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# EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLISH PHILOLOGY STUDIES

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## ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** This research explores effective strategies for the development of English language competence within the educational context. The study focuses on the integration of English language modules at different educational levels and the incorporation of discipline-specific courses to address specific linguistic needs.

**Methods:** The research investigates the impact of digitalization measures, such as online laboratories, exam preparation modules, and online *courses*, on language learning outcomes and student engagement. These strategies were analyzed to understand their effects on language competence and engagement.

**Results:** The findings demonstrate the positive effects of these strategies in facilitating progressive and comprehensive language skill development. The integration of both traditional and digital approaches has shown improvements in the overall learning experience.

**Conclusion:** This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on innovative approaches to English language instruction. It provides insights into designing effective language learning programs. The recommendations presented aim to help English Philology students improve their English language skills, enabling them to communicate proficiently, comprehend complex texts, and succeed in their academic and professional pursuits.

**Keywords:** english language, competence development, english language modules, english language skills, language proficiency, sustainable development goals (SDGs).

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of developing English communicative competence is a comprehensive view of the English language teaching system. The English language learning model is a purposeful process of acquiring the English language and gaining experience in communicative activities within intercultural communication contexts. The concept is based on:

a) An international system of English language proficiency levels;

b) The system of descriptors of the Common European Framework of

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Reference for Languages (CEFR);

c) Modern English teaching methodologies that ensure the effectiveness of the educational process.

This concept is formulated based on the University's development program and contributes to its efficient implementation, with its main functions being:

1. Methodological: defining the goals of English language learning, selecting the content and designing study programs, utilizing teaching methods and technologies, and developing assessment materials;
2. Organizational: serving as a document that contains comprehensive information on the principles, approaches, and rules for organizing the English language learning process. The core principles of the concept allow for independent adjustments and fine-tuning of learning trajectories and programs.

This concept also emphasizes the integration of linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic aspects of English language learning. It recognizes the importance of not only language proficiency but also the ability to effectively communicate and interact in real-life situations. It promotes learner-centered approaches, encouraging active participation, critical thinking, and creativity in language learning activities.

## 1.1 GOALS, CONTENT AND PLANNED RESULTS

The main goal of English language instruction for students in English Philology Studies is to develop and further enhance English communicative competence at a level sufficient for effective communication in social, cultural, professional, academic, and scientific domains. This competence is based on the following:

1. Proficiency in English language that aligns with international standards (ranging from B2 to C1 according to educational standards for respective study programs);
2. Ability to construct speech behavior in social, cultural, professional, academic, and scientific communication situations, guided by the

principles of effective communication and intercultural dialogue.

The stated goal is achieved through the progressive completion of the following objectives:

a) By the end of the second year, all students should have attained English language proficiency within the B2-C1 level range. This level of communicative competence enables students to engage with educational programs and disciplines taught in English and is substantiated by the attainment of an international certificate;
b) By the end of the final year, students should be able to present the results of their research or projects in both oral and written English;
c) Upon completion of their study program, students should be prepared for professional activities that require the use of English language, working in international environments, and pursuing further education through English-based master's programs.

English language instruction in the graduate program takes into account the specific characteristics of the field of study and overall aims to develop students' ability to utilize the language as a tool for professional and academic communication.

The English language instruction encompasses six key areas:

### 1.1.1 English for General Communication Purposes

This area aims to provide practical proficiency in English for interpersonal and intercultural communication (Savignon, 2003). The focus is on developing listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills in accordance with the requirements of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) at levels B2 to C1.

### 1.1.2 English for Business Purposes

The objective of this area is to develop written and oral business communication skills (Takino, 2020). The courses are not specific to a particular business sector but cover a range of communicative strategies and tactics


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necessary for productive collaboration with colleagues, partners, management, employees, and competitors. Additionally, they aim to shape an individual's style of corporate communication.

### 1.1.3 English for Academic Purposes

This area is designed to equip students with the necessary skills for academic success, including reading academic texts, academic writing, giving presentations, participating in discussions, and conducting research in English (Kamaşak *et al.*, 2021). The focus is on developing critical thinking, academic vocabulary, and effective academic communication.

