experience, are outside the purview of higher education.

3. The connection between the employment sector and higher education is grounded in employment sector requirements, expressed as "outcomes" or "competencies required for employment". These requirements should be transformed into learning outcomes, namely, competencies acquired through education (Hayward et al., 2021).

The methodologies employed in this transformation include a) a consistent and structured description of learning outcomes based on employment activities; b) a systematic approach to transforming labour market outcomes into learning outcomes; c) achieving learning outcomes in specific environments, particularly workplaces.

Additionally, there is a reciprocal relationship between the higher education sector and the labour market that reflects their interaction. This relationship aims to clarify labour market requirements, enhance training processes through job opportunities, align educational programmes with the evolving demands of the labour market through continuous monitoring and assess the outcomes of professional education (Hayward et al., 2021).

In 2004, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education introduced a new procedure for developing and publishing subject benchmark statements, including a detailed review process for existing standards. This procedural development was in response to various subject communities' requests for assistance in establishing and approving new standards. The finalized version resulted from comprehensive consultations regarding the draft criteria and guidelines for standard creation, managed by the Agency's Steering Group for Benchmarking (Quality Assurance Agency, 2004).

The establishment of educational standards was one of several interrelated recommendations in the 1997 report by the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing, 1997). This report advocated for the development of national qualification frameworks, program specifications and a code of practice for quality assurance in higher education. The standards themselves articulate the expectations for academic standards, thereby instilling confidence among employers, the public, and

other stakeholders in the quality of qualifications and degrees awarded by higher education institutions.

At the institutional level, educational standards provide general requirements for knowledge, skills and abilities for developing bachelor's and master's programmes, steering them towards professional standards to clarify necessary competencies. For interdisciplinary programmes, it is recommended to use multiple standardized descriptions of subject areas, each covering specific fields. Although educational standards are not legally binding, UK universities typically adhere to their recommendations, as this enhances the quality of professional training and facilitates further accreditation by professional communities (Quality Assurance Agency, 2004).

Therefore, the flexibility of the UK educational standards and their primarily advisory nature allows higher education institutions to adapt creatively to labour market changes and educational policies. At the same time, their existence ensures a benchmark that maintains consistency in educational outcomes across diverse programmes and institutions. This balance fosters high education standards while enabling innovation and responsiveness to the evolving needs of industries and students.

DISCUSSION

In 2002, the Quality Assurance Agency established the first educational standard for the field of "Linguistics" (Linguistics Subject Benchmark Statement) at the bachelor's level, followed by a fourth edition in September 2023. This document not only provides general information but also contains sections detailing the nature and scope of linguistics, subject knowledge and understanding, as well as skills related to teaching, learning and assessment. The programme learning outcomes focus on equipping students with a variety of intellectual skills, discipline-specific skills and generic skills. Detailed content for each skill type is outlined in Table 1 (Quality Assurance Agency, 2023).

Table 1

Expected Learning Outcomes for the Bachelor's Degree in Linguistics

Intellectual skills	Discipline-specific skills	Generic skills
To earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in "Linguistics", students are required to be able to:		
Demonstrate deep knowledge and understanding of the structure of linguistic science and its theoretical foundations. Specify, illustrate and apply leading linguistic concepts to new data. Characterize, apply and evaluate key components of formal linguistic models at various levels of linguistic analysis. Demonstrate awareness of linguistic theories and their interpretations, as well as an understanding of the criteria for evaluating alternative theories. Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between data and theory, particularly the key role of hypotheses and the technologies for their verification, and apply this knowledge during analysis. Demonstrate an understanding of empirical and theoretical issues and problems, identifying and collecting relevant data for their effective resolution. Demonstrate an understanding of the phenomenon of alternative analysis and develop criteria for assessing its validity. Justify the main trends in the development of linguistic fields and disciplines, and identify fallacies in the arguments of others. Effectively use information and communication technologies to solve standard tasks in professional activities.	Characterize, evaluate and effectively use appropriate technologies for data collection and analysis, while identifying technical challenges that may arise during the analytical process. Consider the diversity of ethical and legal principles in the context of data provided by subjects during field and laboratory research. Apply methods for data collection and processing in accordance with defined research objectives and evaluate the obtained results. Demonstrate an understanding of basic techniques for data analysis, evaluating and applying appropriate actions for analysing different types of data. Demonstrate an understanding of data and analysis results presented in the form of graphs, syntactic trees, tables, matrices and other diagrams, and report accordingly using these formats.	Formulate hypotheses and develop effective technologies for testing them. Plan, design and conduct research and surveys both collaboratively and independently. Participate in scientific discussions, articulating one's viewpoint competently in both oral and written forms. Seek out and process various data formats, synthesizing them succinctly and clearly. Present information from different sources logically and coherently in oral presentations. Apply IT skills to create electronic documentation. Independently interpret, evaluate and utilize data presented in diagrams, tables and graphs, competently reporting on the results achieved. Organize the process of personal learning and self-education.

