

## A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AS AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF OPTIMIZING STUDENTS' SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ACTIVITY AT HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

### ІНОЗЕМНА МОВА ЯК ЕФЕКТИВНИЙ ЗАСІБ ОПТИМІЗАЦІЇ НАУКОВО-ДОСЛІДНОЇ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ У ВИЩОМУ НАВЧАЛЬНОМУ ЗАКЛАДІ

*The article provides a substantive analysis concerning organization of students' research activities in the context of the foreign language professional education system. It has been noted that the discipline "Foreign language" is a necessary and important part of the scientific research activities of future specialists, as it optimizes access to foreign scientific information, allows the use of Internet sources, stimulates the development of international scientific contacts and expands the possibilities of improving the students' professional level.*

*The article deals with the organization of students' scientific research work in a foreign language: the didactic functions and key elements of research activities have been highlighted; the problems of forming students' scientific research competence have been discussed; some forms of students' scientific research work in foreign language classes have been presented; the criteria and indicators of students' research skills formation have been revealed.*

*The result of the study is the consideration of the students' research activities development, including the following stages - preparatory, main and final ones with a complex of tasks for each of them. The analysis of the practical research confirmed that it is advisable to organize special training of students for scientific research activities. One of the effective means of developing students' scientific research competence is different types of tasks as the basis for analyzing specific methodological situations in foreign language classes.*

*As a conclusion, the author notes that scientific and research competence creates favorable conditions for the development of a future specialist's professional competence, as well as positively affects the development of the cognitive sphere of the personality, his/her independent thinking, planning and implementation of their professional activities. Encouraging students to conduct their own research in a foreign language, optimizing the use of foreign language authentic sources in the specialty will contribute to the education of students who can participate in international conferences, internships abroad, which in turn leads to the formation of highly qualified and mobile specialists.*

**Key words:** scientific-research activity, foreign language, scientific-research competence, optimization, higher educational institution, student's scientific conference.

*У статті проведено змістовний аналіз питань щодо науково-дослідної діяльності*

*студентів у контексті системи іншомовної професійної освіти. Наголошується, що дисципліна «Іноземна мова» є необхідною та важливою частиною науково-дослідної діяльності майбутніх фахівців, оскільки оптимізує доступ до наукової інформації іноземною мовою, дозволяє використання іншомовних Інтернет ресурсів, стимулює розвиток міжнародних наукових контактів та розширює можливості підвищення професійного рівня студентів.*

*У статті розкриваються питання організації науково-дослідної роботи студентів на заняттях з іноземної мови у ЗВО: висвітлюються дидактичні функції та ключові елементи дослідницької діяльності; обговорюються питання формування науково-дослідної компетенції студентів; наведені деякі форми науково-дослідної роботи студентів на заняттях та у поза аудиторний час; висвітлюються критерії та показники сформованості дослідницьких навичок студентів.*

*Результат дослідження – розгляд питання формування науково-дослідної діяльності студентів, що включає наступні етапи - підготовчий, основний та завершальний з комплексом завдань для кожного з них. Аналіз практичного дослідження підтвердив, що доцільно організувати спеціальну підготовку студентів до науково-дослідної діяльності на заняттях з іноземної мови. Одним із ефективних засобів формування науково-дослідної компетенції студентів є різні види завдань як основи аналізу конкретних методичних ситуацій на занятті.*

*У висновках авторка зазначає, що науково-дослідна компетентність створює сприятливі умови для розвитку професійної компетентності майбутнього фахівця, а також позитивно впливає на розвиток когнітивної сфери особистості, самостійного мислення, планувати та здійснювати свою професійну діяльність. Заохочення студентів до проведення власних наукових досліджень у контексті іншомовної підготовки, оптимізація використання іншомовних автентичних джерел за фахом сприятимуть вихованню студентів, які зможуть брати участь у міжнародних конференціях, стажуваннях за кордоном, а це своєю чергою призводить до формування висококваліфікованих та мобільних спеціалістів.*

**Ключові слова:** науково-дослідна діяльність, іноземна мова, науково-дослідна компетентність, оптимізація, заклад вищої освіти, студентська наукова конференція.