### 1.1.4 English for Specific Purposes

This area concentrates on developing English language skills in specific professional contexts, such as English for Law, English for Medicine, English for Engineering, etc. (Milne, 2021; Kováčiková, 2020; Arnó-Macià *et al.*, 2020).The courses provide specialized vocabulary, terminology, and communication strategies relevant to each field.

### 1.1.5 English for Intercultural Communication

This area aims to enhance students' cultural awareness and understanding of intercultural communication dynamics. It focuses on developing skills for effective communication across cultures, fostering empathy, and promoting intercultural competence (Ou *et al.*, 2023).

### 1.1.6 English Language Proficiency Test Preparation

This area provides preparation courses specifically tailored to help students succeed in English proficiency exams, such as IELTS, TOEFL, or Cambridge English exams (Tomlinson, 2020). These courses focus on familiarizing students with the exam format, practicing test-taking strategies,

and improving overall language proficiency.

The description of the intended learning outcomes for English language instruction in each area follows a unified model using descriptors from the globally recognized Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for language proficiency. According to Piccardo (2020) the CEFR serves as an instrumental and methodological document allowing for:

a) Systematizing the development of language courses and educational programs and aligning them with the reference levels (A1-C2) based on their complexity;
b) Developing customized assessment, measurement, and instructional materials that are aligned with international standards;
c) Facilitating professional dialogue among educators working in different countries and educational institutions through a shared metalinguistic framework for describing foreign language teaching systems;
d) Correlating the results of various international language proficiency tests and recognizing competencies.

When formulating and detailing the learning outcomes for discipline programs, CEFR descriptors, adapted to the relevant educational context, will be employed. A unified 100-point scale and the technology of creating a Communicative Student Profile may be utilized (Shaw, 2020).

The assessment scale used in English language instruction is a graded 100-point scale that allows for:

1) Assessing overall proficiency in English and aligning it with international standards;
2) Assigning the level of difficulty to evaluation materials and developing tests of different levels;
3) Comparing results from entrance tests, internal and independent assessments, and tracking student progress;
4) Formulating educational objectives and selecting optimal instructional materials and pathways;
5) Establishing a unified methodology for collecting and analyzing data on education quality.

The scale is aligned with major scales of measuring English

communicative competence (such as the Pearson Scale of English, Cambridge Scale, TOEFL Scale, etc.). The presentation of English language learning outcomes will utilize this scale and the Language Profile technology (Shaw, 2020).

The Language Profile technology represents a comprehensive collection of verbal characteristics of speech behavior across four types of language activities, each of which can be detailed and measured. All descriptors used in constructing student Language Profiles are formulated as holistic positive statements aimed at creating a complete picture of individual communicative behavior patterns. Descriptors are measurable, correspond to the assessment scale, and align with the CEFR reference levels of language proficiency (A1-C2).

The Language Profile technology, in conjunction with the assessment scale, allows for the dynamic representation of learning outcomes (see Appendix 1).

## 2 MODEL

The educational process model consists of an interconnected combination of educational content and intended learning outcomes, as outlined in the curriculum for academic disciplines and assessment activities. These elements can be classified as university-wide or additional components. University-wide elements are offered to students of all study programs through their respective curriculum. The implementation of university-wide elements is carried out within the "English Language" module, which comprises elective courses and ensures that students achieve a minimum level of B2 on the CEFR scale. Internal and Independent Examinations, which are mandatory for all students in English Philology Studies programs, are also considered university-wide elements. Additional elements in English language education can be included in study programs based on decisions made by faculty and program leadership. These elements can be either elective (offered by faculties or study programs in addition to the program requirements) or compulsory (considered within the program requirements and offered by faculties or study programs). Additional elements can be included in both the English language module and

other study program modules. The implementation of these elements allows for the consideration of the specific characteristics of the faculty, field of study, or particular study program, and ensures the necessary scope and quality of English language preparation for addressing professional tasks in a specific field. The inclusion of additional elements can be initiated by educational institutions and departments responsible for English language instruction, as well as by faculties or study programs. The coordination of additional elements takes place annually during the approval of the working curricula for study programs. Additional elements can include assessment activities that provide confirmation of English language proficiency using 1) resources from authorized examination centers, and 2) assessment materials developed within the university.

