

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46502/issn.1856-7576/2023.17.02.8>

Cómo citar:

Balanaieva, O., Mamonova, O., Khuda, N., Hupka-Makohin, N., & Morozovska, L. (2023). Formation of foreign language communicative competence of future lawyers. *Revista Eduweb*, 17(2), 89-100. <https://doi.org/10.46502/issn.1856-7576/2023.17.02.8>

## Formation of foreign language communicative competence of future lawyers

### Formación de la competencia comunicativa en lengua extranjera de los futuros abogados

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Recibido: 12/02/23

Aceptado: 01/04/23

#### Abstract

This paper focuses on the development of foreign language communicative competence of students studying law. The research used different methods to study how students studying law can improve their ability to communicate in a foreign language. There was looked at existing research and did a survey to understand more about how students can improve their language skills. The results of the study reveal the main directions of scientific developments on issues related to the formation of foreign language communicative competence of students of law specialties. The priority of development,

assessment of components, and the procedure of this process from a practical point of view have been clarified. The paper emphasizes the importance of foreign language communicative competence in the field of law and highlights the challenges that students face in acquiring these skills.

**Keywords:** higher education institutions, English language, development of communicative competence, English language competence, formation of foreign language communication skills.

## Resumen

Este trabajo se centra en el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa en lenguas extranjeras de los estudiantes de derecho. La investigación utilizó diferentes métodos para estudiar cómo los estudiantes de derecho pueden mejorar su capacidad para comunicarse en un idioma extranjero. Se analizó la investigación existente y se realizó una encuesta para comprender más acerca de cómo los estudiantes pueden mejorar sus habilidades lingüísticas. Los resultados del estudio revelan las principales direcciones de los desarrollos científicos en temas relacionados con la formación de la competencia comunicativa en lengua extranjera de los estudiantes de las especialidades de derecho. Se ha aclarado la prioridad del desarrollo, la evaluación de los componentes y el procedimiento de este proceso desde un punto de vista práctico. El documento enfatiza la importancia de la competencia comunicativa en lenguas extranjeras en el campo del derecho y destaca los desafíos que enfrentan los estudiantes para adquirir estas habilidades.

**Palabras clave:** instituciones de educación superior, idioma inglés, desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa, competencia en el idioma inglés, formación de habilidades comunicativas en lenguas extranjeras.

## 1. Introduction

Foreign language skills are an important component of a lawyer's competence. Today, in a period of rapid development of higher education, training requirements and internal standards for the quality of training are increasing, including a focus on foreign language competence as an important component of professional training. Higher education institutions (HEIs) that train lawyers are lagging in these processes.

The theoretical part of the study substantiates the relevance of the research and describes the main components and factors of success of the process of forming future specialists' foreign language communicative competence.

The practical part of the study includes the identification of the most important components of English-language communication competence of students of legal specialties. This part of the study identifies the factors that influence its formation and approaches to the organization of the educational process to improve the effectiveness of professional-oriented competence in learning foreign languages by future lawyers. Besides that, the primary signs of the potential for the development of the multicultural component of communication competence are in the experience of future legal professionals. What is more, the most important didactic ways to improve the effectiveness of professional-oriented competence in teaching foreign languages to students of legal specialties are identified. The survey also allowed us to identify the most important approaches to the strategy of learning foreign languages by legal professionals in terms of their areas of research.

Based on the results of the study, conclusions have been drawn regarding the issues under consideration. In particular, the survey found that the main components of the English-language communication competence of students of legal specialties are information and learning, social and cognitive, and communication skills. The factors influencing the formation of students' foreign language communicative competence are professional activity and existing social conditions of personal development. The survey allowed us to identify the most important approaches to the organization of the educational process to improve the effectiveness of professional-oriented competence in teaching foreign languages to future lawyers. This refers to the integrated study of the specialized content of the professional specialty and language, as well as the network formation of intercultural and professional skills. It has been found that the signs of high potential for the development of the multicultural component of communication competence in the experience of future specialists, according to the results of the survey, are the developed communication culture of students and the formed worldview of students. According to the survey, the most important didactic ways to improve the effectiveness of professional-oriented competence in teaching foreign languages to future lawyers are the development of knowledge and skills in ethics, discussion, communication, and interaction with people, and the formation of a global way of thinking. The main approaches to foreign language learning strategies, the scientific research of which is most important in the development of future lawyers' foreign language communicative competence, are cognitive, linguistic and cultural, and competence-based.

Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions have been drawn regarding the development of foreign language communicative competence for future lawyers. The survey revealed that the key components of English-language communication competence for students of legal specialties include information and learning, social and cognitive, and communication skills. Additionally, the formation of students' foreign language communicative competence is influenced by professional activity and existing social conditions of personal development.

The study identified important approaches to improve the effectiveness of professional-oriented competence in teaching foreign languages to future lawyers. These include the integration of specialized content from the professional specialty and language, as well as the formation of intercultural and professional skills through networking. The survey results also indicate that the development of communication culture and worldview in students are signs of high potential for the multicultural component of communication competence.

To enhance the effectiveness of professional-oriented competence in teaching foreign languages to future lawyers, the survey identified several key didactic approaches. These include the development of knowledge and skills in ethics, discussion, communication, and interaction with people, as well as the formation of a global way of thinking.

The study highlighted important foreign language learning strategies that are crucial to the development of future lawyers' foreign language communicative competence. These include cognitive, linguistic and cultural, and competence-based approaches. By considering these findings, educators and institutions can better tailor their language teaching strategies and programs to meet the specific needs of future lawyers and prepare them for success in their careers.

## 2. Literature Review

Today, it is extremely important to provide the future lawyer with high-quality development of individual skills that ensure the formation of a professionally and socially competent personality and a socially mobile professional in the field of law (Zinchenko & Udovichenko, 2022). It should be noted that the effectiveness of teaching future professionals communication skills has significantly decreased during distance learning. Moreover, educators use traditional teaching methods without adapting them to the conditions of the distance learning process, which significantly reduces the effectiveness of learning during distance learning classes (Jupe, 2019).

Communicative competence in a foreign language is viewed by the vast majority of scholars as a set of skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, initiatives, and communicative experience that is necessary for understanding others and creating individual programs of linguistic behavior, and achieving communication goals (Thielgen, Schade & Niegisch, 2022).

Other researchers interpret foreign language communicative competence as an integral personal and professional quality of a person with a certain level of language, which is ready to be realized on a certain basis for successful, productive, and effective activity using communicative and informative skills (Vasilieva, 2020).

According to a common point of view, the formation of foreign language and intercultural communication skills includes the development of foreign language skills in the process of studying at an educational institution and self-education. Moreover, it is an integral part of the professional training of lawyers (Munezane, 2019).

Another noteworthy point of view is that one of the most important tasks in training future lawyers in foreign languages is to overcome the language barrier. At the same time, the process of learning a foreign language should be aimed at managing the verbal conversation process. This is necessary for use in the most typical situations of professional communication. Therefore, foreign language skills and intercultural communication are an important part of the professional training of law students (García-Martínez et al, 2021).

One of the methods of effectively overcoming the language barrier in foreign language communication is the method of modeling situations of professional voice communication. This contributes to effective intercultural communication (Fantini, 2020).

A common trend in recent times and an effective method of developing foreign language communication skills among law students is the use of general open lectures by the teacher. In the context of distance learning, open lectures are often held in an online format, and they demonstrate their effectiveness both in learning a foreign language and in disciplines related to international law (Huang, 2018), (Tao et al., 2020).

The use of integrated learning with specialized foreign language learning is quite popular today. In close cooperation with law professors, foreign language teachers develop students' intercultural and professional competence. At all stages of developing communication skills in a

foreign language, future lawyers receive additional conditions for professional development (Mishra & Mishra (2020)).

The research is aimed at determining the position of scholars and teachers of English, as well as students, on the peculiarities of the development of components and the application of certain approaches in the formation of future lawyers' English-language communicative competence.

