Когнитивная компетенция как ключевая цель профессионально ориентированного обучения иностранным языкам (социально-политические науки)

Н. С. Харламова[1], Г. А. Иванкина[2]

[1,2]*Московский государственный лингвистический университет, Москва, Россия*
[1]*nskafedra@mail.ru,* [2]*galina_ivan@mail.ru*

Аннотация. В статье комплексно рассматривается когнитивная компетенция как методическое понятие профессионально ориентированного образования в области социально-политических наук. Авторы дают определение когнитивной компетенции, обосновывают ее важность для будущей профессиональной деятельности, обозначают стратегии и алгоритмы обучения когнитивной компетенции, освещают инновационные методы формирования когнитивной компетенции на кафедре лингвистики и профессиональной коммуникации в области политических наук Московского государственного лингвистического университета.

Ключевые слова: когнитивная компетенция, формирование когнитивной парадигмы, когнитивные навыки, стратегии, алгоритмы обучения, когнитивная модель

Original article

Cognitive Competence as the Key Goal of Vocationally Oriented Language Teaching (socio-political sciences)

Natalya S. Kharlamova[1], Galina A. Ivankina[2]

[1,2]*Moscow State Linguistic University, Moscow, Russia*
[1]*nskafedra@mail.ru,* [2]*galina_ivan@mail.ru*

Abstract. The paper deals with a comprehensive coverage of cognitive competence as a methodological concept in the sphere of vocationally oriented foreign language teaching of students in socio-political sciences. The authors define cognitive competence, prove its importance for the future professional activity, give an outline of strategies and algorithms of teaching cognitive competence, describe the innovative methods of forming cognitive competence at the Department of Linguistics and Political Communications in Moscow State Linguistic University.

Keywords: cognitive competence, formation of cognitive paradigm, cognitive skills, strategies, learning algorithms, cognitive model

Педагогические науки

INTRODUCTION

Vocationally oriented language learning (VOLL) has been an exceedingly dynamic sphere in the past thirty years. From the perspective of the future, the most general goal of professional university training should be to empower students with the skills, knowledge, and mindset needed to succeed in rapidly evolving and increasingly complex world.

It is obvious that training programs should meet the necessity to prepare students for the constantly changing job market by providing them with skills and knowledge needed to adapt to new technologies and professional trends. The importance of interdisciplinary skills and knowledge is emphasized. University training should aim at developing students' ability to work across different disciplines and collaborate with diverse teams. The pace of change in the workforce is accelerating, and professionals are to be committed to lifelong learning to stay relevant. University training should cultivate a culture of continuous learning and encourage students to seek out opportunities for professional development and retraining throughout their careers. Globalized world becomes more and more connected, so it is necessary for future specialists to possess skills to work globally. Training programs should focus on developing students' cross-cultural communication and understanding of global issues.

FORMING COGNITIVE PARADIGM

Taking into consideration the forthcoming goals facing vocationally oriented training in the future, let's focus on *cognitive competence* which has become increasingly essential for professionals to succeed in their careers and adapt to new challenges. *Cognitive competence* refers to the ability to effectively process information, adequately understand it, think critically, express thoughts clearly, solve problems, make competent decisions.

As such, enhancing cognitive competence should be a key goal of professional training programs in the future. This means providing opportunities for professionals to develop skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, creativity. It also involves fostering a growth mindset, curiosity, willingness to learn and adapt to new information and technologies.

Incorporating cognitive competence into professional training can help individuals become more agile, and adaptable in their careers, better equipped to handle uncertainty and complexity, and able to innovate and find creative solutions to new or unusual problems. Additionally, cognitive competence can also enhance communication skills and teamwork, as individuals are better able to understand and collaborate with others.

Investing in developing cognitive competence in professional training programs can help professionals stay competitive in ever-evolving job market and contribute to their overall success and fulfillment in their careers.