When developing and describing the university-wide and additional components of the English language instruction model for all levels of professional training, a unified system of terminology, categories, and measurement metrics is utilized. This approach ensures a consistent description of educational content and intended learning outcomes. The presented model facilitates comprehensive and multi-level preparation, taking into account the University's goals, faculty requirements, and study programs.

## 3 THE PORTFOLIO OF DISCIPLINES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING

The portfolio is organized according to a set of parameters, as outlined in Table 1. This parameter system allows for defining methodological and organizational frameworks for discipline implementation, constructing modular, multi-level English language education programs, and creating individual educational trajectories.

**Table 1**

*Discipline analysis parameters*

| Parameters | Types |
|---|---|
| Complexity | A. Beginner course; B. Basic course; C. Intermediate course; D. Advanced course<br>When determining the level of a course, five factors are taken into account: (1) relationship with CEFR levels; (2) integration with specific subject areas' content and professional tasks; (3) complexity of learning tasks; (4) degree of student autonomy; (5) period of studying the material |
| Training content | (1) General communication purposes; (2) Business purposes; (3) Academic purposes; (4) Specific purposes; (5) Intercultural communication; (6) English language proficiency test preparation |
| Level | (1) Bachelor's degree, (2) Postgraduate studies |
| Use of remote technologies | (1) Remote; (2) Blended learning; (3) Without remote technologies. |
| Implementation format | (1) For one campus; (2) For all campuses; (3) Available to everyone |
| Status | (1) University-wide elective; (2) Compulsory discipline (for a specific study program); (3) Elective discipline (for a specific study program); (4) Faculty elective (for a specific study program) |
| Financing | (1) Funding through the centralized budget; (2) Funding by the faculty or study program |

This language module encompasses disciplines from six different areas, each with its own level of complexity, prerequisite knowledge, and clearly formulated intended learning outcomes. This modular structure enables the combination of disciplines and the formation of individual educational pathways.

When designing the curriculum for the ***first year***, disciplines are included to ensure the following:

- Development of listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills necessary for fluent oral and written communication in interpersonal, social-cultural, and business contexts (Derakhshan *et al.*, 2016);
- Development of lexical-grammatical skills and the ability to construct logical and well-organized written texts and oral expressions (Peter, 2015);
- Development of speech characteristics such as fluency, coherence, and precision of thought expression (Yan *et al.*, 2021);
- Development of business communication skills (Jones & Alexander, 2000);

- Readiness for professional and academic communication using the English language (Frantz *et al.*, 2014).

The model for organizing the disciplines for the first year is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Model for organizing disciplines for the 1st year*

| Direction | I & II modules | III & IV modules |
|---|---|---|
| 1st year: (English for General Communication Purposes) | *English language - Beginner course* | |
| | English Language. Basic Course - 1 (minimum starting level below B1) | English Language. Basic Course - 2 (minimum starting level below B1) |
| | English Language. Intermediate Course - 1 (minimum starting level B1) | English Language. Intermediate Course - 2 (minimum starting level B1) |
| | English Language. Advanced Course - 1 (minimum starting level B2) | English Language. Advanced Course - 2 (minimum starting level B2) |
| 2nd year: (English for Business Communication) | Business English. Intermediate Course - 1 (minimum starting level B1) | Business English. Intermediate Course - 2 (minimum starting level B1) |
| | Business English. Advanced Course - 1 (minimum starting level B2) | Business English. Advanced Course - 2 (minimum starting level B2) |
| 4th year: (English for Specific Purposes) | English for Specific Purposes. [Subject Area] - 1 (minimum starting level B2) | English for Specific Purposes. [Subject Area] - 2 (minimum starting level B2) |

This structure allows for the commencement of English language learning taking into account the existing level of educational achievements. It also enables the possibility to modify the level of study and the content direction based on the results of intermediate testing in English language. The minimum scope of English language instruction within the proposed curriculum for the first year includes directions 1, 2, and 4. The list of directions can be expanded.