### **3. Methodology**

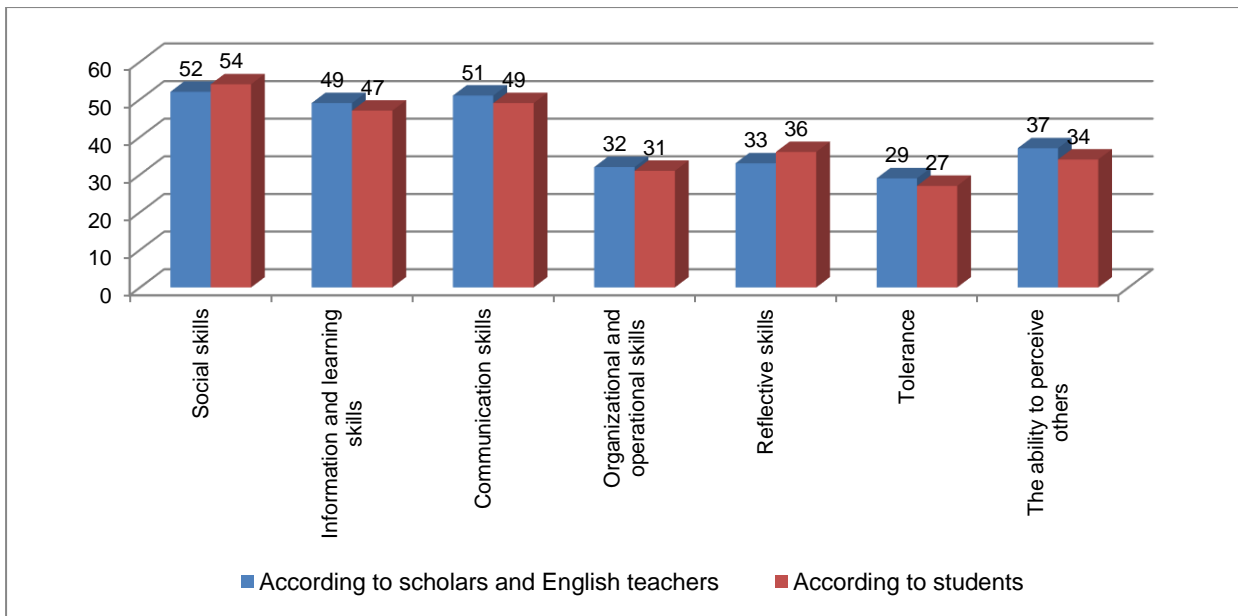
The study of the practical aspects of the process of formation and development of future lawyers' foreign language communicative competence was conducted by interviewing 217 practicing scholars and teachers of English in HEIs, as well as 246 students of 14 HEIs in Sumy, Chernihiv, Zhytomyr and Kyiv oblasts of Ukraine. The survey was conducted using the Survio service.

The survey sought to gather insights from both teachers and students about the challenges and opportunities in developing foreign language communicative competence for future lawyers. The participants were asked about their opinions on the importance of foreign language skills in the field of law, the most effective teaching methods, and the practical skills that future lawyers need to succeed in their careers.

The data from the survey was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. For the qualitative analysis, the responses from the open-ended questions were grouped into common themes and patterns using a process called content analysis. This helped to identify the main issues and challenges related to the development of foreign language communicative competence for future lawyers. For the quantitative analysis, the data was processed using statistical software to generate descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations. This allowed the researchers to quantify the responses to the survey questions and identify trends and patterns in the data. The data was also analyzed using comparative and correlational analysis techniques to identify the relationships between different variables, such as the teaching methods used and the perceived effectiveness of these methods.

