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## Criteria and Indicators of Foreign Language Teachers' Soft Communicative Skills

The article explores the crucial role of soft communicative skills for English language teachers, emphasizing their significance within the broader framework of soft skills essential for effective teaching. It highlights that beyond simply transmitting information, teachers must engage, inspire, and connect with students on various levels, employing both verbal and non-verbal cues, active listening, adaptability, and creating a supportive learning environment. It stresses the importance of these skills in addressing modern trends in education, particularly in Ukraine's efforts to foster a multicultural environment for Euro integration processes. The research tasks outlined include clarifying the terminological framework, characterizing soft communication skills as a component of soft skills, and highlighting the importance of obtaining these skills. Theoretical foundations from various fields such as philology, psychology, sociology, and pedagogy are examined to provide insight into the complexity of communication as a scientific issue. The study identifies promising prospects in improving curricula and courses in foreign language teaching, stimulating further scholarly work in the field, and enhancing pedagogical practice. It emphasizes that soft communication skills are essential not only for the work of foreign language teachers but also for the functioning of the entire educational institution. The article presents a comprehensive list of criteria and indicators of foreign language teachers' soft communication skills, including emotional intelligence, proficiency in the foreign language, communicative skills, and personal effectiveness. These criteria serve as a basis for further research into the methods and conditions for developing these essential skills in future foreign language teachers. The study highlights the significance of soft communicative skills for foreign language teachers and underscores the need for continued research and development in this area to enhance pedagogical practice and improve the quality of foreign language instruction.

**Key words:** *effective teaching, foreign language teachers, soft skills, soft communicative skills.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Soft communicative skills are indispensable for English language teachers as they navigate the spectrum of soft skills essential for successful teaching. Within the realm of education, particularly language instruction, the ability to communicate clearly, empathetically, and dynamically holds paramount importance. This introduction delves into the significance of effective communication within the broader framework of soft skills for English language educators.

English language teachers serve as conduits of knowledge and catalysts for linguistic and cultural understanding. Beyond mere dissemination of information, they must engage, inspire, and connect with their students on multiple levels. Effective communication encompasses verbal and non-verbal cues, active listening, adaptability, and the capacity to foster a supportive learning environment. It involves not only the transmission of language concepts but also the cultivation of critical thinking, creativity, and confidence in learners.

Within the spectrum of soft skills, effective communication stands as a cornerstone, influencing teaching methodologies, student engagement, and overall classroom dynamics. Through clear instructions, constructive feedback, and encouraging interactions, teachers can empower students to articulate their thoughts fluently, comprehend complex concepts, and collaborate effectively. Moreover, adept communication fosters mutual respect, rapport, and trust between teachers and students, essential for fostering a conducive learning atmosphere.

This discourse underscores the pivotal role of soft communicative skills within the multifaceted domain of soft skills for English language educators. By honing these skills, teachers can not only enhance their instructional efficacy but also enrich the educational experience, nurturing proficient language users and confident communicators.

The relevance lies in the modern trends of democratization and humanization in secondary education, necessitating enhanced professional training for future teachers. Pedagogical activities involve a multitude of communicative acts, essential for both speaking processes and continual interaction among educational participants in offline and online formats.

Foreign language teaching holds significant social importance, aligning with Ukraine's goal of fostering a multicultural environment for Euro integration processes. Soft communicative skills of future teachers are crucial soft skills, facilitating connections, relationship-building, teamwork organization, fostering relationships irrespective of socio-economic status, religion, or nationality, and creating multilingual educational environments. These skills are vital for successful interaction with students, colleagues, administration, parents, and the community, contributing to career growth and professional development.

Despite legislative recognition, the formation of soft communication skills in foreign language teachers within higher education institutions remains largely unexplored. Resolving contradictions in educational practice, such as the disconnect between recognizing the teacher's role and the inadequacies of educational environments, underscores the relevance of this study. The research object is the process of training foreign language teachers in higher education institutions.

The research subject soft communication skills in foreign language teachers in higher education institutions

The objective of the research is to determine the impact of scientifically substantiated and experimentally verified teaching methods on the development of flexible communication skills in future foreign language teachers and their proficiency level in acquiring these soft skills.

In accordance with the aim, the research tasks are outlined as follows:

- to clarify the terminological framework of the study;
- to characterize soft communication skills as a component of soft skills;
- to clarify the importance of obtaining soft communicative skills.