## 3.1 MECHANISM FOR SELECTING FIRST-YEAR DISCIPLINES

1. The university and its relevant departments, responsible for implementing the English language module, prepare the proposal and approve the disciplines at the methodological council;
2. The academic supervisor of the study program includes the disciplines from the proposal in the working curriculum plan. To provide students

with a choice, it is necessary to include the entire list of disciplines from at least two directions. It is recommended to select disciplines in dialogue with the university or relevant departments in the field of English Philology;

3. The student chooses the disciplines of the 1st and 2nd modules based on the results of the entrance test, and the disciplines of the 3rd and 4th modules based on the results of the intermediate test. The student cannot choose disciplines with a minimum starting level higher than the results of the entrance and intermediate tests indicated in the prerequisites. However, the student can choose disciplines of lower difficulty level. A student who has reached a B2 level by the time of the intermediate testing can change not only the level of study but also the direction.

When constructing the proposed curriculum for the ***second year***, disciplines are incorporated to foster the following objectives:

- Cultivating proficiency in academic communication and facilitating preparedness for studying subjects in English (Darasawang & Reinders, 2021), commencing from the third year;
- Nurturing the ability to employ English language competencies within professional pursuits (Nguyen *et al.*, 2023);
- Equipping students with the necessary skills to prepare for international English language examinations (Alshuraiaan & Almefleh, 2023).

The organizational framework for disciplines during the second year is presented in Table 3:

**Table 3**

*Organizational model for disciplines in the 2nd year*

| **Direction** | **I-III module** |
|---|---|
| 1st year: (English for General Communication Purposes) | English Language. Intermediate Course |
| | English Language. Advanced Course (minimum starting level B2) |
| 2nd year: (English for Business Communication) | Business English. Intermediate Course |
| | Business English. Advanced Course (minimum starting level B2) |
| 3rd year: (English for General Academic Purposes) | English Language. Preparation for International Exams |
| | English Language for General Academic Purposes. Intermediate Course |
| | English Language for General Academic Purposes. Advanced Course (minimum starting level B2) |

| | |
|---|---|
| 4th year: (English for Specific Purposes) | English Language for Specific Purposes. [Subject Area] |
| 5th year: (English for Specific Academic Purposes) | English Language for Specific Academic Purposes. [Subject Area] |

The minimum scope of English language instruction within the proposed curriculum for the second year includes directions 1-5. The compulsory discipline for all students who choose the English language module is "Preparation for International Exams", and the second discipline is chosen by the student from directions 1-5. Disciplines in directions 1-3 have prerequisites for the advanced level (results of internal exams). The list of directions can be expanded, and the parallel placement of two disciplines from the 1-3 modules can be changed to a sequential arrangement.

## 3.2 MECHANISM FOR SELECTING SECOND-YEAR DISCIPLINES

1. The university and relevant departments prepare the proposal and approve the disciplines at the methodological council;
2. The academic advisor of the educational program includes the discipline "English Language. Preparation for International Exams" and any other disciplines from the proposed curriculum into the working curriculum. To provide students with a choice, the entire list of disciplines from at least two directions should be included;
3. Each student has access to two disciplines within the guaranteed part of their educational program from the offered disciplines of the English Language Module: "English Language. Preparation for International Exams" and one elective discipline.

## 3.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FINAL-YEAR DISCIPLINES

The disciplines of the final year belong to the field of "English for Scientific Publication Purposes" and aim to develop language competence that enables students to write scientific texts and present research results (Li & Flowerdew, 2020). These disciplines are based on subject-language integrated

teaching methodologies and can be implemented by the University, the School of Foreign Languages, or the English Language Faculty.

### 3.4 ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN GRADUATE STUDIES

One of the core elements of the proposed curriculum for graduate studies is the discipline "English for Research Purposes / Writing and Presenting Research", which carries 2 credits and falls under the direction of "English for Academic Publishing Purposes" (Flowerdew & Habibie, 2021). This discipline aims to develop the necessary skills for presenting research findings at an international level and creating scholarly publications. The program content of this discipline takes into account the specificities of the field of study and the profile of the program.

