

**TILTM 2020****Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication****SHAPING STUDENTS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH  
FLT CONTENT: PRAGMATIC AND AXIOLOGICAL LINGUISTIC  
MODELLING**

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***Abstract***

Even with a multitude of approaches and techniques in FLT, this field still lacks the tools to ensure the students' full linguistic and cultural immersion in terms of axiological features of target language. With the majority of formalised LSP teaching methods, even a good command of target language becomes insufficient since it does not reflect any pragmatic-axiological relevance. We think that a proper language acquisition should focus on fundamental cultural values and their linguistic interpretation. Therefore, the objective of this study is to describe the theory of pragmatic and axiological linguistic modelling as an indispensable FLT tool, and to develop its step-by-step methodology for verification of its validity on the material of FLT discourse. Along with that, the paper explains how the results of this modelling can be implemented into FLT practice via changes in curriculum/exercise construction. The proposed method of professional identity formation is based on shaping professional language personality and consists of discourse analysis, pragmatic-communicative analysis, functional and linguoaxiological analysis. This procedure accentuates dominant axiological spheres through constructing value-charged concepts of the professional FLT discourse. As a new FLT material generation tool, this method states that a proper axiologically-charged professional curriculum would be a set of materials organised to reflect most important professional processes. This allows us to purposefully form students' professional language personality and competences necessary in this sphere. Since all the mentioned factors are based on the axiologically-charged language material, they amplify the overall axiological effect and help build a solid and value-oriented professional identity.

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**Keywords:** Pragmatics, axiological linguistics, modelling, professional identity, professional language personality, axiological sphere.

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## 1. Introduction

Being one of humanity's oldest philosophical issues, pedagogy as a field of study incorporates millennia of investigation history. Each period of historical development required a specific method of teaching. According to the fact that in the past decades much research has focussed on different aspects of teaching as a form of shaping students' identity, it stands to reason that we are on the verge of establishing a new teaching method, holistic in nature and intricate in design.

Even though a plethora of studies in humanities can be found on the topic of personal identity, the linguistic and pedagogical aspects of this topic have a surprisingly superficial coverage, mainly dealing with purely theoretical aspects without any practical outcome (Kroger & Marcia, 2011; McAdams & Zapata-Gietl, 2015). That is why it remains unclear how, for instance, the identity is formed and how this formation can be traced and manipulated. By the same token, even though a lot has been written concerning different types of professional identity (Archer, 2008; Cruess et al., 2016; Hammond et al., 2016; Nadelson et al., 2017), as well as various aspects of its deformation (Costello, 2005), from the point of view of its evolution and practice-oriented forms of development (i.e. how exactly any given professional identity is to be formed, what steps are to be taken, and which outcomes are to be anticipated) this research subject does not have enough coverage, either.

In the light of modern breakthroughs in cognitive science, we hold to the view that the holistic understanding of professional personality and identity regarding an individual as a member of a certain worldview would be impossible to form without accepting them as a specific language personality (i.e. personality with certain linguistic identity, 'homo communicans') having distinctive communication behaviour and strategies in each particular professional sphere. It is difficult to argue with Karaulov (2010) claiming that trying to shape a full-fledged personality before the linguistic identity is formed would be as futile as putting the cart before the horse.

Thus, all the above mentioned allows us to put forward the problem of shaping professional identity through language teaching as an important niche which, once being found and established, needs to be scrutinised and exploited. And even though we believe the methodology of shaping professional identity via language teaching to be universal, the focus of our attention is motivated by our area of expertise and deals with the ways of shaping the professional identity of a foreign language teaching (FLT) student.

It is important to highlight that, within the framework of professional identity formation as an innovative language teaching method, as we see it, the main focus is to be on axiological and pragmatic aspects of any professional space subject to being taught. Such an approach seems most reasonable, as it is supported by extensive anthropological research (Brown et al., 2008). In essence, we put forward the hypothesis that pragmatic and axiological modelling of language (i.e. any given professional discourse space) is crucial in any language teaching approach which aims to provide the students with full linguistic and cultural immersion.

## 2. Problem Statement

Even with all the plenitude of approaches and techniques in FLT, this field of study still lacks the tools to ensure the students' full linguistic and, most importantly, cultural immersion in terms of axiological

features of target language. Therefore, even a relatively good command of target language becomes 'impaired' to a certain extent as its foundation is purely formalised and does not reflect any pragmatic relevance or set of value. The same is true if the matter at hand is language for specific (professional) purposes (LSP). This state of affairs primarily affects students and impedes proper language acquisition where, from our point of view, the main focus is to be made on fundamental cultural values and their linguistic interpretation.

