

THE INTERRELATION OF PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSALITY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG BEGINNING FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPECIALISTS

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This paper sets out to examine the potential value of professional universality in relation to professional development among beginning foreign language specialists. The purpose of revealing the interrelation is to prove the importance of professional universality for promoting a better competitiveness, mobility, competence and professional development of future graduates.

I. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to reveal the essence of the interrelation of professional universality and professional development among beginning foreign language specialists. In today's globalized world educating philologists and linguists, integrated with training for a future profession as translator and/or interpreter and foreign language teacher, constitutes an important challenge to educational systems worldwide. The central concept of universality, which underlines both the theoretical framework and the pedagogical methods seems particularly well suited for the complex approach of training future foreign language specialists, given the fact that the study programme and the curriculum involved concern the education and training of students for professions whose ultimate goal is to enable precisely communication, intercultural dialogue and mediation. On the basis of theoretical analysis of central concepts that underline contemporary professional training for higher education such categories as competence, tolerance, mobility, competitiveness, empathy, understanding should be taken into consideration. It is assumed that the key categories mentioned above can be successfully integrated into the concept of professional universality in training foreign language specialists. Indeed, to address issues like professional universality, and professional development it is necessary to develop several closely related models. The two key concepts differ in many ways, so comparing them is not a matter of changing the value of one or two parameters. The theoretical framework is based upon wide

theoretical underpinnings from Russian and international studies, within areas such as pedagogy, vocational psychology, cross-cultural communication, theory and methodology of professional education, translation studies, sociology, philosophy, and other relevant disciplines.

II. Implications of professional development

It is necessary to reveal the implications of professional development among future foreign language specialists in Russia. The system of higher education in Russia is undergoing a considerable change, where traditional methods of educating foreign language specialists, and training translators and/or interpreters and language teachers will have to give way for more updated methods and technologies, to cater for the needs arising as a consequence of the rapid international development of the roles and characteristics of these professions. The issue of raising the efficiency level of professional development and professional competence among foreign language specialists, language teachers especially, has been addressed quite frequently over the past years. The interest to the topic can be explained by a number of factors influencing modern educational standards in the way to make them capable of meeting the needs conditioned by the rapid development of society in all its spheres. The modern society undergoes social and economical changes which contribute to the extension of relations between countries and their enterprises, for example, popularization of travel and tourism, and diversity of educational opportunities. These needs can be sat-

ified by properly educated, highly professional personnel speaking foreign languages on a certain level, because employers are sure of the connection between language competence and business success.

The contemporary model of foreign language specialist professional development should become more universal, integrative and more constructive than focused just on knowledge of transmission, it treats beginning foreign language teachers, and translators/interpreters as active learners (Lieberman, 1994; McLaughlin and Zarrow, 2001). It sees the long-term process effective if it allows to apply previously acquired knowledge to new experiences. Future specialists should become 'reflective practitioners' (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001; Lieberman, 1994). Professional development in the sphere of foreign language teaching and interpreting should be viewed as a collaborative process as meaningful interactions and mediations have a positive effect on professional development. It is also a multi-dimensional process (Scribner, 1999) though we assume that there should be certain universal professional development models in training foreign language specialists. Educational institutions working on the basis of modern educational standards are more competitive and capable of supplying the market with qualified graduates. They work according to educational standards controlled by the state. The goal of modern education is to match the teaching goals and learning needs. Many researches assume that the quality of professional education is directly linked with the omnifaceted structure of various competences of specialists, as well as with the support of specialists in the course of their professional development (Chernilevsky, 2002: 303). Professional development enables teachers to develop learners proficiency in a foreign language required for meeting learning needs. Professional universality of foreign language specialists could become a key parameter to match principles for teacher competences and qualifications within Russian and common European educational

standards. Students will benefit from combining previously acquired and lately developed foreign language teaching or/and interpreting skills and professional competence with the developed professional universality in the course of their professional development. The education of foreign language specialists is *multidisciplinary*. This ensures that they have extensive subject knowledge, a good knowledge of pedagogy, the skills and competences required to guide and support learners, and an understanding of the social and cultural dimension. They should be encouraged to participate actively in *professional development*, which can include periods of time spent outside their professional sector, and this should be recognized and rewarded within their own systems. *Mobility* should be a central component of initial and continuing education programmes. Foreign language specialists should be encouraged to participate in different projects and spend time working or studying in other countries for professional development purposes. Those who do so should have their status recognized in the host country and their participation recognized and valued in their home country. The concept of universality implies that they should also have the opportunity for mobility between different levels of education and towards different professions within the education sector. Institutions providing teacher education should organize their work collaboratively in *partnership* with schools, local work environments, work-based training providers and other stakeholders. Higher education institutions need to ensure that their teaching benefits from knowledge of current practice. Teacher education partnerships, which have an emphasis on practical skills and an academic and scientific basis, should provide teachers with the competence and confidence to reflect on their own and others' practice. Teacher education, in itself, should be supported and be an object of study and research. Every beginning foreign language specialist should have the opportunity to continue their studies to the highest level in or-

