

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: CONCEPTUAL EVOLUTION AND APPLICABILITY TO EFL TEACHING IN ECONOMICS

Komilova Dildora G‘ulamjanovna

PhD researcher, Gulistan State University

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20839487>

**Abstract:** *This paper examines the conceptual evolution of professional communicative competence from its communicative origins to its contemporary application in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction. Drawing on a comparative analysis of international, and Uzbek scholarly frameworks, the study delineates three developmental phases in professional communicative competence theory and argues that teaching English to prospective economists requires an integrated, professionally oriented competence model rather than a general linguistic approach. The paper further proposes an authorial definition of professional communicative competence tailored specifically to future economists within Uzbekistan’s higher education context.*

**Keywords:** *professional communicative competence, ESP, Economics, education, communicative competence, EFL, higher education.*

In an era of accelerating globalisation and the rapid expansion of knowledge-based economies, the capacity to communicate professionally in a foreign language has become one of the most sought-after attributes of a competitive specialist. For economists and business professionals in particular, English is no longer merely a supplementary academic skill; it has evolved into an indispensable working instrument for conducting international negotiations, analysing cross-border financial reports, preparing investment proposals, and engaging with global partners. Uzbekistan’s deepening integration into international economic structures, combined with the strategic linguistic policy directives issued by President Sh.M. Mirziyoyev requiring graduates of all educational institutions to command at least two foreign languages has placed the question of professionally oriented foreign language instruction at the very centre of higher education reform.

Yet despite the clarity of this policy imperative, a persistent conceptual ambiguity pervades both research and practice: the term “professional communicative competence” continues to be used interchangeably with “communicative competence”, “language competence”, and “professional competence”, without rigorous differentiation. This conflation undermines curriculum design, hampers assessment, and ultimately leaves students underprepared for the real communicative demands of their future careers. The present paper addresses this gap by tracing the conceptual genealogy of professional communicative competence, mapping the contributions of international, CIS, and Uzbek scholars, and proposing a refined definition that is both theoretically grounded and practically applicable to economics education in Uzbekistan.

The scholarly journey towards the concept of professional communicative competence can be usefully organised into three distinct yet interconnected phases, each building upon and refining the insights of its predecessor.

The first phase, which may be termed the sociolinguistic foundation, was inaugurated by Dell Hymes’s landmark critique of Chomsky’s purely grammatical notion of linguistic competence. Hymes contended that true communicative ability transcends grammatical correctness: a speaker must know not only what is linguistically possible but also what is socially appropriate, contextually feasible, and pragmatically effective. This insight that language use is inherently situated in social contexts laid the indispensable groundwork for all subsequent competence theorising. Building on

Hymes, Canale and Swain proposed their influential four-component model, comprising grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. Their framework established a principled architecture for describing what it means to communicate successfully in a second or foreign language.

The second phase saw the extension of communicative competence theory into professional and domain-specific contexts. Dudley-Evans and St John, working within the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) tradition, argued compellingly that language instruction for non-philological learners must be subordinated to the professional needs and domain-specific functions of the target discourse community. Mere grammatical knowledge, however accurate, is insufficient if the learner cannot navigate the genres, registers, and communicative conventions of their professional field. This professional turn in competence theory set the stage for a more fine-grained, functionally grounded understanding of what prospective economists, engineers, and other specialists actually need to be able to do in English.

The third phase is characterised by structural elaboration and contextual adaptation, particularly within the CIS scholarly tradition. Pustovalova contributed a four-component model of foreign-language communicative competence for non-philological students motivational-axiological, cognitive, communicative-activity-based, and reflective-evaluative components that has since been widely adopted and adapted across the region. Petrova extended this framework to six components (linguistic, sociolinguistic, verbal-cognitive, subject-matter, professional, and discursive), while Krivtsova offered the empirically grounded observation that no fewer than sixty percent of an economist's working day consists of communicative acts negotiations, report analysis, correspondence conducted in a foreign language, thereby foregrounding the professional-communicative dimension as the primary object of instruction. Abdullayeva, writing from within the Uzbek context, further enriched this conception by incorporating international diplomatic etiquette and intercultural communicative norms as constitutive elements of professional communicative competence.

The foregoing survey reveals a trajectory of progressive refinement: from a sociolinguistic broadening of grammatical competence (Hymes; Canale and Swain) to a domain-specific, functionally grounded professional competence (Dudley-Evans; Pustovalova; Petrova; Krivtsova) to a culturally and institutionally situated professional communicative competence. A comparative reading of these frameworks yields several points of convergence that are particularly relevant to the Uzbek higher education context.

