

UDC 37.02/09 + 81'27: 811.111

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<https://doi.org/10.34142/23128046.2024.57.04>

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**ANALYSIS OF THE CREDIT-MODULAR SYSTEM OF STUDENTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE FORMATION  
(a case study of Kharkiv higher education institutions)**

*This article considers the currently applied credit-modular system as a component of the Bologna Process in Ukraine which creates prerequisites for the implementation of competence-based teaching and studying, in particular, in the field of higher professional foreign language education designed for the formation of foreign language communicative competence of students.*

*The concepts of the 'Bologna Process', 'academic credits', 'credit-modular system' and 'educational and professional programme', which are currently the key positions of the terminological apparatus of higher education in Ukraine, are studied.*

*The paper highlights the peculiarities of reception of specialists with different levels of higher education in the modern labour market, which creates additional turbulence in the field of higher education due to the mismatch of understanding of educational and qualification levels in Europe and Ukraine which is explained by the conservative nature of the domestic educational community.*

*The features of the credit-modular system for the formation of foreign language communicative competence of students in Kharkiv are described. These students are studying under the educational and professional programmes which provide for the qualification of a Bachelor of Philology in the field of the English language and literature, as well as translation/interpretation inclusive.*

*It has been found that the main applicable principle of the teaching load distribution is the provision of fundamental and conservative higher education. Based on the results of the analysis of educational and professional programmes of four higher education institutions of Kharkiv, the strengths and weaknesses of this credit-modular approach variation are characterised.*

*As a solution to this problem, it is proposed to compensate for the lack of field subjects in the structure of the education content by reducing the disciplines of the general training cycle and implementing a programme to improve the efficiency of higher foreign language education which should be compatible with the new Education Standard.*

**Keywords:** *academic credit, Bologna Process, competence, credit-modular system, educational and professional programme, foreign language communicative competence.*

**Зенякін О. С.** *Аналіз кредитно-модульної системи формування іншомовної комунікативної компетентності здобувачів вищої освіти (на*

*матеріалі закладів вищої освіти міста Харкова). У статті розглянуто кредитно-модульну систему як складову Болонського процесу в Україні, що створює передумови для реалізації компетентнісного навчання, зокрема, і у сфері надання вищої фахової іншомовної освіти для формування іншомовної комунікативної компетентності здобувачів вищої освіти.*

*Досліджено поняття «Болонський процес», «академічний кредит», «кредитно-модульна система» та «освітньо-професійна програма», які є наразі ключовими позиціями термінологічного апарату вищої освіти в Україні.*

*Розглянуто особливості реєції на модерному ринку праці спеціалістів з різними рівнями освіти, що створює додаткову турбулентність у галузі освіти через невідповідність розуміння освітньо-кваліфікаційних рівнів в Європі та в Україні, що пояснюється особливостями консервативної природи освітянської спільноти.*

*Описано особливості кредитно-модульної системи формування іншомовної комунікативної компетентності здобувачів вищої освіти міста Харкова, що навчаються за освітньо-професійною програмою, яка передбачає надання кваліфікації бакалавра філології у сфері англійської мови та літератури і перекладу включно.*

*З'ясовано, що основним застосовним принципом розподілу навчального навантаження є принцип надання фундаментальної та консервативної вищої освіти. За результатами аналізу освітньо-професійних програм чотирьох закладів вищої освіти міста Харкова охарактеризовано сильні та слабкі сторони такого кредитно-модульного підходу.*

*В якості вирішення порушеної проблеми запропоновано компенсувати нестачу фахових предметів у структурі змісту освіти через зменшення дисциплін циклу загальної підготовки та програму підвищення ефективності вищої іншомовної освіти, яка має бути сумісна з новим Стандартом освіти.*

***Ключові слова:** академічний кредит, Болонський процес, іншомовна комунікативна компетентність, компетентність, кредитно-модульна система, освітньо-професійна програма.*

**Introduction.** The competence-based approach to education is now undoubtedly dominant in Ukraine and the countries of the progressive West. A wide range of new opportunities opened up by the competence-based approach have helped to build a modern integrated system of interaction between higher education institutions, that train specialists, and the labour market, where graduates ought to find a job that matches their speciality and allows them not only to earn money but also to develop both professionally and personally, embodying the concept of 'lifelong learning'.

In Ukraine, the competence dimension of education is currently being implemented within the framework of the New Ukrainian School and the higher education as well where the learning and studying outcomes are to be the acquisition of a certain set of key competences. This widely used term – competence – is also

found in the educational and professional programmes of higher education institutions on a par.