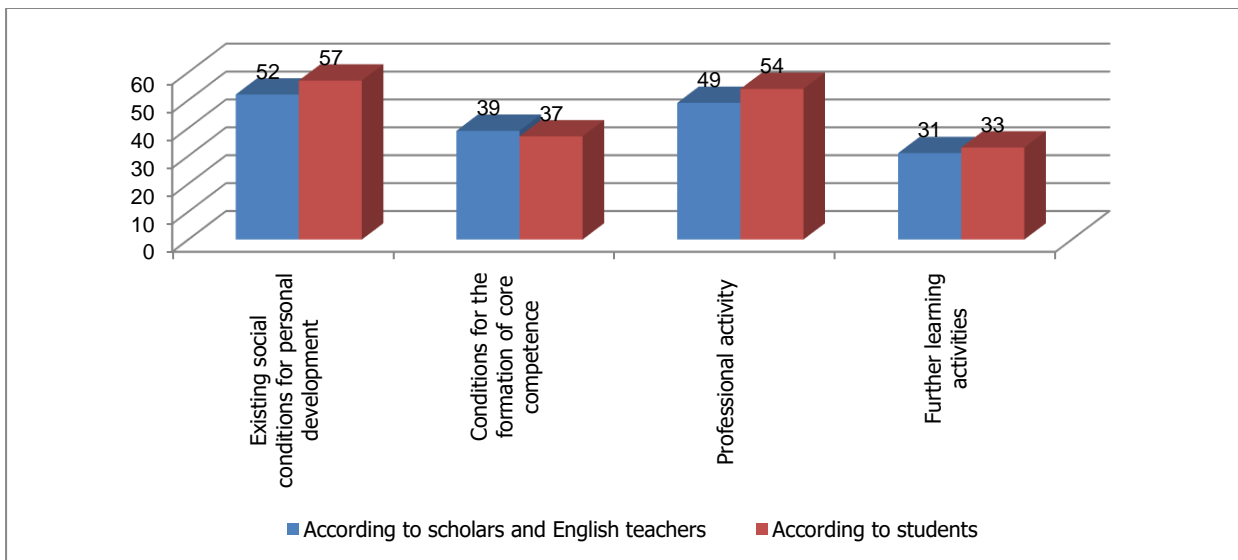
### **4. Results and Discussion**

First of all, the survey revealed the respondents' point of view on the main components of English-language communication competence of law students (Figure 1):



**Figure 1.** The most important components of English-language communication competence of students of law specialties, %  
Source: built by the authors.

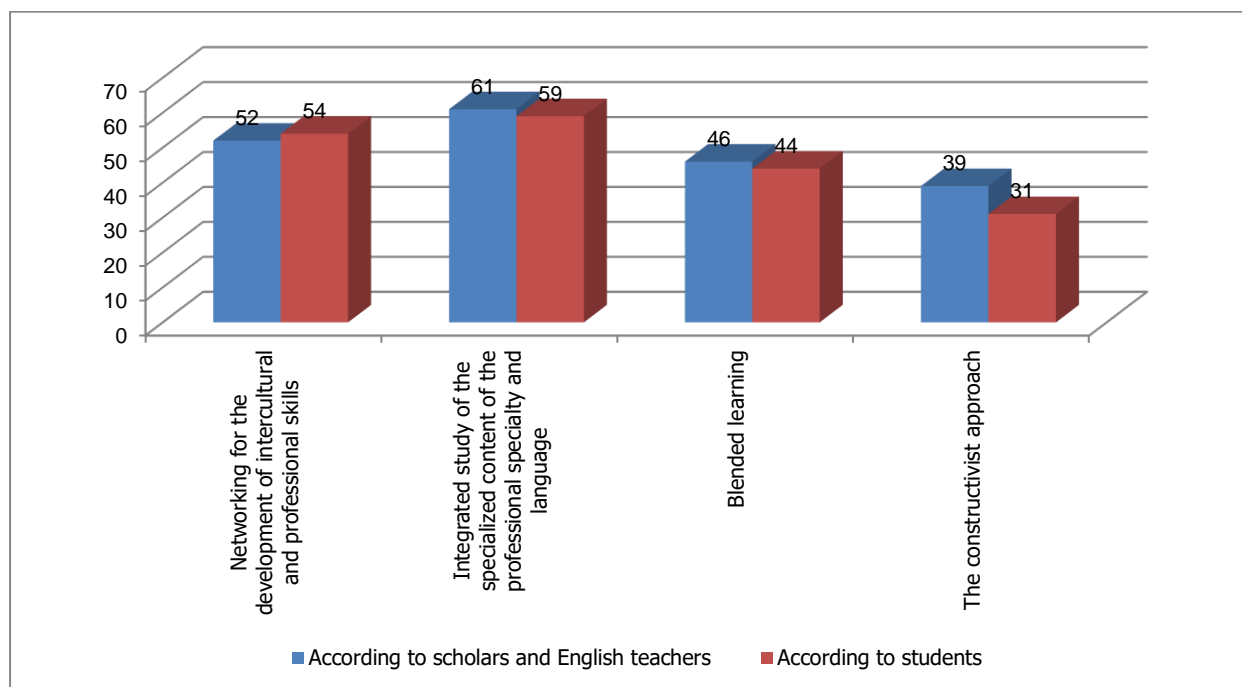
According to the survey participants, today the main components are information and learning, social and cognitive skills, and communication skills. The respondents also identified the following factors that influence the formation of foreign language communicative competence of law students (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Factors influencing the formation of future lawyers' foreign language communicative competence, %  
Source: built by the authors.

