

## **COMPETENCE AND COMPETENCY IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF TERMINOLOGICAL COMPETENCY**

Aripova Sayida Abdulaxatovna

Assistant Lecturer, Department of Languages and Humanities

Andijan State Technical Institute

### **Abstract**

The article examines the theoretical foundations of the competency-based approach in higher professional education with a focus on terminological competency in technical university students. The study analyses the concepts of “competence” and “competency” in pedagogical and methodological literature, emphasizing their distinction and interrelation. Drawing on the works of Irina A. Zimnyaya, Aelita K. Markova, Eduard F. Zeer, and other scholars, as well as the frameworks of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and Noam Chomsky, the article argues that competence functions as a psycho-cognitive resource, whereas competency reflects its practical implementation in professional activity.

**Keywords:** Competence, competency, terminological competency, competency-based approach, professional education, technical university, language education.

### **Introduction**

The modernisation of higher professional education has consistently placed the competency-based approach at the centre of curricular and methodological debate. This approach, oriented toward measurable outcomes of educational activity, responds to the widening gap between theoretical preparation and readiness for professional practice that characterises graduates of technical universities. A substantial part of graduates who possess the required volume of disciplinary knowledge nonetheless experience significant difficulties when applying that knowledge under real working conditions. This contradiction necessitates a reconceptualisation of educational objectives and the development of standards oriented toward the formation of competencies as integrative characteristics of the learner’s personality [1].

Within this framework, the terminological dimension of professional competency occupies a special position. Technical discourse is constituted by specialised vocabulary,

and the ability to operate with professional terms – not merely to recognise them, but to deploy them accurately in professional communication – marks the boundary between passive knowledge and active professional ability. It is precisely this boundary that terminological competency is designed to address. In order to construct a theoretically grounded model of terminological competency, however, it is first necessary to clarify the foundational concepts on which it rests. The present article therefore undertakes a systematic theoretical analysis of the categories “competence” and “competency”, their historical development, their disciplinary variants, and their methodological status in contemporary pedagogy.

The aim of the study is to provide a theoretically substantiated distinction between “competence” and “competency” and to justify the choice of “terminological competency” as the operative construct for researching and developing language outcomes in technical university education. The objectives are: (1) to trace the historical and disciplinary origins of the concept of competence; (2) to analyse existing definitions and classification frameworks; (3) to delineate the boundary between competence as a latent characteristic and competency as its active realisation; and (4) to introduce the concept of competency distillation as a methodological principle for the present research.

## **Materials and Methods**

The study applies a theoretical-analytical methodology and does not involve primary empirical data collection. The research draws on the following sources and procedures. The source base comprises: foundational works in pedagogical theory and the competency-based approach – I.A. Zimnyaya, V.I. Baidenko, A.K. Markova, E.F. Zeer, N.V. Kuzmina, V.D. Shadrikov, A.V. Khutorskoy, G.K. Selevko, Yu.G. Tatur; works in Uzbek pedagogical science addressing competency in professional and language education – U. Inoyatov, B. Khojayev, N.Sh. Turdiyev, Yu.M. Asadov, Zh.Zh. Zhalalov, G.A. Asilova, N.A. Muslimov, A.Kh. Makhmudov, M.R. Kadirova; foundational linguistic texts including Chomsky’s competence/performance distinction [4] and Hymes’s communicative competence framework; [5] and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The primary analytical procedures employed are: comparative conceptual analysis (systematising definitions across research traditions and national scholarly schools); etymological-historical analysis (tracing the concept from its Latin origins through its disciplinary transformations); and structural modelling (identifying the component

structure of competency on the basis of existing frameworks, in particular that of N.V. Bordovskaya and E.A. Koshkina) [3].

## Results

### The genealogy of the concept of competence

The Latin root **competere** – **to correspond, to be capable, to be appropriate** – originally functioned in juridical and philosophical discourse to denote the circumscribed sphere of a subject's authority. The modern pedagogical content of the term was built through successive disciplinary transformations. The first decisive redefinition occurred in linguistics: Chomsky's 1965 distinction between linguistic competence and performance drew a principled line between abstract knowledge of a language system and its deployment in real communicative events [4].

Hymes's subsequent critique extended competence into the socio-pragmatic domain, reconceptualising it as communicative competence – knowledge not only of grammatical rules but of the norms governing language use in social contexts [5]. This expansion introduced a cultural and situational dimension that later proved constitutive for language education frameworks. The Common European Framework of Reference defines competencies as the sum of knowledge, skills, and characteristics that enable a learner to perform communicative acts; it thus treats competence as both cognitive and performative [6].

### Competence and competency: definitional differentiation

Contemporary Russian-language pedagogy distinguishes between **competence** and **competency**, a distinction methodologically significant for the present study. I.A. Zimnyaya defines competence as a latent psychic formation – a construct comprising knowledge, skills, and modes of activity – that constitutes a potential characteristic of the individual [7]. Competency, by contrast, is defined as an actualised quality that manifests in the course of activity. It includes not only cognitive but also motivational, value-based, and behavioural components, and reflects the degree to which formed competences are realised in concrete professional situations.

Further theoretical support for this distinction is provided by V.I. Baidenko, who frames the competency-based approach as a transition from the assimilation of knowledge to the formation of the capacity to use it practically [8]. G.K. Selevko defines competence as a learning outcome that integrates knowledge, skills, habits, and individual traits; A.V.