The issue of studying competence in Ukraine is still being developed by many scholars who outline paradigmatic changes in education, of course, in different ways; but they are unified in understanding at least one thing: recognition of the fact that there are numerous alterations conditioned by the evolution of scientific and pedagogical thought, modifications in the practice of teaching and upbringing, which is implemented through continuous reforms in education and science (Hrynevych, 2022; Plushko, 2023; Kravtsova, 2014).

In accordance with the international Bologna Declaration signed by Ukraine in 2005, which applies to the national education sector, our country is a participant to the process that should lead to a positive transformation of the Ukrainian system of knowledge, skills, and abilities provision and mastering to make this competence-based education in line with the best Western European standards.

Nevertheless, Ukrainian scholars have repeatedly raised the issue of shortcomings or controversial issues in the Ukrainian understanding of the Bologna Process (Diachenko, 2018; Shkola & Shevchenko, 2010; Radomska & Standii, 2010; Yehorova & Holubieva, 2007).

This article presents a description of the essence of such an approach in the field of foreign language teaching, that is, in the process of forming a foreign language communicative competence (hereinafter – the FLCC).

**Objective and tasks.** The purpose of the proposed scientific paper is to analyse the modern credit-modular system used in the educational process in higher education institutions, where, according to the educational and professional programme, Bachelors of Philology are being trained in the field of the English language, literature, and translation/interpretation.

Deriving from the paper objective, the author considers it necessary to solve the following tasks:

- to study the essence of the credit-modular system in Ukraine as a part of the Bologna Process;
- to analyse the national approach to the interpretation of foreign language communicative competence and to outline the main structural characteristics that best describe the approach of competence-based teaching in the field of a foreign language in the context of the credit-modular system in Kharkiv-based higher education institutions.

The object matter of the paper is the credit-modular system of Kharkiv higher education institutions offering educational services in the field of foreign philology, whereas the subject matter of the study is the educational and professional

programmes for the Bachelor's Degree in a foreign language (English) of the relevant structural units of four such Kharkiv-based higher education institutions.

**Research methods.** The methodological basis of the article is the combination of general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis, comparison and contrast, induction and deduction, as well as the methods of introspection and description.

The topicality of the research is conditioned by the current increased demand for professionals in the field of foreign philology since the area of their employment has expanded significantly, and with Ukraine's status as a candidate country for the European Union, knowledge and ability to use a foreign language has become paramount in the current realities of the labour market when specialists with knowledge of a foreign language automatically receive a priority position and the possibility of additional payment or greater tangible or intangible rewards in the process of performing their work.

The practical value of the presented scientific work lies in the possibility of using its results in the development of an educational standard in a foreign language area, a professional standard for foreign language lecturers and translators/interpreters, a strategy for academic promotion of a foreign language, as well as in the framework of the author's thesis in the field of competence-oriented studies.

**Results.** It is a well-known fact that at the turn of the twentieth century, the countries of united Europe, guided by a new understanding of the importance of applying the latest competence-based approach to learning, decided to unify the academic environment and processes within it through the introduction of the so-called Bologna Process (Rashkevych, 2018, p. 6). This marked a transition from the binary opposition of the knowledge education paradigm 'I know: I do not know' to a new system of opposition 'I can: I can't'.

The Bologna Process is defined encyclopaedically as 'a system of coordinated measures to reform European higher education and create a European Higher Education Area' (Great Ukrainian Encyclopedia, n.p.). I. Bezusiak emphasises that the main cornerstones of the Bologna Process are the credit-modular system, the introduction of Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes (two-cycle studies), and the rooting of academic mobility which should make European education open to the world (Bezusiak, 2017). O. Peramiakov reveals the essence of this process by describing the following characteristics: a) introduction of a single diploma supplement with full additional information; b) interpretation of a credit as a numerical equivalent of a grade; c) achievement of high quality education through interdependence of educational academic institutions (Permiakov et al., 2007).

Summarising the opinions of scholars, it can be noted that the Bologna Process is a set of measures aimed at unifying the educational and research procedures of

universities in the European academic area to facilitate their interaction and improve the quality of education and research. This is reflected in the unification of education into the procedure of accrual and verification of academic credits which are interpreted as units of a complex competence construal that is further recognised as an educational and professional qualification of a specialist.