Strategies for teaching cognitive competence at the university level can involve the following:

– *Encouraging active learning.* Students are engaged in hands-on activities, group discussions, case studies, and real-world problem-solving exercises to help them apply their knowledge in practical situations. In Moscow State Linguistic University, as well as in many other Universities of the Russian Federation, numerous discussion platforms have been started to launch role-play students' discussions in foreign languages on current issues. They can be denominated as UNO Model, or African Model, or Middle East Model, etc. Organizational forms can include role-played debates, press-conferences, political leaders imitated interviews, etc.

– *Building cognitive flexibility.* Students' ability to adapt and adjust to new situations is trained. They are taught to keep their minds open and active by learning new things, exploring new ideas, and staying curious about the world around them. Students are encouraged to stay up-to-date on current trends and developments in their professional fields. They are engaged in activities that challenge their minds and in extensive reading. The importance to try to think outside the box and see problems from multiple angles is emphasized.

– *Consolidating knowledge.* Massive and various information students get, both linguistic and professional, is constantly revised and recycled to let it stay. Otherwise, it tends to be hugely diminished or even completely lost as soon as the semester ends and corresponding exam is passed. Vocabulary snowballs and situation remodeling are among those technologies that are practiced to enlarge vocabulary and expand factual awareness of students. For the new information to integrate efficiently, connections are made between the newly acquired knowledge and the old one.

– *Fostering critical thinking.* Students are encouraged to analyze information, evaluate evidence and arguments, and think critically about complex issues. Opportunities are provided for them to question assumptions, consider alternative perspectives, and make informed judgments. Students are taught how to recognize truth and fake, fact opinion, how to look for proofs in various sources, how to compare

information from different sources, how to test sources of information for reliability and trustworthiness, etc. Also, students are offered to practice looking at situations from different perspectives and considering various options before making decisions.

– *Developing problem-solving skills.* Students are taught how to identify problems, gather relevant information, develop and evaluate potential solutions, and make decisions based on logic, sound reasoning and proven evidence. Besides, they are instructed how to break down complex problems into smaller, manageable parts, and how to come up with creative solutions and later be able to test them out to see what works best.

– *Promoting effective communication.* Students are taught to improve their written and verbal communication skills through assignments that require clear and coherent writing, presentations, and group discussions.

– *Collaborative learning.* Students are encouraged to work together in group projects, collaborative assignments, and peer review exercises to develop their teamwork and effective communication skills. Students are engaged to work in mini-groups, in pairs, or research multi-staged collectively performed projects.

– *Supporting metacognition.* Metacognitive skills allow individuals to monitor and control their own thinking processes. These skills include being able to plan, evaluate, correct one's thinking and problem-solving processes, as well

as being aware of one's strengths and weaknesses in these areas. These skills are important for effective learning. Students are helped to develop metacognitive skills by encouraging reflection on their learning process, setting goals, monitoring their progress, regulating and adjusting their strategies as needed.

– *Providing feedback.* Students are offered constructive feedback on their work to help them identify areas for improvement and further development of their cognitive abilities.

By implementing these strategies and creating a supportive learning environment, university professors can help students develop cognitive competence and prepare them for success in their academic and professional pursuits.

Cognitive competence can be defined in terms of cognitive skills. Teaching cognitive competence means mastering *two types of skills*: structural cognitive skills and constructive cognitive skills [Дмитриева, 2019].

The *text-work algorithm* that makes it possible for all the cognitive skills to develop comprises three stages: *pre-reading stage, intro-reading stage and post-reading stage.* The cognitive model of discourse processing is presented in the works of the University of Amsterdam professor T. A. van Dijk [Ван Дейк, 2000]. Adequate understanding of the text depends on how well students know the situation described in the text. Individual situational models are based on student's personal awareness

Table 1

COGNITIVE SKILLS

1. *Constructive cognitive skills:*	• determine the topic of the news discourse using the headline
	• find culturally significant information
	• find, analyze, compare information about new facts based on professional experience
	• find connections between parts of the text
	• recognize the primary and the secondary part of the text
	• fully and adequately understand the content of the text
	• identify semantic milestones in the text
	• set connections between the content of the text and the broader political context
2. *Lingvocognitive skills:*	• see whether the headline matches the principal message of the text
	• evaluate the means of influencing the reader when implementing a speech strategy
	• identify means of concealing information
	• determine the means of argumentation
	• correlate neutral terms with their political counterparts
	• explain the meaning of euphemisms and replace them with neutral equivalents
	• assess the author's attitude towards the described events
	• predict the further political development of the problem based on the information received
	• see what actions the author encourages the reader to take