Source: based on the information provided by Quality Assurance Agency (2023)

Table 1 indicates that graduates of the "Linguistics" programme at UK universities acquire both general and specific (professional) competencies. These competencies are further categorized into those related to cognitive activities, such as formulating and solving cognitive tasks, understanding and addressing non-standard solutions and problematic situations, as well as engaging in productive and reproductive

cognition, research and intellectual activities. Additionally, competencies for activity encompass the means and methods of activity, including planning, designing, modelling, forecasting, research activities and navigating various types of work. Information technology competencies involve the ability to receive, process and disseminate information, transform information, use mass media and multimedia technologies and demonstrate computer literacy, including proficiency in Internet technologies (Quality Assurance Agency, 2023).

To illustrate the practical implementation of these standards, it is important to consider the experience of the Newcastle University, in particular a comprehensive description of its educational programme for "Linguistics" (Bachelor of Arts). This description outlines how future specialists gain intellectual, practical and transferable skills throughout their professional training. The specific content for each type of skill is detailed in Table 2 (Newcastle University, 2024).

Table 2

Learning Outcomes for the Educational Programme "Linguistics" (Bachelor of Arts) at the Newcastle University

Intellectual skills	Practical skills	Transferable skills
To obtain a higher education qualification (Bachelor of Arts), students must be able to:		
Collect, analyse and evaluate data. Analyse and critically assess arguments. Compare and evaluate different intellectual theories. Enhance knowledge of the English language. Study foreign languages.	Practice critical argumentation within the field of linguistics. Collect, analyse and evaluate linguistic data. Compare different linguistic concepts. Understand the relationship between data and theory in the process of studying the English language. Address analytical, psychological and cultural challenges that may arise during language learning, particularly in English. Use a foreign language for communication and/or as a form of linguistic data.	Use the target language fluently, flexibly and effectively in both spoken and written forms. Coordinate various projects. Use information technologies. Understand the essence and social significance of the future profession, the main issues of disciplines defining specific linguistic fields and their interconnections within a holistic system of knowledge. Engage in business communication both verbally and in writing. Work collaboratively in teams as well as independently.

Source: based on the information provided by the Newcastle University (2024)

The Newcastle University (2024) follows the guiding principles set forth in the educational standard for the "Linguistics" while also maintaining the autonomy to define the practical orientation of its educational programme. This flexibility allows the university to consider both organizational and content-specific aspects within its unique educational environment.

Thus, The UK stands as a leading European nation that consistently develops methodologies aimed at enhancing professional training of specialists. The implementation of a competency-based approach to professional training in the 1980s served as a catalyst for a significant shift in the paradigm of professional education across various fields. This transformation initiated the emergence of a current individual capable of critical thinking and skilled in applying acquired professional knowledge, abilities and competencies in their professional activities.

CONCLUSIONS

The educational framework established by the Newcastle University exemplifies the effective integration of a competency-based approach within the field of linguistics. By aligning its curriculum with national standards while retaining the flexibility to adapt to its unique educational context, the university fosters graduates who possess robust linguistic knowledge, critical thinking skills and practical competencies. The UK's systematic development of methodologies for professional training has facilitated the emergence of skilled individuals capable of navigating the complexities of their fields, enhancing both individual and societal outcomes.