From the analysis of visions on the essence of the Bologna Process, it can be concluded that the educational process should be carried out primarily through the credit-modular system. V. Sydorenko points out that a credit can be understood as an ‘indicator of success’ (Sydorenko, 2009). O. Kotlyarova believes that it is a formal equivalent of the academic workload that a student has to fulfil (Kotliarova, 2011, p. 3).

In general, we can say that a credit is a conventional academic unit that corresponds to a certain number of hours required for a student to master certain information in accordance with the curriculum. This is a unit of measurement which indicates academic success, and the summation of such units in the future during the certification of the student determines the awarding of the relevant qualification in accordance with the national qualifications framework which is integrated with the European Qualifications Framework. Depending on the age and the number of credits gained, a student can move through the stages of the lifelong learning system – from school to Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees, and then to the degree of PhD or Dr.Sc.

Nevertheless, S. Vavreniuk emphasizes that due to the incongruence of the general visions of higher education systems in Ukraine and Europe, strategic problems arise when the already applied principles of the Bologna Process do not coincide with their anticipated results at the implementation stage revealing contradictions of a practical nature ‘Ukraine:: Europe’ (Vavreniuk, 2018).

In particular, in our opinion, due to differences in the interpretation of the essence of Bachelor’s or Master’s degrees, which is caused, on the one hand, by the classical post-Soviet tradition of mono-cyclic education without division into two or three degrees, and, on the other hand, by the erroneous application of European realities of the education space to Ukrainian conditions and labour market features, there has been a stratification in the understanding of the concept of a ‘Bachelor’. In our country, many employers often interpret a Bachelor’s degree as an ‘under-qualified specialist’ or a person who lacks certain professional skills to perform tasks in their speciality effectively.

The validity of this statement is confirmed by a simple overview of the local labour market, where most positions require an applicant to have a Master’s degree. However, based only on mathematical calculations, when, under certain relatively average conditions, a Bachelor’s degree takes 4 years and a Master’s degree takes about 2 years (Bologna Process in Ukraine, n.p.), where a significant part is devoted

to writing a scientific qualification thesis, we can conclude that, of course, 4 years of study provide the biggest part of all professional training, and the last 2 years are the smallest part of it. However, in this case, employers act illogically by requiring only those who have a Master's degree, practically confirming that a Bachelor's degree is not enough.

From his own experience, the author can note that 97% of professional training is provided at the Bachelors level, which produces a work-ready specialist. In addition, the Law of Ukraine 'On Education' in its current version does not define the Bachelor's degree as insufficient or inferior to any extent, presenting it as a level of higher education, without notes or explanations.

However, returning to the main purpose of the article and deriving from the statement that the Bologna process in Ukraine is currently taking place exactly as it is, which is the set of external conditions under scrutiny in this paper, let us turn to the specifics of the credit-modular system in higher education institutions in Kharkiv which provides professional training of foreign language specialists in a wide range of qualifications.

In order to cover the tasks of the study, four Kharkiv higher education institutions were selected, namely: V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, National Polytechnic University 'Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute', Kharkiv University of Humanities 'People's Ukrainian Academy' (private higher education institution) and H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University.

A research of this kind involves an in-depth analysis of the main document that briefly describes the credit-module characteristics of the education process – the educational and professional programme which is a type of educational programme. According to Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine 'On Education' 'An educational programme is a single set of educational components (subjects, disciplines, individual tasks, testing, etc.) planned and organised to achieve certain learning outcomes'.

The educational (educational and professional) programmes developed by higher education institutions are based on the provisions of a higher-level document that regulates the content of the programme. For the speciality '035 Philology', this document is the Higher Education Standard. It is worth noting that currently there is no separate standard for foreign philology, and higher foreign language education is being provided according to a regulatory document of a unified applicable nature which is the same for all languages. This standard immediately sets out a list of competencies graduates are expected to acquire (Standard of Higher Education of Ukraine, 2019).

It is known that competence as a pedagogical category has repeatedly been the subject of research by both domestic and foreign scholars. However, the national scientific and pedagogical literature has not yet formed a generalised vision of what

competence is and what it consists of. In this research paper, the author considers competence in general as a dynamic interaction of knowledge, skills, and abilities that allows a person to carry out professional activities at the appropriate level in accordance with its purpose and task.

The standard of higher education in the speciality '035 Philology' outlines a threefold system of competences required for an expert in the field of foreign languages:

- integral competence;
- general competences;
- special (professional) competences.

Integral competence is defined as a set of general and specialised competences. At the same time, general competences are universal and do not depend, unlike special (professional) competences, on the subject area.