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**Tsvyd-Grom O.P.,**

Candidate of Philological Sciences,  
Associate Professor at the Department of  
Foreign Languages  
Belotserk National Agrarian University

**Reida O.A.,**

Senior Lecturer at the Department of  
Foreign Languages  
Belotserk National Agrarian University

**Reznik V.H.,**

Senior Lecturer at the Department of  
Foreign Languages  
Belotserk National Agrarian University

**Introduction.** In the recent past, the development of students' need for independent research activities within the educational process has become a priority at a higher educational institution. As the role of science is increasing, there is an urgent need to establish close linkages between scientific and

academic students' activities, to master the methods of scientific research. At present, the aim of modern university education is to develop intellectual, highly educated, creative personality, who is able to solve not only his/her professional tasks, but also to realize personal abilities, opportunities, and

interests. Active engagement of students in research activities becomes one of the effective ways of future specialists' training at universities.

The development of a highly qualified specialist in the conditions of higher educational institution reforms is impossible without purposeful research work of students, which is an integral part of the educational process, in the course of which the activity of acquiring and strengthening scientific knowledge, mastering new skills and abilities, forming scientific world outlook and personal beliefs on using the gained knowledge and abilities in practice are optimized. Scientific research activity of students as a way to improve their educational competence can be carried out in various fields of scientific knowledge, including a foreign language. A foreign language is a necessary and integral part of scientific research activities, as the knowledge of this discipline optimizes access to foreign language scientific information, allows the application of Internet resources, stimulates the development of international scientific business contacts and expands the opportunities to improve the professional level of a future specialist. Scientific research in foreign language classes at a higher educational institution not only contributes to the development of independence, creativity, analytical thinking of students, promoting the development of scientific potential of students' personality, but also provides experience in foreign language communication.

It should be mentioned that recently enormous efforts have been made by Ukrainian universities to improve the teaching process, increasing the requirements for teaching various disciplines, including "Foreign Language", which promotes creative activity by involving many students in scientific research work. At the current stage of the higher educational system development, students' scientific research activity is becoming increasingly important and one of the main components of future specialists' professional training. The students' scientific research activities allow them to fully apply their knowledge, demonstrate their individuality and creative abilities as well as their readiness for self-realization of the individual.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Some research works illustrates that students' scientific research activity significantly contributes to their future professional development by enabling to use the knowledge gained at the higher educational institution in an employment context and to courageously advance according to the chosen specialty (Augienė, Bernadic, Traubner, Mladosičevićova, Lamanaukas). The full application of potential synergies between faculty research and undergraduate education takes an important role as well (Brent, Felder, Prince).

Scientific research activities are considered by pedagogical scholars as one of the means to

optimize students' interest in an academic discipline. In their works N. Yakovleva, M. Furmanova, N. Fesyanova, S. Belova, A. Teslina, A. Leontovich, M. Zaprudskiy, N. Fedotova raise issues directly related to the problem of organization and technology for completing scientific research activities in foreign language classes.

**The purpose of the article** is to reveal the didactic functions and key elements of students' scientific research activities; to consider and analyze the process of developing scientific research competence in the context of foreign language training at a higher educational institution.

**The statement of the main material.** Research activity is one of the forms of the learning process allowing students to fully realize the acquired knowledge, to express their individuality and abilities, and to be ready for self-realization. There is therefore a pressing need to form students' stable cognitive interest and to develop analytical and creative thinking which is considered to be an indispensable characteristic of a harmonious and comprehensively developed personality. Thus, one of the key directions in the educational process is to create conditions for the students' personal qualities development ensuring competitiveness in the labor market, as well as the development of a creative personality capable of adapting to modern conditions. Students' scientific research activities are considered to be the principal means of implementing those objectives. According to some pedagogical scholars, scientific research work in foreign language classes should be interpreted as an activity, which is primarily aimed at creating personal educational product in the field of a foreign language, defining its content; has a creative nature, ensuring the student's personal qualities formation as a speech personality, his/her self-regulation and self-development; activity based on learning competence in language and culture studies, which is a necessary condition for productivity and creativity. Research activity is considered as a specific activity focused on the satisfaction of cognitive, mental needs, the product of which is new knowledge gained in accordance with the established objectives [4, p.124].