For Ukraine, several innovative recommendations can be considered in the ongoing development of higher education in linguistics and other professional fields, i.e, teacher education (Mospan, 2016). First, institutions should be empowered to create dynamic, modular curricula that allow for real-time adjustments based on labour market trends (Mospan, 2022) and emerging technologies. This approach would enable universities to swiftly integrate new topics or competencies as they become relevant, ensuring that programmes remain current and applicable. Additionally, establishing dedicated interdisciplinary innovation hubs within universities can foster collaboration among students from linguistics and other fields, allowing them to work on projects that

address real-world challenges. These hubs can serve as incubators for creative solutions, enhancing teamwork and students' problem-solving skills. Moreover, implementing tech-enhanced learning experiences, such as virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR), can simulate real-world linguistic applications, deepening students' engagement and understanding while equipping them with practical skills in a controlled yet dynamic setting.

To ensure that curricula continuously align with market needs, it is also advisable to form industry-centric advisory boards that include industry leaders, alumni, and educators, facilitating direct feedback loops for swift adaptation to evolving workforce demands. Incorporating gamification strategies into the learning process will make education more engaging and competitive, while collaborative learning experiences, such as team-based language projects or competitions, can enhance student motivation and improve outcomes. Finally, establishing global partnerships for knowledge exchange can provide opportunities for student exchanges, joint research initiatives, and collaborative projects with leading universities in Europe and beyond, enhancing educational quality and offering students diverse perspectives.

By implementing these innovative recommendations, Ukraine can significantly enhance the quality of its higher education system, particularly in the field of linguistics, and better prepare its graduates to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving labour market.

Further research should focus on studying successful practices from leading European universities, leveraging their insights to foster a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation in Ukrainian higher education.

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ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ КОМПЕТЕНТНІСНОГО ПІДХОДУ ДО ПІДГОТОВКИ ЛІНГВІСТІВ У СПОЛУЧЕНОМУ КОРОЛІВСТВІ: ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ДЛЯ УКРАЇНИ

Олена Дорофєєва, кандидат філологічних наук, доцент кафедри іншомовної освіти і міжкультурної комунікації, Хмельницький національний університет, вул. Інститутська, 11, 29016, Хмельницький, Україна, elenadorofeyeva72@gmail.com

Ольга Лапшина, кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент кафедри іншомовної освіти і міжкультурної комунікації, Хмельницький національний університет, вул. Інститутська, 11, 29016, Хмельницький, Україна, olga1807komochkova@gmail.com

У статті досліджено розвиток компетентнісної освіти у Сполученому Королівстві, особливо її вплив на професійну підготовку майбутніх фахівців із лінгвістики. Першочергово підкреслено необхідність покращення пізнавальних здібностей студентів з метою їхнього ефективного занурення в освітньо-соціальне середовище закладу вищої освіти. У статті проаналізовано перехід від традиційного академічного оцінювання до компетентнісного, згідно доктрини Болонського процесу, а також зактуалізовано впровадження міждисциплінарних освітніх стандартів. Крім того, у статті подано історичний огляд зародження компетентнісного підходу у Сполученому Королівстві, зокрема прослідковано його витоки в 1980-х роках й проаналізовано шлях затвердження Національних професійних кваліфікацій (NVQ) та національних професійних стандартів. Ці стандарти, затверджені завдяки співпраці зацікавлених сторін, забезпечують наявність у випускників необхідних компетенцій для майбутніх професійних ролей згідно швидко змінюваних умов міжнародного ринку праці. На основі позитивних аспектів британського досвіду запропоновано шляхи ефективного покращення професійної підготовки майбутніх фахівців із лінгвістики в ЗВО України.

Ключові слова: *лінгвістика; компетентнісний підхід; компетенція; компетентність; Велика Британія.*