Although there are sometimes different approaches to the structure and content of social and communicative competence, based on the results of the survey, it can be noted that the formation of future lawyers' foreign language communicative competence is mainly influenced by professional activities and existing social conditions of personal development.

The survey made it possible to identify the most important approaches to organizing the educational process to improve the effectiveness of professional-oriented competence in teaching foreign languages to future lawyers (Figure 3).

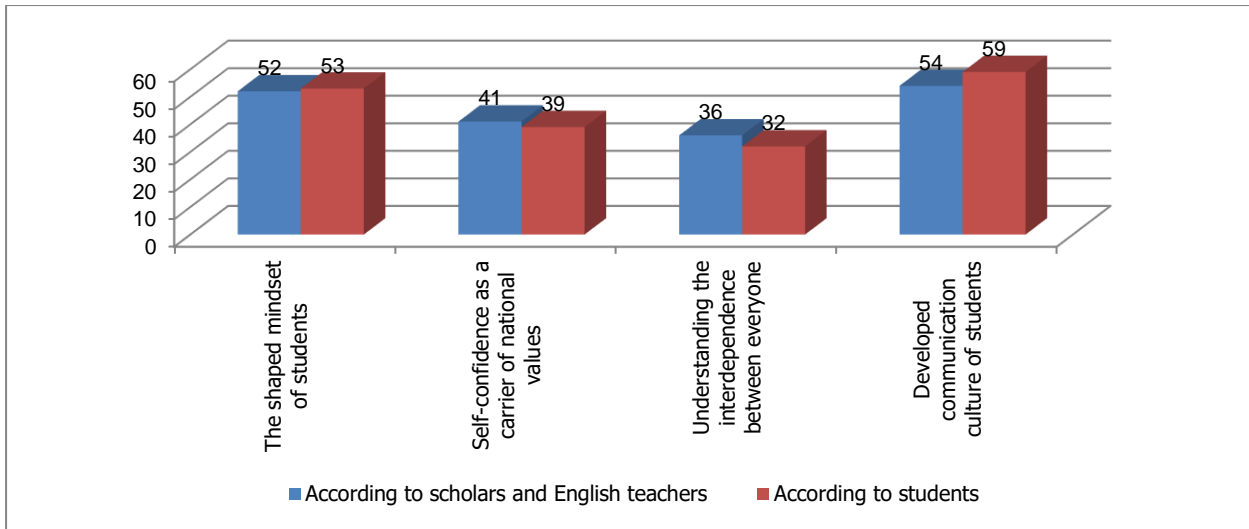


**Figure 3.** Approaches to the organization of the educational process to improve the effectiveness of professional-oriented competence in teaching foreign languages to future specialists in law specialties, %

Source: built by the authors.

As can be seen from Figure 3, these methods include the integrated study of specialized content of the professional specialty and language and the networking of intercultural and professional skills.

An essential aspect of the development of students' English-language communication skills is to take into account the multicultural potential of students. The necessary signs of the significant potential for the development of the multicultural component of communication competence in the experience of future specialists, according to the results of the survey, are (Figure 4):