Thus, students' scientific research work is a set of educational, academic, administrative and coordination-methodological activities, aimed at improving the training of future specialists on the basis of the students' skills development in the field of scientific researches in accordance with their future profession (training direction). Students' scientific research activities are organized and take place both in the classroom and extra-curricular time.

Based on the analysis of scientific and pedagogical papers, it is reasonable to identify the following didactic functions of research activities:

1. The educational material previously learned is systematized and structured, relationships between

the studied material are identified and connections between different concepts are established.

2. The learning material is summarized and deepened, and various evidences of the learned material are found.

3. New material is studied, i.e., essential properties of concepts are established, regularities are identified, etc.

4. Students develop their independence, self-management skills, self-actualization, self-education and self-realization.

5. Students are taught different methods of research activities.

Program for scientific research training in any academic discipline contains the following compulsory components: activities focusing on the development of research skills; the research activity and its practical stage; monitoring and analysis of students' research activities.

Scientists associated with the abovementioned issue emphasize, that scientific research activities contribute to the formation of future specialists' readiness to implement the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired at higher educational institutions, promote mastering of scientific information collection methods, assist in gaining research experience, develop the ability to quickly obtain, efficiently process and correctly use the received information in modern world, which is the key to success in any professional career [6, p. 38]. Scientific research not only contributes to the development of independence, creativity, analytical thinking of students, promoting the development of scientific potential of students' personality, but also provides the gaining experience in the communication.

Therefore, students' scientific research activity in foreign language class is a creative research task involving an unknown solution and assumes the key stages of research in the scientific field – problem statement, studying theory, responsible for research, its analysis and synthesis, selecting research methods, practicing, summarizing.

In the modern pedagogical context, research activities are related, on the one hand, to obtaining and interpreting new scientific knowledge, and on the other hand, to a special kind of organized abilities (competences) forming the style of students' scientific research activities. In order to identify a set of competencies comprising research competence, the research activity is considered as a type of students' educational and professional activity in which the level of activity of the subject determines his/her development and ensures successful completion of professional tasks.

In this way, the research competence of a future specialist is defined as an integrative holistic formation containing competences that relate to different aspects of research activities. As a consequence,

scientific research competence is primarily a set of methodological, projective, cognitive-discursive, verification and innovation competences, and it also has a strong practical orientation, demonstrating the connection between knowledge, skills, competencies and has a stable content and manifestation properties.

The development of scientific research competence is a specifically organized and purposeful process based on a group of principles. It should be mentioned that the development of students' scientific-research competence takes place simultaneously and interconnected with the development of other professional competences, indicating that the process of its development is realized in accordance with the principles of implicitness of foreign language teaching content components, the principle of pedagogical process integrity, its consistency, professional orientation and activity. Taking into consideration the multidimensional character of scientific-research competence, it can also be emphasized that the development of scientific-research competence takes place on the basis of a socio-personal approach allowing to combine the goals of society with the personal aims, considering the process of scientific research competence formation as a purpose of professionally oriented cognitive activity development.

The systemic approach to scientific research competence development requires taking into consideration the structural characteristics of professional learning in the process of future specialists' training. In this case, professional training is a complexly organized integral pedagogical system, the structure of which is determined by specific components. It is the interconnection between these components that ensures qualitative development of scientific research competence, as the systemic approach in the generally understood sense contributes to the analysis of these internal linkages in the system of future specialist's training, its internal structure and integrity [5, p. 214].

Based on the analysis of scientific and methodological studies, it is possible to define a methodological system as a set of interrelated tools, methods and processes required to create an organized, intentional influence on the development of scientific research competence [1, p. 29]. The above-mentioned pedagogical system is a complex of structural (target) component; information component; communication means; students; a foreign language teacher) and functional components (gnostic; design; constructive; communicative; organizational components) [1, p. 62]. I.A. Tsaturova supplemented the system by structuring it according to the following components: learning process objective; learning content; communication means (methods and ways of learning); learning subject (a student); learning subject (a teacher); organizational forms of learning process [3, p. 338].

