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<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5464-7323>e-mail: [beatrice.abalasei@uaic.ro](mailto:beatrice.abalasei@uaic.ro)**IMPORTANCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMPETENCE FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION IN SPORTS COACHING**

*This article examines foreign language competence (FLC) as a critical, multidimensional component of the professional profile of modern sports coaches. In globalized sports, proficiency in English as a lingua franca is an absolute necessity for effective intercultural communication, professional mobility, and accessing international scientific resources. Despite the implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in higher education, current frameworks predominantly target undergraduate students. Consequently, a systemic gap exists regarding the continuous linguistic development of practicing professionals, highlighted by the absence of explicit FLC requirements in the Ukrainian professional standard for sports coaches. To address this empirical gap, the study analyzes expert interviews with twelve international national team coaches. Quantitative findings demonstrate a near-absolute consensus on the necessity of English, with coaches rating its importance at an average of 9.08 out of 10. Qualitatively, the research identifies high-stakes applications of FLC: navigating major competitions, coordinating joint training camps, acquiring regulatory licenses, and engaging with peer-reviewed sports science. Based on these findings, the study presents a functional matrix categorizing the specialized linguistic tools required by coaches into six distinct domains: technical and biomechanical vocabulary, tactical language, interpersonal and psychological communication, medical lexis, administrative jargon, and public relations discourse. The study concludes that updating national professional standards to explicitly include FLC is imperative. Furthermore, universities and sports federations must collaborate to design specialized continuous professional development programs tailored for adult learners in high-performance environments. Future research should prioritize developing standardized diagnostic tools to assess domain-specific language proficiency among practicing coaches.*

*Keywords: trainer's activity, professional activity, sport, foreign language competence, sports coaching, ESP, CLIL, intercultural communication.*

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**1. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In the context of globalization, modern sport has turned into an international and intercultural phenomenon. This transformation significantly increases the requirements for professional competencies of sports coaches, extending beyond technical and tactical knowledge. One of the key competencies is foreign language competence (FLC), which enables effective communication in multicultural environments and access to international scientific resources [1].

The relevance of this study is determined by the growing need for coaches to function successfully in international contexts, participate in global competitions, and engage in continuous

professional development through foreign-language sources. The organization and participation in activities such as international competitions, training camps, and professional exchanges require the use of a common language of communication. In most cases, this role is performed by English, which functions as the global lingua franca in the field of sport.

However, in practice, a significant number of coaches and athletes demonstrate insufficient proficiency in foreign languages. This limitation creates barriers to effective interaction, complicates cooperation within international teams, and increases the risk of miscommunication. As a result, valuable opportunities for professional growth, knowledge

exchange, and competitive success may be diminished or entirely lost.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF RECENT RESEARCH

The issue of foreign language competence in the field of physical education and sports has attracted increasing attention in contemporary scientific discourse. Modern studies emphasize that foreign language proficiency is an essential component of professional training for specialists in non-linguistic domains, including sports coaching, as it ensures effective communication, access to international knowledge, and professional mobility [1].

A significant body of research is devoted to the integration of foreign language learning into sports education through innovative pedagogical approaches. In particular, the concept of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has become one of the most widely studied methodologies [2, 3]. According to recent studies, CLIL enables simultaneous acquisition of subject-specific knowledge and foreign language skills, thereby creating a more contextualized and effective learning environment. A systematic review of CLIL implementation in physical education demonstrated that such programs can significantly improve learners' overall language proficiency, especially when integrated across multiple subjects [4].

At the same time, researchers highlight that the effectiveness of CLIL largely depends on the level of teachers' linguistic competence [5]. Empirical studies show that insufficient language proficiency among educators can negatively affect the quality of bilingual instruction and limit the successful implementation of CLIL in physical education settings. This finding is particularly relevant for sports coaching, where clear and accurate communication is crucial for both training processes and competition performance.

Another important research direction concerns the role of foreign language competence in enhancing communication and professional interaction in sport [6]. Studies indicate that participation in international sports events, training camps, and academic exchanges requires not only technical expertise but also the ability to communicate effectively in a foreign language. The use of English as a global lingua franca in sport is consistently emphasized across the

literature, reinforcing its importance for professional development and international cooperation.

In addition, a number of studies focus on the motivational and psychological aspects of foreign language learning in sports contexts [7, 8]. For example, the application of CLIL methodologies has been shown to increase learners' motivation, improve self-confidence, and enhance communication skills, particularly in practical and interactive environments such as sports activities. Furthermore, research suggests that competence-based approaches to language learning can reduce foreign language anxiety and improve overall learning outcomes in higher education settings.

Scholars also emphasize the importance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the professional training of sports specialists [9]. ESP-oriented programs focus on developing domain-specific vocabulary and communicative skills relevant to coaching practice. In the context of higher education, there is a growing shift from traditional ESP courses to more integrated models such as CLIL, which combine language learning with professional content and better reflect real-life communication needs.

Despite the considerable number of studies devoted to foreign language learning in education, the specific issue of foreign language competence formation among sports coaches remains insufficiently explored. Existing research is predominantly focused on school physical education or general higher education contexts, while the professional training of coaches requires further theoretical and empirical investigation.

For example, the Ukrainian professional standard for sports coaches, which provides a list of required competencies for these specialists, does not mention the need for a foreign language competence [10]. The professional standard only mentioned general communication competencies and the requirement to know industry-related terminology within this context.

Thus, the analysis of recent research and publications indicates a growing recognition of the importance of foreign language competence in sports education. At the same time, it reveals a gap in the study of its role in the professional activity of sports coaches, which determines the relevance and necessity of further research in this field.