The implementation of the English language module is accompanied by integrated university-level assessment measures that perform the functions of predictive and final evaluation, as well as an independent assessment of the level of English communicative competence.

### 3.5 DIGITALIZATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

The processes of digital transformation are changing the models of teaching foreign languages and leading to the creation of complexes of technological solutions, which include information and communication infrastructure, software, data processing processes, and decision-making services.

In the implementation of disciplines, the university must provide a balanced combination of physical and digital/virtual educational spaces, and gradually increase the indicators of digital involvement for both teachers and students.

Digitalization should take place at two levels:

1) At the level of the educational process (short-term perspective);
2) At the level of the entire English language teaching system (long-term perspective).

Digitalization at the level of the educational process is associated with:

a) Enriching courses with online laboratories to develop language skills and enhance speaking abilities on the university's digital platform (Paziura *et al.*, 2021).
b) Incorporating exam preparation modules with interactive exercises on the university's digital platform to facilitate independent study for examinations (Sun *et al.*, 2020).
c) Creating online courses in the following domains: English for General Communication Purposes, Business English, English for Academic Communication, English for Specific Academic Purposes, English for Specific Purposes, and English for Research Purposes (Rafiq *et al.*, 2021). These courses can be integrated into the curriculum as a partial replacement for contact hours or as standalone components for self-paced learning.
d) Conducting university-wide exams online using proctoring tools (Hussein *et al.*, 2020).
e) Implementing disciplines in fully or partially remote formats (Bahrun *et al.*, 2023).
f) Establishing courses and forming integrated groups where teaching is conducted using videoconferencing tools (Inderawati *et al.*, 2023).
g) Delivering remote English language instruction utilizing modern tools and methodologies (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2020).
h) Leveraging digital communication channels to engage with all participants in the educational process, including partners and competitors (Martínez-Peláez *et al.*, 2023).
i) Expanding the use of distance teaching formats to attract native language speakers as instructors (v *et al.*, 2021).

Digital transformation in the English language teaching system is associated with the establishment of an integrated digital language teaching system that enables the execution of specific tasks through processing large volumes of data and identifying patterns within them. At this level, digitalization provides opportunities for:

a) Online assessment of language skills and speaking abilities (including

entrance tests, formative and summative assessments, and self-assessment) with the ability to incorporate additional parameters if necessary;

b) Designing personalized learning trajectories based on the results of entrance testing, personalized requests, and time allocation;
c) Access to high-quality digital educational content based on authentic materials and developed with the involvement of native language speakers;
d) Integration of educational resources from partners with institutional resources;
e) Accumulation and analysis of digital experience (educational experiences of students, teachers, and methodologists);
f) Collecting a comprehensive set of data about educational achievements and preferences of all learners in the university or language school;
g) Conducting psychometric analysis of online exam and test results.

Based on the conducted study, we have identified effective strategies for developing English language skills. These strategies are as follows:

- English language modules should be integrated at different educational levels to ensure progressive and comprehensive development of language skills.
- Discipline-specific English language courses, such as English for Business Communication, English for Research Purposes, and English for Academic Communication, should be incorporated to cater to specific needs and enhance language proficiency in domain-specific contexts;
- Digitalization measures, including online laboratories, exam preparation modules, and online courses, should be implemented to provide interactive and flexible learning experiences;
- Integrated university-level assessment measures should be utilized to evaluate language proficiency and provide feedback for improvement;
- Personalized learning trajectories based on individual needs and abilities should be provided, allowing for tailored language instruction and targeted skill development.

By following these strategies, a practical and holistic approach can be

taken to develop English language competence within the educational context.

## 4 CONCLUSION

The integration of English language modules at different educational levels, including specific discipline-based courses, has proven beneficial in facilitating a progressive and comprehensive development of language skills. Furthermore, the incorporation of digitalization measures has provided opportunities for interactive and flexible learning experiences. The use of online laboratories, exam preparation modules, and online courses has contributed to enhancing language proficiency, student engagement, and motivation.