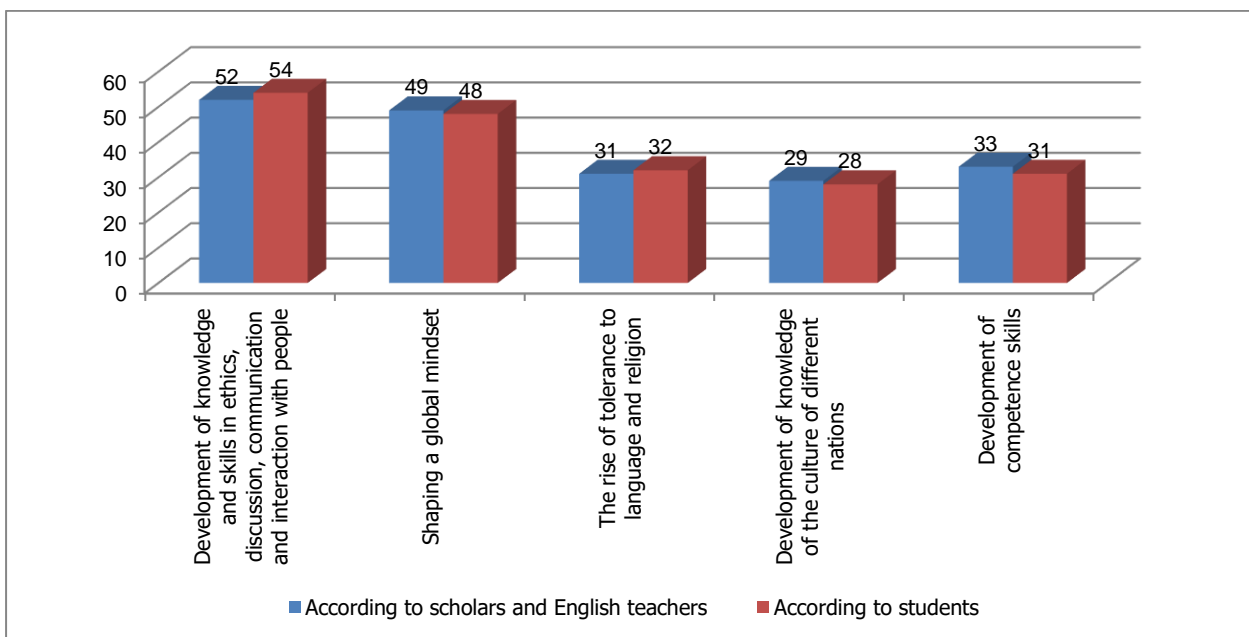


**Figure 4.** Primary signs of the significant potential for the development of the multicultural component of communicative competence of future lawyers' experience, %

Source: built by the authors.

developed communication culture of students;  
the shaped mindset of students.

An important result of this survey was the identification of the most effective didactic ways to improve the effectiveness of professional-oriented competence in teaching foreign languages to law students (Figure 5).

