



**A foreign language as an effective means of research skills development for  
economics students**

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**A foreign language as an effective means of research skills development for economics  
students**

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**ABSTRACT**

The issue of research competences formation as part of professional skills is considered to be of high significance especially while implementing educational standards of the third generation. A strong command of a foreign language and its use as a tool for searching, selecting and processing scientific or specialized information is of great current interest in the context of globalization of information resources as well as the modern labor market modernization. The involvement of students in various research activities connected to foreign language studies contributes to the formation of additional research competencies. In the article, the authors determine the organizational tasks, the types of Students' Scientific Research (SSR), the pedagogical conditions for the research competencies formation. Moreover, the authors assessed the research skills development within the framework of the SSR.

**Keywords:** Students' scientific research (SSR), foreign language, expertise, competency, student, economic sphere.



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### **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of research competence formation as part of professional competencies is generally considered in the context of the third generation educational standards. A strong command of a foreign language and its use as a tool for searching, selecting and processing scientific or specialized information is of great current interest in the context of globalization of information resources as well as the modern labor market modernization. Students' scientific research projects in current socio and economic environment is a vital component of any professional education. It is worth mentioning, that this type of research significantly improves the quality of training. The involvement of students in various research activities connected to foreign language studies contributes to the formation of additional research competencies.

Students' scientific research in higher educational institutions is a multifaceted object of study: from the point of view of the scientific interest formation (Aksenov L. I., Arapov M. V., Belov G. A., Kisileva N. V., etc.); fundamentals of self-directed scientific research among students (Abramova S. V., Astanina S. Y., Berezhnova L. N., Kolesnikova N. I., Kuznetsov I. N., Rozanova N. M., etc.); issues of research skills formation among students in the studying process (Galiullina F. S., Minajeva Y. I., Skarbich S. N., Fedina O. V., etc.); foreign language as a means of research skills development (Lopatina O. V., Saifullin R. S., Bezrukova O. G., Galishnikova E. M., Valeeva L. A., Krivchenko L. P., Zakharova A. V., Mardanshina R. M., etc.). The formation of different competences is considered in the framework of the educational competence approach (Bolotov L. N., Lednyov V. S., Filatova L. O., etc.).

In this study, the authors intend to examine the foreign language potential in the research competence formation among students majoring in economics at the early stages of learning.

### **METHODS**

Analysis and synthesis of scientific and educational literature, project method, interpretation of the results on vocational training.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Most of the students who took part in the survey demonstrated a high level of research competence, which signifies an effectiveness of this research system. Requirements to the level of professional competence formation for future economists in the sphere of analytical, scientific and research activities are expressed in the FSES (Federal State Education Standards) in the training program 38.03.01 "Economics" [12].



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According to the FSES, a graduate who has completed the undergraduate program must possess:

- an ability to build standard theoretical and econometric models based on the description of economic processes and phenomena, to analyze and interpret results (PC-4);
- an ability to analyze and interpret financial, accounting and other information from the reports of various enterprises, organizations, agencies, etc. and use this information to make management decisions (PC-5);
- an ability to analyze and interpret the domestic and foreign statistics data on the socio-economic processes and phenomena, to identify trends in socio-economic indicators (PC-6);
- an ability to use domestic and foreign sources of information, collect necessary data, analyze them and prepare an informative overview and/or analytical report (PC-7);
- an ability to solve analytical and research problems using modern technical means and information technologies (PC-8).

In addition to the core competencies the graduate of the bachelor program in economics should also be able to collect, analyze and process data which is necessary for solving professional tasks (GPC-2); as for common cultural competencies, the student must be able to communicate in oral and written forms in Russian and foreign languages for solving interpersonal and intercultural problems (GPC-4) [13].

According to the FSES, a competence is the ability to apply knowledge, skills and personal qualities necessary for a successful activity in a certain area [13].

The main goal of a scientific research is to obtain new knowledge, scientific explanation of a new fact, the proof of its cognitive, theoretical or practical significance. Students' scientific research projects at the university can be considered as part of the educational process, regulated by the curricula and educational programs (writing term papers and dissertations) and as extracurricular activities. The second type of work includes subject groups, problem-based student labs, a business case clubs, as well as participation in scientific and practical conferences and competitions, panel discussions, and roundtables.

An additional key component of any economist's professional the ability to ongoing self-education and self-development [5].

Students' scientific research outside the classroom is the scientific work related to a search of information and experiments aimed at obtaining new knowledge, verifying scientific hypotheses,



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establishing laws and scientific generalizations, providing scientific support for various projects [11, 10, 1, 4].

In foreign practice, the scientific competence formation (research skill development framework) in the broad sense is a gradual (multilevel) development of the following practices: problem clarification, search and generation, evaluation, organization, analysis and synthesis, communication and application [15]. Considering this system in a more detailed way, we can distinguish four main areas of competences, such as:

- knowledge and intellectual abilities
- personal qualities or personal performance,
- organization of studies and management,
- communication, influence, and application.

Each of the areas, in its turn, brings together several competencies or skills. For example, personal effectiveness incorporates the personal qualities, self-management, professional and career development. [14, p.4].

Learning a foreign language in high school due to modern conditions is included in the general process of professionalization. It includes the two task solving – mastering the language of specialization and skills of its practical application [3]. This forms a number of research competencies, such as working with information, selection tools for data processing [15], the use of computer technologies [6, p. 16].

Integrating a plurality of components in the research competence formation the via a foreign language, students acquire knowledge, skills and various ways of working, which allows them "to take the position of the researcher, enabling them to carry out and to present the results of the study using the language of international communication that fosters the full realization of their intellectual potential in a future professional activity" [7, p. 249].