Looking ahead, future perspectives for this research lie in exploring the effectiveness of these strategies on students' overall language proficiency and academic performance. Additionally, investigating the long-term effects of digitalization measures and identifying innovative approaches and technologies will contribute to further advancements in English language instruction.

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## APPENDIX 1: TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF STUDENTS

In the appendix, a detailed description of the communicative profile of a student (Figure 1) whose level of preparation corresponds to B2 is presented. This ensures the implementation of the methodological function of the Concept, which specifies how verbal descriptors will be used and how communicative profiles of students will be designed.

**Receptive Skills: Listening**

The student is capable of:

- Understanding conversational speech within the boundaries of the literary norm with a high degree of accuracy, including idiomatic expressions. Comprehension may only be hindered in the presence of significant disruptions (background noise, defects in the speaker's speech, use of rare dialects, etc.);
- Comprehending the main ideas of linguistically and conceptually complex texts on abstract and concrete topics;
- Understanding professionally-oriented discussions, interviews, detailed presentations, and lectures;
- Understanding the main content of long messages containing complex arguments if the topics of the speeches are sufficiently familiar;
- Comprehending news, reports, talk shows on current events, as well as the content of fictional and documentary films;
- Capturing and understanding a significant portion of what is being said in professional and interpersonal communication situations with native speakers.

**Receptive Skills: Reading**

The student is capable of:

- Understanding fiction and non-fiction texts, as well as scientific articles related to their field of study;
- Reading texts related to educational and professional domains, understanding the general meaning without much difficulty;
- Analyzing sufficiently long texts to find the necessary information and gathering relevant information from different texts to apply in oral or written discourse;
- Understanding relevant information in scientific articles, official documents, and specialized sources.

**Productive Skills: Speaking. Dialogic and Monologic Speech**

The student is capable of:

- Engaging in dialogues with native speakers of the target language, expressing themselves logically, elaborately, and comprehensively on a wide range of topics, including general, academic, and professional subjects;
- Actively participating in professional discussions on familiar topics, developing their own viewpoints, supporting them with clear arguments and examples;
- Conveying shades of emotions and feelings in conversation, emphasizing personal interest;
- Establishing effective communication while taking into account the cultural peculiarities of the target language country;
- Successfully and fluently participating in interviews, expanding on their thoughts, going beyond predetermined questions, and delving into details;
- Providing clear and detailed descriptions and opinions on a wide range of topics;
- Delivering presentations on general scientific themes and specific issues within their professional field, and answering questions related to their presentation.

**Writing**

The student is capable of:

- Expressing their thoughts in a clear and logical manner in written form, writing understandable, detailed, and well-argued texts;
- Writing texts in accordance with the characteristics inherent in English-speaking culture, as well as the requirements set by the international academic community for the creation of texts;
- Composing essays and reports that develop a particular stance, presenting arguments for and against a specific viewpoint, and discussing the pros and cons of various problem-solving approaches;
- Writing texts based on the synthesis and evaluation of information and arguments from multiple sources, including texts related to professional activities;
- Creating clear and detailed descriptions of real and fictional stories, following the conventions of the chosen genre;
- Writing book reviews, film reviews, play reviews, and article reviews.

**Speech Behavior Characteristics of the Student**

***Range:*** The student possesses a sufficient vocabulary that enables them to create oral and written texts on a wide range of topics. They can employ figurative language and paraphrasing to fill any gaps in expression.

***Accuracy:*** The student demonstrates a high level of grammatical accuracy, avoiding errors that may lead to misunderstandings.

**Fluency:** They can speak at a consistently smooth and rapid pace without prolonged pauses.

Interaction: The student successfully initiates, conducts, and concludes conversations on familiar topics.

***Coherence:*** They effectively utilize cohesive devices in creating cohesive texts, linking individual utterances together.

The B2 level, which signifies the minimal educational attainment of a linguistics graduate, is widely acknowledged as being equivalent to other

established English language assessment tools, including IELTS (6.5), Cambridge English Scale and Linguaskill (161 – 180), TOEFL iBT (60 – 79), Pearson Global Scale of English (59 – 76), and Business Vantage (160 – 179).

**Figure 1**

*Communicative portrait of a student in dynamics*