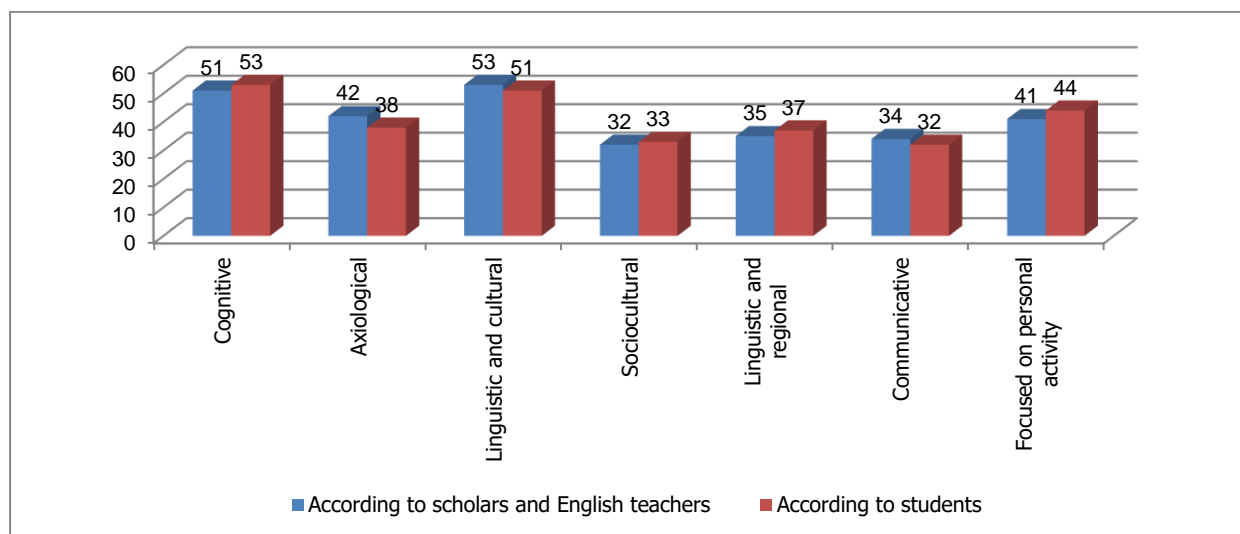


**Figure 5.** The most important didactic ways to increase the effectiveness of professionally oriented competence in teaching foreign languages to future specialists of law specialties, %

Source: built by the authors.

The survey showed that these ways include the development of knowledge and skills in ethics, discussion, communication, interaction with people, and the formation of a global mindset.

The survey allowed us to find out the main approaches to the strategy of learning foreign languages, the scientific study of which is most important in the development of foreign language communicative competence of future lawyers (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** The key approaches to the strategy of learning foreign languages by professionals in the sphere of law based on their areas of research, %

Source: built by the authors.

According to the survey participants, these approaches are mostly cognitive, linguistic and cultural, and competency-based.

To define the nature and content of an effective process of forming the social and communicative competence of future lawyers, it is necessary to take into account the content of regulatory and legal documents that represent the requirements for professional knowledge and skills. Moreover, it is worth paying attention to important qualities and other components of professional competence that are related to social and communication skills. The results of the analysis of scientific research and publications show that the approaches of scientists differ significantly in defining the structure and, accordingly, the nature of social and communication competence (Pavlova et al., 2022), (Yuen & Hew, 2018).

The main components of socio-communication competence are social-cognitive, communicative, organizational, operational, and reflective. Scientists believe that the content of this competence is the ability to cooperate in teamwork, resolve conflicts constructively, psychological tolerance, have sincere respect for the work of others, and the ability to understand and perceive them. Sometimes there are different approaches to the structure and content of teaching foreign language communicative competence. However, it can be noted that this type of skill is formed with the help of social communicative knowledge, skills, and experience of their use in professional situations of interaction, based on the motivation and professional and social

orientation of the individual (Aghajani & Gholamrezapour, 2019), (Heyworth, Chan & Lawson, 2022).

In addition to the above conclusions, the definition of competence as the ability of a person to successfully establish contacts, and perform professional and further educational activities should be also considered (Mohammadi & Izadpanah, 2019).

The results of the analysis of educational and professional training programs for future lawyers show that their professional activity requires the ability to use the experience of social interaction in solving professional and life problems to achieve mutual understanding, to prevent and resolve conflicts between colleagues from different countries of the world (Schukking & Kircher, 2021).

Since the activities of legal scholars are communicative, the most appropriate approach to teaching foreign languages is the development of communicative competence. The formation of communication skills in a foreign language for future lawyers to increase its effectiveness should take place in a vocal foreign language communication environment. This is aimed at ensuring the highest possible efficiency of the future lawyer's communicative and professional behavior (Lønsmann, 2020a), (Uteubayeva, 2022).

It is also worth noting that the process of forming skills in foreign language communicative competence should be based on the principles of effective information exchange, organization of active and independent activities of future specialists in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills, and mastering new and effective methods of working with professional material. Moreover, the organization of the educational process should be based on the student's own cognitive experience, as well as on the need to increase professional motivation and develop professional orientation of the students' personality (Lønsmann, 2020b), (Gong, Chun & Xuesong, 2022).

## 5. Conclusions

Thus, as evidenced by the analysis of scientific literature on the topic of the study and the results of the survey, today the importance of developing foreign language communication skills of law students in higher education institutions is extremely high. In the course of the study, the authors emphasize the importance of a foreign language as the main means of international communication, which outlines the direction of the necessary professional activity of law students. It has been established that one of the most important tasks of foreign language training for future lawyers is to overcome the language barrier. Moreover, the process of learning a foreign language should be aimed at mastering, first of all, a spoken foreign language, which can be used in the most typical situations of professional communication. In the course of the scientific research, the authors identify effective methods of developing foreign language communication skills of law students.

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