Khutorskoy emphasises its systemic character as a cluster of interrelated personal qualities ensuring effectiveness in activity [9]. G.A. Asilova operationalises competence as the effective deployment of knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics in professional work, rendering it a condition of successful professional functioning [10]. Uzbek pedagogical scholarship elaborates these positions with specificity. Inoyatov and Khojayev treat competence as a dynamic formation requiring continual updating of knowledge and development of application skills [11]. Turdiyev, Asadov, Akbarova, and Temirov treat both categories as integrative characteristics that include practical application, readiness for activity, and the capacity to achieve meaningful results. Zhalalov, writing from a linguodidactic perspective, accents the functional character of competence by linking it to readiness for language acquisition and its practical use [12].

### **Professional competency: structure and levels**

Tatur's tripartite classification distinguishes key, general-professional, and professional competencies [13]. Key competencies ensure universal modes of activity and social adaptability; general-professional competencies form the foundation of disciplinary training; professional competencies reflect the requirements of a specific field. Kuzmina describes professional competency as a dynamic personal property that enables high results in professional activity [14].

Zeer's definition emphasises the practical orientation of professional competency: it is a set of knowledge, skills, and modes of activity ensuring the successful performance of professional tasks [15]. Markova identifies cognitive, practical, motivational-value, and personal components, framing competency as inherently multi-component and integrative. The inclusion of motivational-value components indicates that effectiveness in professional activity is determined not only by the level of knowledge and skills but also by the subject's orientation toward and investment in that activity. Shadrikov highlights activity as the site where professional competency both forms and manifests, thereby underscoring the deontological nature of the phenomenon.

Among Uzbek scholars, Muslimov conceives of competency as the integration of knowledge and skills across activity types [16], while Makhmudov adds the capacity to act effectively in a changing environment, connecting professional competency to adaptability as a structural feature. Kadirova stresses that professional competency entails more than domain-specific knowledge: it requires the capacity to act in a professional environment through the integration of knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics.

This convergence is consistent with observations by Zeer and Zavodchikov regarding the growing significance of communication, critical thinking, and self-organisation among competencies valued alongside technical knowledge by contemporary employers [17].

## Discussion

The analytical survey of the literature yields several findings of methodological significance. First, the conceptual genealogy of competence reveals a consistent pattern of expansion: from a juridical concept denoting circumscribed authority, through Chomsky's formal-linguistic construct [4], through Hymes's socio-pragmatic extension, to the integrative pedagogical construct that currently informs the competency-based approach. Each expansion added a dimension – from knowledge of rules to ability to apply them, from grammatical correctness to communicative appropriateness, from isolated cognitive skills to integrative personal characteristics – and each of these dimensions remains embedded in the contemporary understanding.

Second, the distinction between competence and competency captures a genuinely important pedagogical contrast: the gap between a learned potential and its enacted realisation. This gap is pedagogically consequential. A student of technical Russian who can define the term “weld seam” (сварной шов) but cannot deploy it accurately under the time pressure of a professional consultation exhibits competence without competency. Engineering education has long recognised this gap implicitly in the distinction between examination performance and workplace performance; the competency-based approach attempts to make it explicit and to address it systematically through the design of activity-rich instruction.

Third, the concept of “competency distillation” – introduced here to denote the process by which knowledge accumulated in an educational setting is transformed through practice into a stable professional capacity – connects the pedagogical literature on competency formation with the didactic question of how to design contexts within which this transformation can occur. The richer the activity context of instruction, the fuller the transition from competence to competency [2]. This principle has direct implications for the design of language instruction in technical universities, where the activity context of professional communication must be explicitly constructed rather than assumed.

The choice of “terminological competency” as the operative construct for the present research follows from three considerations. First, the object of pedagogical intervention is a holistic educational outcome that encompasses both the latent resource and its active

realisation; neither “competence” alone nor “competency” alone captures this totality. Second, in contemporary pedagogical literature “competency” has consolidated as the generic term for integrative outcomes of professional training. Third, the structural-functional model of Bordovskaya and Koshkina, which provides the theoretical architecture for the present study, is itself built on the notion of terminological competency [3].

## Conclusion

The theoretical analysis carried out in the present article has demonstrated that the concepts of competence and competency, while sharing a common root and frequently conflated in everyday usage, perform distinct and complementary analytical functions in pedagogical theory. Competence is a latent cognitive-motivational construct formed in the process of instruction; competency is its dynamic realisation in professional activity. The transition between them – what the article terms competency distillation – is mediated by the richness of the activity context built into the educational process.

Professional competency, understood as a multi-component integrative characteristic including cognitive, activity-based, motivational, value, and personal elements, cannot be reduced to a sum of discrete knowledge items. Its formation is a continuous, reflexive process that does not end with graduation but extends across the professional life course. Within this structure, terminological competency occupies the position of the linguistic nucleus that ensures precision of professional thinking and communication.

The findings have direct implications for language instruction in technical universities: the didactic design of professional language courses must aim not at the transmission of terminological knowledge but at creating activity-rich contexts in which that knowledge undergoes distillation into active professional ability. Future research should focus on operationalising the components of terminological competency, developing diagnostic instruments for assessing its formation, and testing instructional models that maximise the activity context of technical language teaching.

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