To address the research objectives, the theoretical method was employed. The theoretical aspects of the research included analysis and synthesis of information from various scientific, educational, pedagogical, methodological and psychological sources. This was aimed at theoretically justifying the problem of developing soft communicative skills in foreign language teachers. Additionally, there was systematic categorization, comparison, and generalization of concepts used in scientific research to determine the terminological basis of the study and characterize the essence and structure of the professional profile of foreign language teachers. Furthermore, the role of soft skills in the teacher's professional activity was identified.

The research materials include existing scientific researches on soft skills, communication skills and their relevance to foreign language teaching, researches on effective communication strategies for language educators and their impact on student learning outcomes.

Communication skills are among the most complex scientific issues. Communication is a sphere encompassing all natural processes; thus, it is of interest to scholars in the fields of philology, psychology, sociology, and pedagogy. The theoretical foundations of communication as a collective action aimed at exchanging ideas, gathering around the resolution of certain issues, transmitting data, etc., have been studied by Y. Kosenko, M. Pryshchak, V. Ryzun, Ye. Romanenko, M. Turiyanska, O. Tsubova, Ye. Tsimbalenko, T. Goban-

Klas, Y. Masuda, and others. The media sphere of communication has been explored by V. Bebyk, N. Bilan, L. Gorodenko, N. Zrazhevskaya, V. Ivanov, Ye. Tsymbalenko, H. Innis, and others. The effectiveness of communication has been investigated by A. Kazmiruk, M. Malinka, O. Sakaliuk, T. Tarnavska, L. Knodel, and others.

Questions regarding the preparation of future professionals for their professional activities have been addressed by both domestic researchers (A. Stadnii, S. Holod) and foreign ones (Steinberg R. J., Horvath J. A.; Walls R. T., Nardi A. H., Minden A. M., Hoffman N.). Particularly, the professional preparation of future philology-oriented teachers has been the focus of research by L. Zelenska, O. Kovalenko, I. Kostikova, O. Osova, and T. Sobchenko. Issues related to the development of "soft skills" in future professionals have been raised by O. Glazunova, T. Voloshyna, V. Korolchuk, K. Koval, and K. Korsikova. The necessity and objectivity of fostering "soft skills" in future teachers have been emphasized in studies conducted by I. Osadchenko, O. Chukhno, I. Shupta, and others.

## 2. CRITERIA AND INDICATORS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' SOFT COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS.

It should be noted that soft communication skills are based on the knowledge paradigm. Taking into account global educational trends in order to improve students' performance, a modern foreign language teacher should possess a range of knowledge (the ability to recognise, generate, present, communicate, reflect on, verify and apply knowledge claims within established norms in key subject areas, etc.) and skills (reflexivity and critical thinking; pedagogical skills; people management skills; administrative and managerial skills; self-governance skills; communication, facilitation, technical and innovation and entrepreneurial skills; social and emotional intelligence, etc.).

In view of the above, it is worth paying attention to the model of teacher education in Ukraine, which ensures the development of a range of professional competences of the future teacher. It should be noted that teacher education should be aimed at educational/pedagogical progressivism. This means the following:

- basing learning on the needs, interests and stages of development of the student;
- teaching students the skills necessary to study any subject, rather than focusing on teaching a particular discipline;
- promoting discovery and self-learning through active participation;
- have students working on projects that meet their interests and that integrate disciplines into socially relevant topics;
- promoting the values of community, cooperation, tolerance, justice and democratic equality.

Soft communication skills are important not only for the work of foreign language teachers, but also for the

functioning of the entire educational institution. Thus, the effectiveness of an educational institution, its structural units, and team members is facilitated by nothing less than communication. According to O. Sakaliuk, the importance and necessity of effective communication in an educational institution is evidenced by a number of provisions, namely: 1) communication is one of the main conditions for the existence and development of the organisation; 2) communication interacts with the external environment, determining the level and quality of management decision-making; 3) communication characterises the state of the internal environment of the organisation by ensuring the functioning and interaction of individuals, structure, goals, technology and tasks of the organisation; 4) communication creates an informal structure in the process of functioning of the organisation and contributes to the convergence of the formal structure with it [3, p.198].

Soft communication skills are also determined by the communication style. In turn, communication style is defined as a set of linguistic indicators of a person in the act of communication. The style means special methods of obtaining information, individual methods of its interpretation, specific methods of expressing a response, and feedback. Communication style is an indicator of how a person is organised in the world of social relations. On the other hand, communication style is an indicator of how to interpret information and turn it into action, behaviour in social judgements. It is very important to combine the "right" styles in a context that is not reduced to a single style [4].