Nevertheless, the method this paper puts forward does not suggest that all the previous ones should be insufficient. On the contrary, we believe that all the existing methods and approaches can considerably benefit from the language material derived with the use of pragmatic and axiological modelling. The method we propose is going to be beneficial for the modern FLT methodology in general and LPS teaching, since it is based on the essence of target language culture and teaches every aspect of language use in terms of its axiological and pragmatic relevance.

As far as we can judge, this way of language material selection is going to significantly boost both teaching and learning processes, enhancing the students' levels of competence and motivating them to find in each target language much more than meets the 'purely formalised' eye. This is exactly the reason why it is important to come up with a relatively clear procedure of pragmatic and axiological modelling.

### **3. Research Questions**

Current research incorporates many fields of study in the sphere of both theoretical and applied linguistics and aims to develop a coherent and practical approach to forming professional identity through pragmatic and axiological modelling. Thus, the foundation of this investigation is based on the main research question: How does pragmatic and axiological linguistic modelling of FLT content shapes students' professional identity? Yet, to find the answer to this question, it is necessary to deal with the following ones:

- 3.1. How is it theoretically possible to model professional identity and are there any existing methods to do it?
- 3.2. What is the place of pragmatic and axiological modelling in the overall linguistic modelling of professional identity? What is its purpose? How is it connected with the theory and practice of modern FLT?
- 3.3. What is the step-by-step methodology behind pragmatic and axiological linguistic modelling? How is it implemented into the analysis of any given professional (in our case - FLT) discourse?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to describe the theory of pragmatic and axiological linguistic modelling as an indispensable tool within the framework of foreign language teaching, as well as to develop the methodology of this modelling for future verification of its validity by testing it on the material of the FLT discourse space. The study also seeks an explanation as to how exactly the results of this linguistic modelling can be implemented into foreign language teaching practice via changes in curriculum and, more

particularly, exercise construction. In this part of the research, pragmatic and axiological linguistic modelling mainly functions as a stand-alone method of analysis in applied linguistics; nevertheless, it needs to be mentioned that in a broader picture this type of linguistic modelling is an integral element of a much more intricate method in modern linguistics – the conceptual linguistic engineering of professional identity.

## 5. Research Methods

Before proceeding to the methodology behind the research, it is important to state the materials used. Given the fact that the field of study under analysis is FLT, all the content used to shape the corpora for further analysis is supposed to be taken from the FLT discourse space, i.e. most famous books and articles dedicated to foreign language teaching methodology: “Learning teaching” by Scrivener (2011), “How to Teach” series by Harmer (2007), “Teaching by Principles” by Brown and Lee (2015), “How Second Languages are Learned” by Hawkins (2018), as well as journal articles by Swan and Walter (2017), Carter and McCarthy (2017), Ur (2019), and Thornbury (2016) to name but a few.

The reason I have chosen the FLT content is simple - even though our department’s research centre is interested in developing the methodology of conceptual linguistic engineering of professional identity which could be easily applied to any kind of discourse space, one of our primary objectives is to add a new dimension to educating and training future teachers of foreign languages by fine-tuning and significantly improving the overall curriculum of this academic area.

The research methods used in this paper have been chosen in accordance with the research questions. To reach the aims of the study, it was necessary to employ methods and ideas of several approaches, namely, linguistic and linguodidactic ones:

5.1. the descriptive method needed to explain the main aspects of conceptual linguistic engineering of professional identity and explain the role pragmatic and axiological modelling plays in this linguistics engineering, as well as the potential it if implemented in FLT sphere;

5.2. a theoretical explanation of the method of pragmatic and axiological modelling demonstrating how exactly this type of linguistic analysis extracts elements of discourse denoting value and arranges them into a corpus for further use in constructing FLT materials;

5.3. the analysis of possible ways to put the results of this modelling to good use in terms of comprising FLT materials.

The methods described correspond with the research questions of the paper and, therefore, represent the procedure of this study.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. Forming professional identity: theoretical preliminaries and possible methods

Generally speaking, at the core of the described methodology of professional identity formation lies the following principle of shaping professional language personality: “professional discourse → professional thesaurus → professional communication → professional activity”. The methodology is as follows: based on the analysis of texts presenting professional discourse, the use of language material is studied, the identified corpus of language units is activated within the framework of (simulated)

professional communication, and then the whole set of skills is tested in direct professional interaction with language specialists (or foreign specialists using foreign language as intermediary).

