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**THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE COMPETENCY-BASED
APPROACH TO TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES (ON THE
EXAMPLE OF GERMAN)**

Abstract. The competency-based approach has become one of the leading paradigms in contemporary foreign language education. It emphasizes not only the acquisition of linguistic knowledge but also the development of communicative, intercultural, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies necessary for real-life communication. This article examines the theoretical foundations of the competency-based approach in foreign language teaching, with a specific focus on the German language. It analyzes key concepts, theoretical models, pedagogical principles, and methodological implications that shape competency-oriented instruction.

Keywords: Competency-Based Approach, Foreign Language Teaching, German Language Instruction, Communicative Competence, Autonomous Learning, CEFR.

**ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВЫ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТНОГО
ПОДХОДА К ОБУЧЕНИЮ ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ
НЕМЕЦКОГО ЯЗЫКА)**

Аннотация. Компетентностный подход стал одной из ведущих парадигм современного иноязычного образования. Он делает акцент не только на приобретении языковых знаний, но и на развитии коммуникативных, межкультурных, социолингвистических и стратегических компетенций, необходимых для реального общения. В данной статье рассматриваются теоретические основы компетентностного подхода к

обучению иностранным языкам, в частности немецкому языку. Анализируются ключевые концепции, теоретические модели, педагогические принципы и методические положения, лежащие в основе компетентностно-ориентированного обучения.

Ключевые слова: компетентностный подход, преподавание иностранных языков, обучение немецкому языку, коммуникативная компетентность, автономное обучение, CEFR.

Introduction. In recent decades, the shift from knowledge-oriented teaching to competency-based instruction has transformed pedagogical practices in foreign language education. This transformation is strongly rooted in modern educational theory, global standardization initiatives, and the need for communicative proficiency in an increasingly interconnected world. In the context of teaching German as a foreign language, the competency-based approach plays a critical role in aligning curriculum design, assessment tools, and instructional practices with real-world linguistic demands.

Competency-based instruction prioritizes the holistic development of learners by integrating linguistic abilities with communicative performance, intercultural awareness, and problem-solving skills. Its theoretical foundations are derived from communicative language theory, constructivist pedagogy, European educational standards (CEFR), and psychological models of competence development.

Main part. The competency-based approach has become a leading paradigm in modern foreign language education, emphasizing not only the acquisition of linguistic knowledge but also the development of practical, transferable skills that enable learners to use the language effectively in real-life contexts. In the case of teaching German as a foreign language, this approach integrates linguistic, communicative, sociocultural, cognitive, and digital competencies, preparing learners for active participation in multilingual and multicultural environments.

One of the fundamental theoretical foundations of competency-based foreign language instruction is the Common European Framework of Reference for

Languages (CEFR). The CEFR conceptualizes language mastery through descriptors of communicative competence and “can-do” statements, which emphasize what learners are able to perform with the language rather than what grammatical content they know. This shift from knowledge-based to performance-based outcomes aligns strongly with competency-based principles. In German language education, CEFR levels guide curriculum design, assessment practices, and pedagogical strategies, ensuring that learners develop functional skills in listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

Concept of Competence. The term *competence* refers to the integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and strategies that enable individuals to perform tasks successfully in specific contexts. In foreign language teaching, competence includes:

- **Linguistic competence** (grammar, vocabulary, phonetics)
- **Communicative competence** (pragmatic and functional use of language)
- **Sociocultural competence** (intercultural understanding, norms of interaction)

This multidimensional concept lays the groundwork for competency-based foreign language instruction.

Competency-based German instruction focuses on developing learners’ practical skills, communicative abilities, and independent learning habits rather than merely emphasizing grammatical rules or memorization. One of its central aims is to cultivate **autonomous learning strategies**, enabling students to take responsibility for their own linguistic progress. Through guided practice, reflective activities, and exposure to authentic German materials, learners acquire the ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning processes. This autonomy not only improves language proficiency but also strengthens learners’ confidence and motivation.

Another key outcome of competency-based instruction is the development of **problem-solving skills**. In German language classrooms, students engage in real-life communicative tasks—such as navigating German websites, resolving misunderstandings, participating in group discussions, or completing project-based assignments. These tasks require critical thinking, creativity, and decision-making, helping learners apply the German language flexibly in various contexts. As a result, students learn to transfer linguistic knowledge into meaningful, practical actions.

The approach also emphasizes **self-assessment**, often guided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Tools such as the CEFR “can-do” statements help learners evaluate their progress in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. By reflecting on their abilities, identifying gaps, and setting learning goals, students become more engaged and responsible participants in the educational process. Self-assessment fosters metacognitive awareness, which is essential for sustained language development.

Discussion. The competency-based approach marks a significant evolution in foreign language pedagogy. While traditional methods emphasized memorization of rules, modern competency-oriented teaching emphasizes communication, creativity, and real-life language use. In the context of German language instruction, the approach enables learners to achieve functional proficiency, cultural adaptability, and independent learning skills. However, challenges remain, including teacher preparation, development of appropriate learning materials, and maintaining a balance between fluency and accuracy.

Conclusion. The competency-based approach provides a robust theoretical and methodological foundation for effective foreign language teaching. Grounded in communicative, constructivist, and intercultural theories, it supports the development of comprehensive linguistic and communicative abilities. In teaching German, the approach aligns with CEFR standards and modern educational demands, helping learners acquire not just knowledge of the language but the

competence to use it meaningfully in diverse contexts. As global communication expands, competency-based instruction will continue to play a central role in shaping successful foreign language education. The pedagogical principles of competency-based instruction form a comprehensive framework that transforms traditional teaching into a dynamic, learner-centered, and performance-oriented process.

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