It is important, in our opinion, that the standard contains a clear percentage of the total amount of disciplines aimed at forming general and special competencies – only 50% for both groups, despite the fact that the formation of foreign language communicative competence requires a number of specialised subjects, because foreign philology is still a separate and specific field unlike general linguistics.

Let us consider the comparative characteristics of educational and professional programmes in English philology at the Bachelor's level of education in Kharkiv higher education institutions, the provisions of which are implemented within the educational process at specialised departments or chairs. For the sake of objectivity, we will use the reference designation for such educational and professional programmes by assigning them a number.

According to the traditional division, the programmes consist of a cycle of general training disciplines, a cycle of professional training and a number of selective disciplines that, according to the postulates of the Bologna system, the applicant has the right to choose for studying.

In the educational and professional programme 1 (EPP1), there are 7 disciplines in the general training cycle, 6 of which have 3 credits of academic load each, and only one discipline – 'world literature' – has 6 credits. The programme description states that upon graduation from a higher education institution, a student should become a qualified specialist in the field of English and a second foreign language. The World Literature programme provides for an overview study of most of the world's writers, without concentration on a particular national literature. In addition, among the mandatory components of the EPP in the cycle of professional training, there is no discipline whose content is the study of the national literature the language of which is being studied (foreign language 1, as well as the literature of

the second foreign language). Thus, the student should acquire knowledge of major's literature through listening to a general literary studies course which makes this task quite a challenge.

In addition, it is worth noting the quantitative ratio of credits in the cycle of general and professional training. Thus, in the EPP1, the discipline 'Philosophy' has 3 credits, as well as the subject 'Fundamentals of interpreter's shorthand'. In our opinion, the explanation of the importance and primacy of the need for more professional knowledge of interpreter's shorthand for a foreign language specialist than free 'second navigation' is superfluous, but this is not obvious at all from the EPP1 being analysed.

The interrelated subjects 'Foreign Language Teaching Methods' and 'Pedagogical Practice' also have an unequal ratio, being in the group of the professional training cycle, when theoretical training is 3 credits and practical training 6 credits, compared to 6 credits in 'the world literature course'. The ratio of 'educational methodology' is equivalent to that of selective subjects which also includes 3 credits, although selectives do not belong to the professional subjects cluster.

There is no differentiation between the general cycle and the professional cycle in the EPP2, however, there are important professional components such as 'Literature of the Language being studied', 'Area Studies', which are allocated 3 credits each, and 'Social Philosophy' with 4 credits, and the equivalent professional subject 'Latin' with 3 credits, respectively. There is a moderate but significant predominance of general training subjects in terms of number of credits over the disciplines of the professional category.

Amongst the selective courses, however, we can see Business English and Translation Theory and Practice, which have a share of 14 credits. It is surprising that such subjects are included in the category of selectives, since the EPP2 is positioned as one that trains a specialist in translation.

The third EPP has 8 general training disciplines with a record 12 credits for the subject 'Physical Education', which is currently impossible to fully implement due to active hostilities, temporary emergency or planned power outages, etc. 'The History of World Literature' has been moved to the professional training cycle with 6 credits, while the Business Translation course has only 4 credits. A significant discrepancy of 18 credits is observed in the study of the main foreign language – English with 40 credits, and 18 credits for German. Nevertheless, in our opinion, the professional cycle component of the specialisation is powerful, with 4 credits each allocated to extensive subjects in the field of professional translation (grammatical aspects, lexical aspects, etc.). Still, Area Studies has a rather small share of 3 credits, and such basic disciplines as English Literature, Business English, and innovative studies in the



application of artificial intelligence technologies are classified as selectives with 5 credits each.

The analysis of the EPP4 shows that the general training cycle includes pedagogy with 7 credits and psychology with 3 credits, although the psychological aspects of different age groups are extremely important for a foreign language teacher. 'World Literature' is also classified as a professional training course. 'English Language Teaching Methods, which, of course, has a general pedagogical basis, covers only 3 credits, but this discipline is supposed to form one of the key competences according to the programme – the ability to teach a foreign language.

**Discussion.** Thus, it can be seen that within the framework of the studied educational and professional programmes implemented at the departments and chairs of foreign languages of Kharkiv educational institutions, certain trends can be traced that characterise the peculiarities of the formation of foreign language communicative competence of higher education students. These trends include the following:

- the tendency to have a much wider range of general cycle subjects, which sometimes exceed or approach the number of subjects provided for within the professional training cycle in terms of their share in the EPP, expressed in units of academic credits (it should be noted that many general cycle subjects are studied very deeply by candidates for university enrollment when entering higher education institutions, so repeated study of such subjects does not seem entirely justified);
- absence of specialised disciplines among the mandatory components of the educational and professional programme;
- lack of homogeneity, at least in the general training cycles, as each higher education institution understands the essence of general training differently;
- a general reduction in the number of credits for specialised disciplines.