Therefore, based on the above-mentioned studies, the training system of a future specialist to do scientific research can be considered as a complex of interrelated components ensuring the development of a number of scientific research competencies in accordance with the regulations of the state educational standard of higher vocational education necessary to actualize the scientific research activity.

The fundamental ideas of scientific research technology in the process of learning a foreign language in higher educational institutions should include the following principles: focus on students' cognitive interests; freedom of choice and responsibility for their activities; mastering knowledge in unity with the means of its acquiring; focus on developing the skills of independent search of foreign language information; combination of productive and reproductive learning tools, developing ideas about knowledge dynamics, accessibility, level and interim cooperation.

Based on the aforementioned in the process of organizing students' scientific research activities in foreign language classes, the following tasks should be emphasized:

- to develop students' ability to use foreign-language educational, methodological, reference and scientific literature;
- to form students' ability to abstract and annotate scientific and professional articles from foreign languages into Ukrainian and vice versa.;
- to develop students' skills of analyzing, summarizing and selecting professionally relevant foreign-language information;
- to form students' motivation for further study of a foreign language for their career purposes.

Based on the foregoing, the following stages are distinguished in the process of scientific research competence development that successively replace each other: preparatory, main and concluding stages. The task of the *preparatory stage* is to acquire knowledge, skills, abilities, generalized means of activity in disciplines of both general and professional nature in the process of coordination and combination of learning activities in accordance with the types of research competences, carried out by solving methodological tasks and developing project tasks, role-plays, reports and presentations. It is at this stage that the foundation is laid for the methodological competence.

The *central stage* of preparation for research activities is related to the development of project and cognitive discursive competences. Complexity and synthesis of the professional and special disciplines content by types of scientific research competence is realized through working on a course project, preparing a presentation for its defense, as well as participation in a scientific student conference and writing a scientific article.

In the *final stage*, special attention is paid to verification and innovation competences, completing the development of scientific research competence. The process of development and transformation of scientific research competence as an integrative entity and achievement of normative level of competence is achieved through writing a scientific research paper and defending it as a result of scientific research.

There are two key forms of students' research work: curricular research work (essays, papers, reports). This type of work allows the student to develop skills in working with foreign-language scientific literature, sources and dictionaries. Students acquire skills of selecting and analyzing necessary information in a foreign language. And extracurricular research work over and above those requirements of the curriculum. This work is most effective for the development of research and scientific abilities of students. Students engage in the above-mentioned activities independently outside the classroom, they are ready to spend their personal time for additional study of a foreign language, to take an active interest in the sphere of the latest achievements.

Consider the kinds of activities appropriate for foreign language classes at higher educational institutions in order to develop students' scientific research competence as an element of professional training:

1. *Research projects* allow students to express themselves creatively as their own accumulated research in any convenient form in a foreign language. For instance, they can be announcements, posters, multimedia presentations in the form of a creative report; by means of surveys and interviews followed by presentation of the results; in the format of model demonstrations with relevant comments; in the design of plans for visiting different places with a guide and illustrations. The advantage of these projects in foreign language class is that they are presented in many various ways: they are differentiated by form, time, number of students, content, etc. The student takes full responsibility for his or her own creation. Such scientific research activity builds students' autonomy, reveals the boundaries of what they have learned and helps them to comprehend the new heights of knowledge and to grow personally.

2. *Mini-researches* include an in-depth study of various sources of foreign language literature, their synthesis and analysis. They may concern both the students' future profession and the methods, principles applied in relation to the foreign language. The above-mentioned kind of research trains students to refer to a variety of foreign language publications, to find answers to existing questions, to constantly develop and improve in their chosen field. When presenting a mini-research to an audience, it is advisable to use the following visual supports:

- verbal means – small texts, short dictionaries of terms, small explainers with definitions of key



professional words, speech patterns, set expressions, colorful expression expressions, etc.;

- verbal-schematic or schematic means – models of exercises, speech patterns, having a functional orientation, specifying the described concept, which can be quickly remembered and recognized;

- illustrative means – photos, pictures, videos, films, drawings, images of symbols, dates, numbers, tables. When using illustrative supports, the following requirements should be met: representativeness, an interesting problematic situation that the student would like to solve. Such means will facilitate the process of memorizing and using e.g., lexical units, form students' intrinsic motivation for the learning process.