It should be noted that an indicator of flexible communication skills is effective communication. T. Ternavska notes that it is effective communication that significantly affects the cognitive sphere of a student's personality and allows them to understand the following: what situations in the student group and in real life cause tension, anxiety, fear, self-doubt; peculiarities of their behaviour and reasons for self-doubt; how his/her behaviour is perceived by other people, whether it is assessed objectively and what consequences it has; own motives, aspirations, needs and the degree of their adequacy, realism and constructiveness; peculiarities of relationships with people during a conflict and the ability to resolve it; own role and participation in the emergence of feelings of anxiety, fear, self-doubt, and the ability to prevent their recurrence in the future.

In general, it should be noted that soft skills allow future foreign language teachers to succeed in the profession, to realise themselves as a personality in a rapidly changing educational environment [2, p.257]. Soft skills ensure the process of self-realisation of the future teacher; contribute to the productive performance of his/her professional activity, and the implementation of hard skills as technical skills related to activities in the field of pedagogical technologies.

Soft skills in the work of a foreign language teacher are

- personal skills and social competences that improve labour productivity in order to achieve success;
- professional skills that ensure successful interaction of the teacher with all participants of educational interaction within the framework of partnership pedagogy;

- skills that are closely related to intrapersonal skills that determine the success of a person in performing professional functions.

Thus, the classifications of soft skills mentioned above have included communication skills as a mandatory skill, but they interpret it from different perspectives:

- communicative skills;
- contactability;
- basic communication skills (possession of a communicative and personal resource);
- ability to negotiate;
- communication skills;
- language and communication skills.

Given the analysis of the literature mentioned above, soft communication skills are not limited to the process of speaking, as it may seem at first glance. The skills under study are manifested at the level of social communication of a foreign language teacher who communicates today with students, colleagues, and the public through various forms and channels of communication both in the process of face-to-face and distance learning. Soft communication skills of a foreign language teacher involve not only the qualitative and complete transfer of foreign language knowledge, but also the organisation of effective communication in solving professional and life challenges. We can state that soft communication skills of a foreign language teacher include the following components:

- the ability to ensure normal human life in society in different situations;

- skills and abilities of social interaction, including adaptation in different situations, demonstrating the ability to communicate, make decisions, transfer conflicts into a productive sphere; skills of decision-making, negotiation, and people management);

- skills that allow you to find a common language with other people, establish and maintain relationships with them, be able to convey your own thoughts; skills of effective communicators and leaders, which are necessary both in everyday life and in professional life;

- communication skills, ability to be flexible and creative in the workplace;

- the ability to “negotiate” and “find a common language”, use and read “sign language”, understand a certain context or situation, start and end communication correctly, listen, summarise and summarise, control own emotions, cope with stress factors, influence the emotions of others, make presentations and self-presentations, teamwork skills;

- social ability to maintain a conversation, effective behaviour in critical situations when communicating

with other people, which includes such qualities as listening, persuasion, argumentation, networking, negotiation, public speaking, teamwork, all types of result-oriented activities;

- the ability to work in a team, negotiate, communicate effectively using various tools (within the team, with clients, managers), interpersonal communication, the ability to persuade, resolve conflict situations, make group decisions, and deliver presentations. These skills are especially important when working at a distance (business correspondence, conflict resolution, group decision-making;

- the ability to clearly formulate thoughts (messages), friendly communication and good manners, interact with different types of people, structure and moderate meetings (discussions), listen and take into account all points of view, respond reasonably, clearly, on time and politely, prepare presentations and present them well, take into account cultural and international peculiarities;

- sociability and the ability to work and interact in a team;

- possession of communicative and personal resources; ability to listen, persuade, argue, public speaking skills, self-presentation, teamwork, effective behaviour in uncertain critical situations, tolerance to uncertainty;

- communication skills/

Soft communication skills of foreign language teachers are necessary for them in the process of implementing scientific work. The study revealed a high level of the need for future foreign language teachers to master scientific literacy skills, which ensures the effectiveness of the teacher’s academic work. Improving future teachers’ scientific literacy skills, which requires teachers to master the competencies for the development of educational material and students’ abilities. Based on the PISA 2015 indicators, scientific literacy competencies cover three aspects, namely identifying scientific problems, explaining scientific phenomena and drawing scientific conclusions. These three competences have indicators related to soft skills. Science education aims to develop scientific literacy [8].

Therefore, soft communication skills are essential for the implementation of foreign language teachers’ scientific work. When studying science, students are required to acquire soft skills, which also correspond to the component of scientific literacy. By mastering effective communication skills, students are expected to be able to realise their scientific literacy abilities in line with the goals of foreign language teachers’ professional training.