First, across all traditions, professional communicative competence is understood not as a static repository of linguistic knowledge but as a dynamic, adaptive, and continuously developing capacity. This dynamic character implies that professional communicative competence cannot be 'delivered' through one-off instruction; it must be cultivated through sustained, contextualised practice in authentic or authenticity-approximating communicative situations.

Second, the professional dimension is understood as irreducibly social and interactional: professional communicative competence encompasses not merely the ability to produce grammatically correct utterances, but to perform communicative acts that are professionally appropriate, genre-conforming, and pragmatically effective within the discourse community of one's field.

Third, and most pertinent to the present research, no existing framework has been specifically tailored to the needs of future economists operating within Uzbekistan's particular socioeconomic and institutional context a context characterised by intensive internationalisation, the demands of

digital economic communication, and the growing imperative of cross-cultural business negotiation.

On the basis of this analysis, the following authorial definition is proposed: professional communicative competence of future economists in English is an integrative, personally and professionally grounded capacity that enables the specialist to adapt to international labour market requirements, to make autonomous decisions in cross-cultural business environments, and to employ English as a genuine working instrument in economic analysis, auditing, and the creation of business projects sustained by a commitment to continuous self-development through digital technologies.

This definition deliberately foregrounds three dimensions absent from or underspecified in earlier frameworks: the dimension of autonomous decision-making in cross-cultural contexts; the dimension of digital-mediated professional development; and the dimension of authentic instrument-use (as opposed to mere communicative participation). Together, these dimensions reflect the realities of twenty-first-century economic practice and provide a principled basis for curriculum design, instructional methodology, and assessment in Uzbekistan’s higher education institutions.

The proposed definition carries several concrete implications for the teaching of English to economics students in Uzbekistan. Most fundamentally, it mandates a shift away from general English instruction towards an ESP approach in which language learning is consistently embedded in the genres, tasks, and communicative situations of economic practice: reading and critically evaluating financial reports, drafting business correspondence, preparing and delivering professional presentations, conducting simulated negotiations, and analysing case studies drawn from international business contexts.

The curriculum should be structured around the authentic communicative demands identified in the target professional situation analysis an approach that aligns with Robinson’s needs-analysis framework and with the recommendations of leading Uzbek researchers including Tursunova, who advocates an interdisciplinary integrative-differential approach; Normatova, who proposes collaborative learning techniques for the development of oral professional discourse; and Yunusova, who demonstrates the efficacy of mobile technologies in forming professional competence in the economics classroom.

The concept of professional communicative competence has undergone significant theoretical development since its communicative origins in the 1970s. The three-phase evolution traced in this paper from Hymes and Canale-Swain’s sociolinguistic framework, through Dudley-Evans’s ESP orientation and the CIS tradition’s structural elaboration, to the emergent Uzbek contribution reveals a progressive deepening of understanding of what professional foreign-language communication actually entails. The authorial definition proposed here synthesises these insights and adapts them to the specific conditions of economics education in Uzbekistan, providing a theoretically coherent and practically actionable foundation for curriculum design, instruction, and assessment. Future research should focus on operationalising this definition through the development of empirically validated diagnostic instruments and on testing the instructional interventions derived from it in controlled experimental conditions.

### **Adabiyotlar, References, Литературы:**

1.Canale, M., & Swain, M. Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1980. P. 1–47.

2. Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge University Press. 1998
3. Hymes, D. On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics*. Penguin. 1972. pp. 269–293
4. Krivtsova, O. V. *Formation of professional communicative competence of students of economic specialties*. Candidate dissertation. Russian International Academy of Tourism, Moscow. 2008.
5. Normatova, N. N. *Development of oral speech skills of economics students in English language teaching*. PhD dissertation abstract. Termez State University, Samarkand. 2021.
6. Petrova, G. A. *Formation of foreign-language professional communicative competence of students*. Candidate dissertation abstract. Tomsk State Pedagogical University, Novokuznetsk. 2010.
7. Pustovalova, Zh. S. *Formation of foreign-language communicative competence of students of non-linguistic universities*. Candidate dissertation abstract. Kazan State Conservatory, Ulyanovsk. 2013
8. Robinson, P. *ESP today: A practitioner’s guide*. Prentice Hall. 1991.
9. Tursunova, U. A. Mechanism of developing professionally oriented communicative competence in future economists. *Oriental Renaissance*, 2(4/2), 2022. P. 858–859.
10. Yunusova, F. Kh. *Methods of forming students’ professional competence in English teaching using mobile technologies*. PhD dissertation abstract. Tashkent State University of Economics. 2025