3. *Case method* is a teaching technique using descriptions of real-life situations. The case method is effective when teaching vocabulary and grammar of a foreign language, when working with professional texts as well as when analyzing a selection of illustrations and video fragments of specialized texts, when students first should identify a problem and then move towards finding a solution. The following sequence of steps is useful in order to implement this method in its entirety:

- defining the problem, the subject and the object of the research;
- setting the main goals;
- identifying the debatable issues;
- determining the type of speech activity that will be used to achieve the goals;
- primary exercises to practise the material prepared in advance;
- automatization and consolidation of the acquired information;
- improving the acquired skills and abilities.

Practical classes directed at students' scientific research activities. Using interactive whiteboards to perform tasks of finding errors in a professional text, completing gaps in exercises, doing crossword puzzles or jigsaws using a foreign language, comparing words, performing tests. It is also possible to prepare a mini-presentation on concrete topic, for instance a grammar topic, and the result will be a publication demonstrating the degree of mastery of the topic. The following complex of tasks are achieved in the project-based learning activities:

- to develop the students' positive motivation for self-education;
- to discover the independence and creative component of learning;
- to systematize foreign language literature and the habit of studying regularly rather than systematically is formed in this process;
- mastering the creative, intellectual and exploratory aspects of learning;
- to develop the skills to work together as a teacher-a student, a student-a student, a student-a

student, a teacher-a student. In different variations, the teacher becomes not only a controlling authority, but also an assistant and adviser;

- orientation of students to his/her interests, individual abilities, life experience;
- to promote collective and individual responsibility for a project, research, work.

In the process of project-research activities in foreign language classes at higher educational institutions the following general learning skills and abilities are formed: research (exploratory); reflective; presentational; communicative; managerial; teamwork skills and abilities; ability to answer unexpected questions.

Hence, the integration of project-based research activities contributes to the development of students' natural features and creative potential. Through project-based activities, a full range of universal learning processes is formed:

- communicative: culture of public speaking in a foreign language, tolerance, group work skills;
- regulative: the ability to take personal responsibility for the result, decision-making skills, planning, goal-setting, correcting, self-organizing;
- cognitive: study of information in the educational space, identification of means to address problems, mastery of new technologies;
- personal: students independently determine the degree of importance of the research project, orient themselves in interpersonal relations and social roles.

The following forms of students' research activities in foreign language classes at a higher educational institution are also actively applied – reports at foreign language scientific conferences, scientific-practical seminars of all levels, participation in academic competitions, preparation of scientific publications, participation in competitions for the best scientific research work, participation in grant competitions, taking part in scientific projects at the foreign language department together with graduate students and young scientists under the guidance of the teaching staff.

Students' scientific conference, as one of the means of foreign language multilateral communication, stimulates students for active and independent intellectual activity, gives them an opportunity to present the result of their activity, publish the expertise of their ideas, promotes the art of discussion in a foreign language, development of the skills of public speaking.

Conducting a scientific-practical conference allows to discover the most advanced students, to develop their independence, individual creative interests, to form a feeling of responsibility for the task, to realize the practical importance of the work done and to make sure that it is in demand, to open the perspective of the intellectual growth of each participant.

Students' scientific conference in organizing the multilateral communication in a foreign language is

defined as the development and formation of theoretical and practical skills in the research-executive activity of students: gathering information, development of analytical abilities, experience in public speaking, practice of debating, language practice.

*To teach students how to gather foreign language information* – students should not only know the content of their presentation, but also be able to justify it competently. Once the student has received or chosen the topic of the presentation, they start preparing for it. Researching foreign language publications in the library is complemented by monitoring web resources. This process builds the student's skills in checking the credibility and relevance needed to present foreign language information. Determining the reliability of a source is a skill required in their future professional activities.

*Practice of open discussing.* The development of skills to organize and competently support discussion is valuable not only as part of academic communicative activities, but will also be helpful for students later in their future professional career. Foreign language practice is considered as a special kind of intellectual and speech activity, which is manifested in the creative use of previously learnt language means, reflects individual-psychological features of the communicant, allows to determine availability for self-expression in a foreign language.