**Conclusions.** The explanation for this situation, on the one hand, can be found in the descriptive part of the Higher Education Standard in Philology, which states that 50% of the total should be spent on general and specialised disciplines. In addition, each department or chair, of course, changes the list of disciplines of the professional cycle, depending on the specificity of the programme or programme learning outcomes: whether it should be a philology graduate and a lecturer or an interpreter/translator, perhaps a secretary with a foreign language communicative competence, etc. Nevertheless, the inclusion of purely professional subjects in the category of selectives with a predominance of general subjects or the 'migration' of subjects (e.g., World Literature) from the category of general subjects to professional subjects is a matter of deep concern.

Of course, the situation described also depends upon a number of objective factors, mostly unfortunately irresistible:

- obsolescence of the education content (lack of innovative approaches, updating of forms and methods of educational activities, which is expressed in the literal conservation of the education content which may remain the same for decades. An example of this is the presence in all programmes of some kind general subject ‘Philosophy’, but the absence of studies in artificial intelligence like large language models or natural language processing and recognition);

- obsolescence of the material and technical base (lack of opportunities for higher education institutions to update the technical means of the educational process, to use the latest textbooks under licence or subscription, in particular, with digital and multimedia support due to lack of funding);

- obsolescence of the teaching staff (a significant proportion of teachers are representatives of the so-called ‘old classical school’, ‘traditional formation’ – the older generation for whom mastering new, in particular, digital technologies is a challenging task; enhanced by the lack of adequate material and technical base and the conservation of educational content, it causes a significant discrepancy between theory and practice the connection of which is the cornerstone of the competence-based approach to education in accordance with the Bologna process).

All of this is amplified by the most recent two major blows to Ukraine's education and research system:

1. the coronavirus pandemic, which has undoubtedly become a global challenge for the entire educational community;
2. the war in Ukraine, which has become a local negative factor.

No expert who understands the seriousness of the situation in Ukraine would question the heroism of Ukrainian teachers who teach against all odds and despite the current circumstances. The analysis of the studied programmes confirms the considerable thoroughness of the training of experts in the field of foreign philology which is based upon fundamentality, but also confirms the discrepancy between theory and practice amid other problems.

Of course, it is currently impossible to change the situation radically due to objective factors. Nonetheless, deriving from the principle of step-by-step and moderate reforms proposed by the Bologna Process, we believe it is appropriate to gradually implement a programme to improve the efficiency of higher foreign language education.

This should not be a radical reform lest it become a shock therapy for an already complex and multi-level education system. Alterations should be implemented gradually, with a focus on quality.

The proposed programme may include several operational objectives. In particular, these could be the following:

- reduction of the general subjects' share , replacing them with disciplines that are of key importance in today's globalised world. Their study can become the basis for the professional competence of a modern specialist;
- increasing the share of innovative digital technologies in the process of teaching and learning foreign languages;
- gradual digitalisation of teaching tools and forms through mandatory grant-based (non-governmental, but donor-funded) training for lecturers.

Sure, the achievement of these goals is possible only if changes are made to the regulatory policy. For example, we believe it would be appropriate to develop a separate Standard for Higher Education in Foreign Philology, since general linguistics, although covering the generalised structure of language, cannot explain in-depth the specifics of all languages. The Standard may include a basic and compulsory cycle of disciplines to ensure homogeneity of programmes and unify the divergence of approaches to the content of education.

We see the prospects for further research in analysing the structure of the competences provided by the Educational and Professional Programmes, as well as the matrices of correspondence, structural and logical schemes, and the creation of a draft Standard of Higher Foreign Language Education and a Programme for the gradual improvement of the quality of foreign language higher education in Ukraine based on the research, taking into account national features, as well as international best practices.

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**Цитуйте цю статтю як:** Зенякін О. С. Аналіз кредитно-модульної системи формування іншомовної комунікативної компетентності здобувачів вищої освіти (на матеріалі закладів вищої освіти міста Харкова). *Теорія та методика навчання та виховання*, 2024. № 57. С. 43-57.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34142/23128046.2024.57.04>

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Дата надходження статті до редакції: 12.09.2024

Стаття прийнята до друку: 24.09.2024