Педагогические науки

COGNITIVE READING ALGORITHM

Pre-reading stage	Reconstruction of the overall information about the situation
Intro-reading stage	New information is added to the reconstructed picture
Post-reading stage	New information is integrated into the general model of the situation. The whole knowledge is updated

accumulating previous intellectual experience and background knowledge in the professionally associated sphere. The pre-text stage aims at reconstructing the overall information about the situation. It starts with observing extra-linguistic visuals around the text: headline, subtitle, photos, pictures. The process inspires inter-text and hypertext associations that are shared in the group and helps activating all the preceding relevant knowledge about the situation. At the same time, the contextual expectations are formed, which minimize further cognitive efforts to process the information contained in the text. In fact, adequate interpretation of the text is based on the efficiency of this stage.

Intro-reading stage provides inter-text reference, when mentioned realia, events, persons, names, etc. are explicated. Both stages build up the student's cognitive environment, which includes all the facts within the framework of the situation that are accessible to the memory. As a result, the entire system of knowledge of the student on the situation is updated.

At the final stage (post-reading), the reconstruction of the situation takes place again, but now the new information is integrated into the general model of the situation.

Oral discourse in socio-political sphere can exist in different formal representations: official speech / address of political leaders, debate, interview, press-conference, etc. In terms of cognitive algorithm, the work goes through the same three stages as in the case of written text. They can be called *pre-watching stage, intro-watching stage and post-watching stage*. However, in a case like that we should take into consideration extra-linguistic factors that really influence the perception of discourse, mainly audio and visual information that, in fact, plays the dominant role for the spectator. Relevant audio characteristics of the speech include speed, pitch of tone, volume of voice, pauses, length of sentences, emphatic means. Relevant visual characteristics include behavior of the speaker, such as gestures, mimics, mood representations, reactions to audience's feedback, etc. Behaviour of the public should also be analyzed: different forms of interaction, signals of approval / disapproval, applause, chanting, standing up from the seats, etc. The most essential idea here is that all these means are tightly and directly connected with the key messages of the political performance. More than that, they are, in fact, adjusted to its purposes. Diligent class work analysis of audio and visual speech characteristics contributes to cognitive algorithms.

Emphasis is placed on competences aimed at constructing knowledge. The role of constructive cognitive competence is growing.

Mastering socio-political sciences provides favourable conditions to build up cognitive skills. Nowadays in the fast developing society, there emerge new challenges and in order to meet them, cognitive skills should also enhance and get more complicated. To take that into account, the department of Linguistics and Political Communications developed a teaching model of forming cognitive competence.

The cognitive model is being formed step by step passing through *three types of activities*: receptive, productive and productive- creative. Receptive activity covering reading and listening is followed by productive activities presupposing speaking and writing on the basis of the received information. Further on, it turns into productive-creative activity (speaking and reading) on the basis of added information, expressed opinions and assessments, analysis and structuralizing.

GENERAL COGNITIVE MODEL

Receptive → skills	Productive → skills	Productive-creative skills
reading listening	speaking writing	speaking writing
	reproduction of received information	recreation of information

The cognitive model is implemented by means of *knowledge-based textbooks*, compiled in the process of a decade-long teamwork (nearly 30 authors have been involved). The textbooks, teaching different languages, are united by the idea of a common cognitive core, that is understood as essential basic professional information (topics, approaches, interpretations, classifications, exercises, terminological glossaries). This innovative

know-how turned out to be very productive and time-efficient in conditions of rigidly restricted academic hours.