der to develop their professional competences and to increase their opportunities for progression within the profession. Acquiring foreign languages in the course of their curriculum with the specialization either in foreign language teaching or in translation and interpretation studies is just the beginning of professional development, which can be characterized as on-going life-long process, emphasizing that both translators/interpreters and teachers in most cases commit themselves to continuing professional growth. It implies raising their own standards of professionalism, constant updating and self-evaluation. All aspects of foreign language teaching, translating and interpreting are equally important for high-quality achievements. Acquiring the ability to create a learning environment, and/or cultural environment through the process of mediation means keeping up to date linguistically, theoretically, psychologically, methodologically, and technically.

III. Applying the concept of universality

It is assumed that the concept of universality can be successfully applied to professional development among future foreign language specialists. The concept of professional universality has got quite an eternal nature, and it has been the problem of many scientific fields. There have been a number of studies on the continuity and change of individuals' vocational interests and interest development (*Low & Rounds, 2007*), on the universality of vocational interest structure among ethnic minorities (*Day & Rounds, 1998*), on the correlation between career choices and decision-making style (*Burley, Turner, Vitulli, 1999*) with the assumption that personality and decision-making styles have a strong impact on the type of work environment in which people strive. They are all based on J.L. Holland's theory of occupational choice, mainly on the investigation of realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional vocational interests (*Holland, 1968*). Thus, J.L. Holland's typological theory of persons and environments is

regarded as the most influential in the field of professional development and career counseling but this has not been carried over to the field of theory and methodology of professional education of foreign language specialists, namely to investigating the possibility of professional universality in such area as vocational behaviour of language specialists in Russia. We assume that the combination of constricted professionalism and universality in the course of professional education of future foreign language specialists implies further consideration of specific processes, which bring over 'trans-border cooperation' between representatives of different cultures in their future professional development. Vocational choice appears to crystallize during adolescence and one's career aspirations begin to take shape later. We base our research on the fact that to happily match vocational aspirations to vocational preference profiles you need not only developed professional competence, but also professional universality in the chosen field. Peter B. Swanson studied individuals seeking to become foreign language teachers, who were assigned a Social, Artistic, Enterprising vocational code (*Swanson, 2008*). However, longitudinal studies were not conducted to verify if these people ever entered the teaching profession. The present study sought to determine a Holland code for in-service foreign language educators. Data analysis confirms a stable Holland profile and his earlier findings as well as highlighting interesting differences among world language educators. This study holds implications for school counselors and recruiters of prospective language teachers during a time of critical shortage. The association between professional activities of future language specialists that share certain qualities is the basis for interest inventories used in career counseling, inventories that assume a certain structure of likenesses and differences among professional activities. According to the reasoning of such inventories, people consider teaching and social work as more alike than pig farming and jet piloting (*Day & Rounds, 1998: 728*). Underlining this

reasoning is a belief that people apprehend similar constellations of activities. But this belief is challenged by multicultural theory, which holds that it is quite possible for subgroups to have quite divergent thought patterns. The common structure of vocational interests is theoretically related to McCrae and Costa's (McCrae & Costa, 1997: 509-516) claim of personality structure as a universal. If vocational preferences are indeed manifestations of personality, then, we can train language specialists to be universal specialists in the sphere of linguistics and intercultural communication. Professional development is inseparably linked with personal development. The principle of self-development is subjacent to both of them and is considered to be extremely important for the foreign language specialist. The combination of the high level of professional competence ability of the language specialist with the targeting impetus to the increasing quality of *universal* professional education will enable to work out new innovative integrative technologies of foreign language teacher training, professional interpreter training, interpreter preparation programs, translation and interpreting courses.

IV. Conclusions

The concept of universality is as urgent for the system of higher education in Russia, as ever. We assume that universality of the foreign language specialist reveals, in the first place, the level of his/her professional competence ability and professional culture, which is the means of creative self-actualization, the highest form of individual performance, in different aspects of professional practices: teaching specialisms, teaching strategies, oral consecutive translation in different professional spheres, simultaneous translation, written translation of texts of various professional mainstreams and special purposes, belles-lettres translation. Professional universality should become an impor-

tant asset in training foreign language specialists. Thus the potential value of professional universality of foreign language specialists reveals its importance for promoting a better competitiveness and professional development of future graduates in general, and is related to a new resultative quality of their professional education.

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