Nevertheless, as easy and straightforward as this procedure may seem, there is much more to it when it comes to data segmentation and proper linguistics analysis. Taking into account the dominant position of language when describing the process of professional identity formation, it is reasonable to have the principle of a complex discourse matrix as the basis of this new methodology, which is realized within the framework of modern developments in such fields as discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics, socio-, psycho- and pragmalinguistics, axiological linguistics, language ecology, and terminology,

At present, only a comprehensive multi-factor analysis of the linguistic actualisation of individual's professional identity - be it a specialist or an amateur - can claim theoretical and practical research potential, validity, and verifiability of results. In order to meet these criteria, the analysis is to include the methods of each linguistics area listed above. On the one hand, the proposed methodology of professional identity linguistic engineering is intended to fill a number of theoretical and practical white spots in several corresponding fields, and, on the other hand, it can ensure effective professional cross-cultural interaction in the spheres of crucial technological development between Russian and foreign scientists.

By implementing conceptual linguistic engineering of specialist's professional identity, scientific community and those who work in other professional fields, get an opportunity to better understand the emergence and development processes of the "internal sense of identity" in members of a certain profession, where this very "sense" forms a united and unique system of personality coordinates in different spheres of life. To do so, the method in question should comprise such stages as complex linguocognitive modelling, socio-lexicographic modelling, pragmatic and axiological modelling, as well as systematization and standardization of professional discourses and their popular science subdivisions.

As is evident from the foregoing, the proposed method of conceptual linguistic engineering of professional identity takes into account the main achievements of each of the general approaches in humanities: linguo-cognitive modelling is largely based on a psychological approach, socio-lexicographic modelling - on a sociological one, whereas pragmatic-axiological modelling and linguo-ecological analysis include elements of philosophical and ethnocultural approaches. It is important to emphasise that axiological and pragmatic aspects of the proposed method are pivotal to properly shaping any professional identity. Along with the above-mentioned approaches, there is another important one which the described method takes into account - a pedagogical approach which is represented by an integrated methodology of studying linguistic phenomena in order to be used in teaching language for specific purposes.

Thus, the proposed method of conceptual linguistic engineering of professional identity combines the existing approaches to professional identity studies while analysing it from the language perspective, which is a crucial point since "language offers a window into cognitive function, providing insights into the nature, structure and organisation of thoughts and ideas" (Evans, 2019, p. 5). In addition to that, the method's overriding priority is purely pedagogical in nature, which makes it even more appealing to be used within the framework of foreign language teaching.

## **6.2. The role of pragmatic and axiological modelling in forming professional identity**

We have already agreed that the axiological aspect is the cornerstone of any culture. In turn, any cultural background significantly predetermines individual's cognitive base and influences the way they transfer and perceive knowledge. And since language is arguably one of the best possible ways to express, describe and perceive the world around us, it stands to reason that values (aka axiological components) are the driving force behind the whole language process. This is one of the main statements of this paper and the foundation of the proposed method.

Even though in theory the situation is more or less straightforward, the question is how to apply this knowledge in practice, i.e. distinguish and correctly arrange the elements of discourse in such a way that they convey the set of values of this particular sociological group speaking this particular language. For this very reason, we have come up with pragmatic and axiological linguistic modelling. In general terms, this research method is used to trace the reverse process of language usage from the point of view of cognitive science: while analysing the language (to be more specific - professional discourse) as the final product of the cognitive process of speech production, this method helps to go all the way up to the basic elements of cognitive base and, thus, pinpoint the correlation between certain professional values and discourse elements that encapsulate them.

The importance of this method in terms of its ability to directly connect a set of values with the elements of language which describe it proves to be interesting and productive for the sphere of FLT, as it provides teachers with a culturally-charged material and helps their students not only to understand the mechanics of a certain language but to dig deeper and acquire axiology and culture through this language. If the language learning material is organised in such a way and with the usage of such discourse elements that ensure the students' deeper understanding of cognitive, philosophical and axiological rationale standing behind the language patterns, this whole process enables a much deeper immersion into the cultural/professional identification and mentality behind the language.

## **6.3. A step-by-step procedure of pragmatic and axiological linguistic modelling**

The proposed type of linguistic modelling consists of the following steps:

- discourse analysis

This step is important in order to single out the elements of discourse that bear certain axiological charge. This is also the stage at which the general corpus is structured and filled in for further types of analysis.

- pragmatic-communicative analysis

When all the necessary data is gathered, the second step is to perform the analysis in terms of the pragmatic and communicative value of the collected discourse elements.

- functional analysis

Within the framework of this research, functional analysis is considered as a part of pragmatic analysis and aims to shape the functional range of the language elements used in a particular discourse, as well as to find the correlation between these elements. Apart from that, this type of analysis helps to pinpoint the peculiarities of using language is its linguistically creative actualisation.

- linguoaxiological analysis

This final step is needed to summarize the previous findings in order to accentuate dominant spheres from the axiological standpoint. This is achieved through constructing value-charged concepts of the professional discourse in question (Bagiyan et al., 2019a; Bagiyan & Shiryayeva, 2018).