As illustrations, we can offer such popular textbooks as *Political Issues of a Global Age, Insights into social issues, Insights into Africa, New challenges need new answers, Digital society* [Гладчук, 2018; Харламова, Демидова, 2022; Харламова, Кулакова, 2024; Харламова, Кивилева, 2020; Харламова, Самойленко, 2024] and a great many of others aimed at the English language. On the other hand, there are textbooks based on the German, French, Spanish, Finnish, Arabic, Chinese, etc. languages taught at our Department, e.g. *Politische Landeskunde Deutschlands und Russlands*, *The Finnish language: translation of social and economic texts* [Гришенкова, Паль, 2014; Братчикова, 2017]. The total number of the textbooks within 2014–2024 exceeds 80. The full pack of the Department-produced textbooks is available in the students library of the University.

The stereotypical textbook consists of units (modules) that can be used in the learning process either in the due succession or in another order depending on the current situation. They can also be combined with materials from mass media or other sources.

The textbooks have authentic social-political materials and a unified system of exercises aimed at developing and consolidating cognitive skills. Students gradually master different types of reading depending upon the purposes (search for facts, general information or full comprehension): scanning, skimming, academic and critical types of reading. They all observe the three stages of reading. Speaking exercises develop students' ability to interpret, assess, debate, convince enacting the relevant information and vocabulary.

The textbook contains sections with explanations and comments to the texts and also keys to difficult exercises. That facilitates the use of the textbooks for independent studies.

The idea of the common cognitive core is also very productive in terms of compiling new textbooks. For instance, a textbook about the UNO on the basis of the English language which has been successfully used for teaching for many years, can be reproduced as a Spanish or German version. In this case, we can witness considerable intensification of the learning process thanks to the common cognitive core having been formed in English.

Moreover, the common cognitive core serves as a hook to give rise to multilateral growth of professional information gained in different languages that the students are mastering. From linguistic point of view, this method is also efficient because it results in constructing relevant professional glossaries that exist in three or more languages (Russian, English, one or two more foreign languages). They are self-made and shared by students, connected with the topics covered, most probably emotionally coloured and that is why easier learnt. In addition, interlingual connections and parallels, that become exposed in this case, are also important. For example, students pointedly pick up political neologisms, find their definitions and see what corresponding lexemes exist in other languages.

CONCLUSION

Cognitive competence, which is seen as increasingly essential for professionals to succeed in their careers and adapt to new challenges in the future, needs a thorough attention in the process of vocationally oriented training.

In a cognitive perspective, language is seen as a mentally constructed system with learners developing their inter-language skills through cognitive processes, such as problem solving, cognitive flexibility and the application of learning strategies which develop through communication, collaboration and guided activities. Within the cognitive paradigm for students of political sciences the following strategies are essential: encouraging active learning; building cognitive flexibility; consolidating knowledge; fostering critical thinking; developing problem-solving skills; promoting effective communication and collaborative learning; supporting metacognition.

Forming cognitive paradigm means mastering two types of skills, structural cognitive and constructive cognitive, and comprises three stages of work (receptive, productive and productive-creative). Special emphasis is placed on constructive cognitive skills. The teaching model enacts a complex of knowledge-based textbooks in different foreign languages united by the idea of a common cognitive core. All teaching techniques are supposed to be well balanced and to follow certain logistics of forming cognitive skills.

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66

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ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ОБ АВТОРАХ

Харламова Наталья Сергеевна
кандидат педагогических наук, доцент,
заведующий кафедрой лингвистики и профессиональной коммуникации в области политических наук
Института международных отношений и социально-политических наук
Московского государственного лингвистического университета

Иванкина Галина Александровна
кандидат филологических наук, доцент,
доцент кафедры лингвистики и профессиональной коммуникации в области политических наук
Института международных отношений и социально-политических наук
Московского государственного лингвистического университета

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kharlamova Natalya Sergeevna
PhD (Pedagogy), Associate Professor
Head of the Department of Linguistics and Political Communications
of the Institute of International Relations and Political Sciences (Faculty)
Moscow State Linguistic University

Ivankina Galina Alexandrovna
PhD (Philology)
Associate Professor of the Department of Linguistics and Political Communications
of the Institute of International Relations and Political Sciences (Faculty)
Moscow State Linguistic University