It is appropriate to use a system of instructions for students to help them solving problems, they should have an idea of what sequence of steps results in certain outcomes. It should also be pointed out that it is advisable to consider the following stages of scientific research work – defining the task of the work under study, pre-testing initial data, presenting actual material, highlighting basic information, presenting theoretical statements and research methods, summarizing the results of scientific research.

One of the advantages of students' scientific research activities in the process of learning a foreign language is the creation of a special educational atmosphere, which allows them to prove themselves in various directions of this type of activity and to develop their universal skills and competences of communication in a foreign language. This enables the implementation of scientific cognition ways in the subject area of knowledge, expanding the foreign language information fund, the students' cognitive and intellectual capabilities, changing motivation, value orientations and communicative behavior, forming psycho-emotional mood, attracting multilateral communication using a foreign language.

Consequently, for successful scientific research work it is necessary to develop cognitive interest, which is the highest motivation for all students. Cognitive interest plays a huge role in the process of teaching a foreign language, it is a means of engaging students in learning, activating their thinking, making them work

with enthusiasm. In this case, it is advisable to include incentives in the task, to create conditions under which students have an interest in acquiring knowledge and implementing it in various forms of research work. The above-mentioned form of activity increases students' awareness and develops their initiative.

Based on the aforementioned, the criteria and indicators of students' research skills are the ability to define goals, motivate themselves to achieve success, manage and organize the research process, work with the recommended foreign language information, interpret the material presented in the sources, carry out analysis and synthesis, classify and categorize, consistently perform scientific activities, correct any mistakes, record and present the results of scientific work in a foreign language.

Thus, it is reasonable to formulate the necessary conditions to prepare students for research practice: to conduct diagnostics of students' preparation and difficulties to carry out scientific research practice; to organize differentiated assistance to students depending on their availability for research practice; to design and implement various options for interaction between students and foreign language teachers during research practice, to provide differentiated assistance in performing and presenting the results of research work, to carry out monitoring and summarizing the results of the research work in a foreign language.

The development of students' research competence in the process of professional training in foreign language classes allows, first of all, to implement a step-by-step approach to each of the component's formation of scientific research competence; to work in development mode; to form humanistic and educational values; to develop students' methodological culture for comprehension and correction of their experience.

Organizing the scientific research competence development is based on: motivation to learn; implementation of the acquired knowledge during practice; sufficient level of methodological culture; development of both general and special abilities; students' intellectual potential; readiness for self-management and taking responsibility for their activities; formation of individual learning strategies.

The significance of students' mastery of scientific research competence is determined by the possibility of implementing the most important functions: analytical – quantitative and qualitative study of the task, the degree of its development (to identify factors demonstrating the correlation between internal and external conditions of development, the correlation between the idea, content, means and results); diagnostic – linking different types of diagnostic tools, methods, using a variety of diagnostic techniques; exploratory – building material, research procedures, modeling component organization of the object under

study; cognitive – aiming at developing new knowledge system and formulating it through the concept, theory; prognostic – designing a new system of knowledge and its formulation by means of the concept, theory; practical transformation – implementing innovations aimed at optimizing conditions.

**Conclusions and prospects for further research.** It is necessary to emphasize that students' scientific research work in foreign language classes at higher educational institutions serves as a specific pedagogical means of organizing and managing the students' learning process. Participation of the students themselves in scientific research activities contributes to their development as versatile person capable of continuous, high-quality self-development, independent thinking, the ability to create their own scientific concepts, to plan and implement their professional activities.

Scientific research activities not only optimize students' activity they also have another important advantage: it is student-centered individualized. Each student uses the source of foreign language information according to their needs and abilities and works at their own pace to obtain the required result.

It should also be highlighted that students' research activities in foreign language classes at higher education institutions are considered as an important component during their academic studies. Providing students with opportunities to conduct their own scientific research in a foreign language, stimulating interest in foreign language authentic sources in their future specialization will contribute to the education of students capable of participating in international conferences, internships abroad and, consequently, will lead to the development of highly qualified, mobile professionals to meet the demands of our times, for this reason developing research competence should be a mandatory task for a foreign language teachers.

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