The Department of foreign languages in the sphere of economics, business and finance, the Institute of management, economics and finance of Kazan Federal University is proud to have experience in holding annual scientific conferences. Within our Department, we consider students' scientific research projects as a multilevel education (bachelor's degree + master's degree + supplementary vocational education (SVE)). The methodological potential of foreign language contributes to the formation of oral and written communication skills and skills of fast and efficient reading [8]. The trend towards greater integration among economics universities graduates into the



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international academic environment places high demands on the research skills availability in the form of scientific articles, reports, business reports. Due to the development of academic writing skills at the postgraduate level, students are focused on research for writing their master's dissertations [2].

The Department of foreign languages in the sphere of economics, business and Finance in the Institute of management, economics, and finance conducts a comprehensive work on research competence formation. This work involves students from different courses. Every year the Department organizes student conferences in various sections: microeconomics, macroeconomics, regional economics and management. This kind of work is considered as an extracurricular, but participation in the conference plays an important role in learning skills and research activities.

Participation in the research work is divided into five stages. The initial step is the choice of topics within the stated sections and discussion with the supervisor, formulation of goals, hypotheses, and methods of the research. The next step is the study of the information sources, analyzing domestic and foreign statistics in both English and Russian languages, which is important for sections of the regional economics due to the lack of scientific literature in a foreign language. At this stage, students should get familiar with the latest theories, methods, and technologies concerning the chosen topic. Moreover, they work with the special terminology (vocabulary). Then there is the creative stage, which includes conducting their own experiment or survey. At this stage, students learn to interpret and generalize the results of the study in the form of a written report in a foreign language using skills of paraphrasing, etc. The fourth stage is making the presentation in English using the skills of work with computer programs (PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.) The imagination and creativeness should be measured alike with the objective of their research. During the speech, their presentation plays a key role in terms of visualization of the goals and the results obtained. At last the final stage, the students publicly report the results of their research and participate in discussions, both with the expert and with other participants in a foreign language. It shows the student ability speak eloquently, to get the audience interested in their speech and to motivate. It also includes the literacy of presentation, the ability to be a competitive speaker.

The authors have conducted a survey of 21 students of first and second courses studying in the Institute of management, economics, and finance. All the students were the participants of the 2017 conference. The survey touched upon the issues of motivation and formation of research skills. The qualitative composition of the respondents can be divided into several groups as follows: 9 students studying general economics fulltime; 12 students of the program "Interpreter in the sphere



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of professional communication". This program is operating within the framework of supplementary vocational education (SVE) at the Department of foreign languages in the sphere of economics, business and Finance, IMEF KFU. The aforementioned program provides students of non-linguistic major with an opportunity to acquire an additional qualification of an interpreter in the sphere of professional communication [9]. Participants in this program study for three years and get great language practice. This program is very popular among students. Graduates of this program possess the profound knowledge and work successfully in international financial companies (e.g. PWC, EY, KPMG, IBM, McKinsey, Deloitte, etc.).

All the participants of the conference are highly motivated students. Answering a mid-close non-alternative question "Why did you decide to participate in the conference?" the responses of the students were ranked in the following way: "I Want to use an additional platform for practicing English" the majority of respondents replied; "I want to try to carry out an independent research in a foreign language" more than half of respondents answered; "I find it interesting and it helps to broaden horizons" two-thirds of the students said; "There is a good opportunity to get a publication" replied every 1 out of 3 students, and every fifth student said that they were motivated by the opportunity "to practice public speaking in English".

During the training period and the participation in the scientific student's conference, there is a constant process of research competence formation among students. We distinguished the components, which correlate with the stages of research work as follows: the ability to work with foreign sources, to analyze domestic and foreign statistics data on the subject of research (1); knowledge of the latest theories, methods, and techniques (2); the ability to interpret and summarize the study results in a written form using a foreign language (3); the ability to prepare an English presentation (4); the ability to publicly report on the results of research and to participate in discussions on the subject (5).

To estimate these competencies formation, we used opinions of invited experts, of a research advisor and student's opinion. Levels of skills formation were ranked on a three-point scale: 3 points - the skill is fully formed, 2 points – the skill is formed to a significant degree, 1 point – the skill is weak, a score of 0 –the skill is not formed. As a result, we obtained the following data:



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Table 1

Scores	Foreign source analysis (1)	Theories, methods, and techniques (2)	Generalization and interpretation (3)	Presentation (4)	Communication (5)
3	42,86%	42,86%	28,57%	66,67%	33,33%
2	42,86%	47,62%	61,90%	28,57%	52,38%
1	14,29%	9,52%	9,52%	4,76%	14,29%
0	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

As it can be seen from the aforementioned data, during the presentation preparation the respondents noted the high potential of this format regarding the research competence formation among students of economics majors.

### SUMMARY

The competence level in a research project, formed by the means of a foreign language studying, is an important criterion defining the success of the future professional activity in the global economic system. The obtained research results can be useful for scientific and pedagogical staff and students of higher education institutions majoring in economics and management, and they can be used to improve the scientific research organization of future specialists.

### CONCLUSIONS

Research competences formation is an indispensable condition in the training of modern professionals in financial, economic and management spheres. A level of competence and skills, which are necessary for research project conduct, are an important criterion of success in the future professional activity of a financial and administrative specialist. A special role here is played by the students' participation in scientific conferences in a foreign language, as it is an integrative type of research and training activities, combining practical and theoretical aspects. It must be noted that this activity esimultaneously develops different types of thinking, contributes to self-development and enhances the creative potential of students. The obtained results can be helpful for teaching staff and students of higher educational institutions in the sphere of economics, and used to improve the research project organization among future economists.



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