In the long run, the analysis procedure demonstrated above investigates each axiologically relevant language unit along with the discourse space where it functions, and all the results are then uploaded into the corpus of axiologically charged FLT discourse elements. According to how we want the method to be used, as soon as all the steps of pragmatic and axiological modelling are complete, the information and data the corpus contains should be used by foreign language teachers (professionals) to compile a range of exercises and materials for FLT students. The logic here is straightforward: each corpus category develops students' better understanding and deeper immersion into that aspect of the axiological sphere which is directly connected to the discourse elements used in the exercise/task.

#### **6.4. Pragmatic and axiological modelling as a part of the new FLT material generation method**

It is common knowledge that, throughout centuries of its evolutional development, modern FLT methodology has accumulated thousands of ways to generate and organise the material and present it to potential students (Erlam, 2016; Lee et al., 2019; McDonough & Shaw, 2012; Stoller & Robinson, 2018; Tomlinson, 2016, 2017; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2017). Nevertheless, it would be too optimistic to suggest that all the possible ways of material development and design have already been discovered. That is why our experience of FLT led us to experiment and try out new forms of material design that would fit the pragmatic and axiological modelling used for gathering this material.

We came to the conclusion that even though separate exercises compiled through our modelling method would undoubtedly have a positive effect on students' overall language performance and ethnocultural awareness, without a complex structure and a set of patterns the teaching process would be fragmented and, therefore, incomplete and at times counter-productive. That is why it is our strong suggestion to implement the method more comprehensively and apply all the findings to structure an axiologically charged FLT curriculum (cf. Manackbayeva, 2017).

Thus, as we see it, the optimal solution for a proper axiologically charged professional curriculum would be a set of materials organised in such a way that it reflects most important professional processes. Simply put, in case the curriculum in question is that of Business English, for example, one of the most comprehensible and efficient types of this curriculum structure would be a business plan. Each module of the curriculum would reflect each consecutive stage of building a business plan, each unit, in its turn, would specify the content even further, and each unit section would be based on the axiologically charged language material gathered via the pragmatic and axiological modelling of business discourse. By the same token, it seems logical to tailor the curriculum for teaching English to future FLT specialists on the grounds of the lesson planning process or, on a larger scale, a curriculum planning process.

Content-wise, this methodology is a step-by-step mastering by the student of all stages of lesson/curriculum planning, from the development of lexical units to the professional and scientific-popular discourse repertoire characteristic of this particular sphere; this brings the student as close as possible to carrying out their future professional activities (Bagiyan et al., 2019b). This approach is due to the fact that lesson/curriculum planning is an almost indispensable component of the daily operational activity of the

specialist in the described type of professional interaction since the plan itself is defined as a concise and accurate description of a certain pedagogical idea and the most significant tool for assessing the development of the project in question, offering optimal and promising ways to solve specific professional problems, as well as the means necessary to realize these ways.

Thus, the topics offered for discussion to students are the main stages of the lesson/curriculum plan. The work on formation and the development of students' professional identity is built in such a way that at each stage of students activity all methods of work are aimed at development of a specific stage of lesson/curriculum development, as well as those soft skills that are necessary for successful implementation of this stage of the study. Such a structure allows us to purposefully form the professional language personality of the student with the simultaneous formation of professional competences and interpersonal interaction skills development necessary in this professional sphere. And as soon as all the mentioned factors are based on the axiologically charged language material, they amplify the overall axiological effect on the addressee (student) and help build a more solid and value-oriented professional identity.

## **7. Conclusion**

Theoretically speaking, the suggested method of FLT material generation and design, based on the principles of pragmatic and axiological modelling, is reliable. Nevertheless, even with a lot of theoretical and, partially, empirical data, this method is still to be tested and fine-tuned in practice. This is the reason why the search for ways to solve the problem of professional identity formation in students led to the creation of a constantly working laboratory that would be engaged in further theoretical research in this field, as well as applying theory in practice. To this end, we created a scientific and educational research laboratory "Conceptual Engineering of Professional Identity: Linguistics and Linguodidactics" under the auspices of the Institute of Romance and Germanic Languages, Information and Humanitarian Technologies of Pyatigorsk State University (Pyatigorsk, Russia).

The results of the studies were the basis for the creation of an experimental methodology for the professional identity formation, which is currently being tested via the disciplines "Practice of Professionally Oriented Speech (English language)" and "Professional Communication (Spanish Language)" for the students of the following specialty - "Theory and Practice of Teaching Foreign Languages & Cultures". Conceptually, the use of the methodology consists both in running practical classes using the pilot manual developed by the laboratory research group, as well as in the activation of the creative component of students through the implementation of project activities. The current stage of the research is writing English and Spanish pilot manuals in accordance with all the theoretical background described in this paper.

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