Based on the study of scientific literature, classifications of soft skills, and communicative processes in the organisation of education, we have identified criteria and indicators of foreign language teachers’ soft communication skills (Table 1.).

Table 1

**Criteria and indicators of foreign language teachers' soft communication skills**

№	Criteria	Indicators
1	Emotional intelligence	– forward-looking orientation – creativity – emotional stability
2	Foreign language skills	– knowledge of the theoretical framework, thesaurus – aesthetics, correctness and appropriateness of speech
3	Communicative skills	– accessibility of presenting your ideas and thoughts in a foreign language – confidence in speaking and performing – establishing contacts with other people, making a positive impression on them
4	Personal efficiency	– self-management – effective behaviour in critical situations when communicating with other people (listening, persuasion, argumentation, networking, self-presentation, teamwork)

The definition of criteria and indicators of foreign language teachers "soft communication skills" necessitates further scientific research to substantiate the methods and conditions for the development of the studied soft skills in foreign language teachers.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

The study has found that soft communicative skills of foreign language teachers imply that they have emotional intelligence, proficiency in a foreign language at the appropriate level, communication skills and personal effectiveness.

Soft communication skills in the spectrum of soft skills of future foreign language teachers ensure the perspective orientation of their activities; creativity, emotional stability; mastery of theoretical framework and thesaurus; aesthetics, correctness and expediency of their speech; expressiveness of ideas and thoughts in a foreign language; confidence in speaking and performing; establishing contacts with other people, making a positive impression on them; having self-management skills, effective behavior in critical situations when communicating with other people (listening, persuasion, argumentation, networking, self-presentation, teamwork).

The research on soft communication skills in foreign language teachers offers promising prospects:

1. The research results can serve as a basis for improving curricula and courses in foreign language teaching at higher education institutions, thereby enhancing the quality of teacher preparation.

2. Conducting this research may stimulate interest in further scholarly work in this field, such as studying the impact of different teaching methods on the formation of communication skills in teachers or investigating the effectiveness of new technologies in the educational process.

Thus, the research on the role of soft communication skills in foreign language teachers holds significant potential for enhancing pedagogical practice and improving the quality of foreign language instruction.

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## КРИТЕРІЇ ТА ПОКАЗНИКИ КОМУНІКАЦІЙНИХ НАВИЧОК ВЧИТЕЛІВ ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ

У статті досліджується вирішальна роль м'яких комунікативних навичок для вчителів англійської мови, підкреслюється їхнє значення в ширшому контексті м'яких навичок, необхідних для ефективного викладання. Вона підкреслює, що окрім простої передачі інформації, вчителі повинні залучати, надихати і налагоджувати зв'язок зі студентами на різних рівнях, використовуючи вербальні і невербальні сигнали, активне слухання, адаптивність і створення сприятливого навчального середовища. У дослідженні підкреслюється важливість цих навичок у контексті сучасних тенденцій в освіті, зокрема, у зусиллях України, спрямованих на формування мультикультурного середовища для євроінтеграційних процесів. Окремі завдання дослідження включають уточнення термінологічного апарату, характеристику навичок м'якої комунікації як складової «м'яких навичок», а також висвітлення важливості набуття цих навичок. Розглянуто теоретичні засади з різних галузей, таких як філологія, психологія, соціологія та педагогіка, що дають змогу зрозуміти складність комунікації як наукової проблеми. Дослідження визначає багатобічючі перспективи в удосконаленні навчальних програм і курсів з викладання іноземних мов, стимулюючи подальшу наукову роботу в цій галузі та вдосконалюючи педагогічну практику. Підкреслюється, що навички м'якого спілкування є важливими не лише для роботи викладачів іноземних мов, але й для функціонування всього навчального закладу. У статті представлено вичерпний перелік критеріїв та показників сформованості навичок м'якої комунікації вчителів іноземних мов, серед яких емоційний інтелект, рівень володіння іноземною мовою, комунікативні навички та особиста ефективність. Ці критерії слугують основою для подальшого дослідження методів та умов розвитку цих важливих навичок у майбутніх учителів іноземних мов. Дослідження висвітлює важливість м'яких комунікативних навичок для вчителів іноземних мов і підкреслює необхідність подальших досліджень і розробок у цій галузі для вдосконалення педагогічної практики та підвищення якості викладання іноземних мов.

**Ключові слова:** ефективне викладання, викладачі іноземних мов, м'які навички, м'які комунікативні навички.

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