### 3. IDENTIFICATION OF PREVIOUSLY UNRESOLVED ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the growing body of research devoted to foreign language learning in the field of physical education and sport, a number of important aspects remain insufficiently explored. First of all, most existing studies focus on general approaches to foreign language teaching in higher education or on the implementation of methodologies such as Content and Language Integrated Learning and English for Specific Purposes. However, these studies are primarily oriented toward students of non-linguistic specialties in general and do not fully take into account the specific nature of professional activity in sports coaching.

In particular, there is a lack of comprehensive research addressing the structure and content of foreign language competence specifically for sports coaches as a distinct professional group. The existing literature does not sufficiently define how linguistic, communicative, and intercultural components of competence interact within real coaching practice, especially in high-pressure environments such as competitions and international training camps.

Furthermore, insufficient attention has been paid to the practical application of foreign language competence in coaching contexts. While theoretical models of communicative competence are well developed, there is a clear gap in empirical studies examining how these competencies influence coaching effectiveness, athlete performance, and team dynamics in multilingual settings.

Another unresolved issue concerns the assessment and measurement of foreign language competence among future and practicing coaches. There is a lack of standardized criteria and diagnostic tools tailored to the professional needs of sports specialists, which complicates the evaluation of training outcomes and the development of targeted educational programs.

Additionally, the challenges associated with integrating foreign language training into the curriculum of sports higher education institutions remain underexplored. In particular, issues such as limited instructional time, insufficient methodological support, and the need for interdisciplinary coordination between language

and sports departments require further investigation.

Thus, the analysis of recent research indicates the presence of significant gaps in both theoretical and practical aspects of foreign language competence formation in sports coaching. Addressing these unresolved issues determines the direction of further research and highlights the necessity of developing more specialized, practice-oriented approaches to foreign language training for sports coaches.

### 4. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to analyze the essence and structure of foreign language competence of sports coaches, to determine its role in professional activity, and to substantiate the necessity of its development within the system of higher education and professional development in the field of physical culture and sport.

### 5. PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN RESEARCH MATERIAL

Foreign language competence of sports coaches should be considered as an integral component of their professional competence, which ensures the effectiveness of communication, access to international experience, and successful functioning in a multicultural environment.

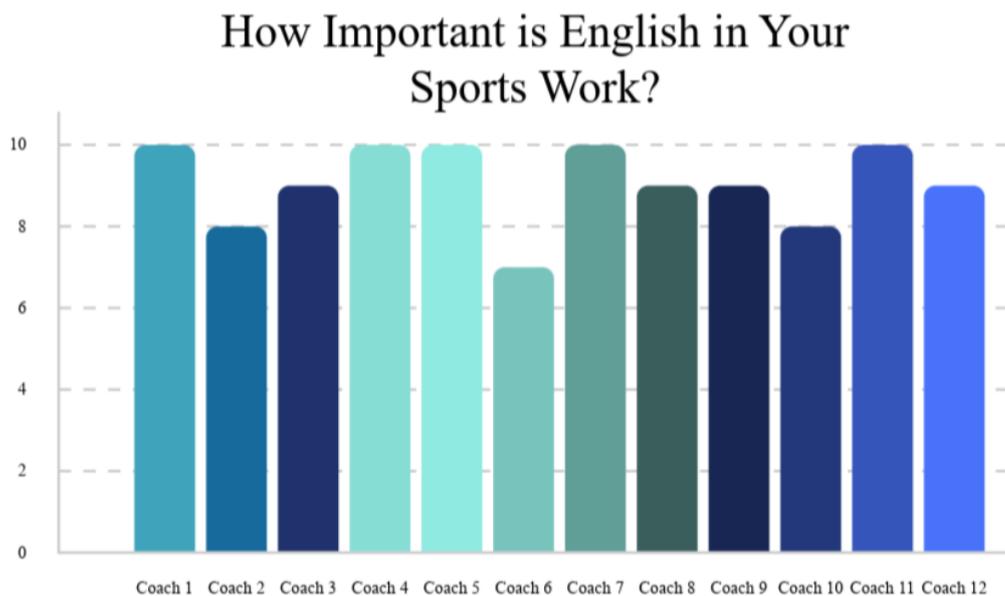
In modern conditions, coaching activity increasingly extends beyond national boundaries, requiring specialists to interact with athletes, colleagues, and organizations from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This makes it essential to have a certain approach to developing linguistic components. At the university level in Ukraine, all learners of bachelor and master programs in physical education and sports must complete a course titled "Foreign language for professional purposes". For example, the Yurii Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University offers this course in English and German [11]. It covers topics like different types of sports, rules, equipment, and more. However, courses like these are targeted at students, not current coaches who have already graduated from their educational institutions.

To explore this, we conducted expert interviews with 12 national team coaches (representing Ukraine, Moldova, Belgium,

Montenegro, Mexico, Serbia, Germany, and Slovenia) during the Elite Montenegro Cup in boxing in March 2026. The interviews directly questioned the coaches on the critical role English plays in their day-to-day sporting activities. More importantly, the dialogue focused on isolating the specific structural and communication challenges these coaches face

when they lack the necessary English language skills to operate on the global stage.

When asked, “How important is English in your sports work?” (on a scale of 1 to 10), the coaches (N = 12) reported a high average score of 9.08 (Min = 7, Max = 10). This indicates that English proficiency plays a crucial role in their professional activities (as shown in Image 1).



**Image 1. Coaches' opinion on the importance of English language skills in professional sports activities**

When asked to identify specific applications of English in their work, several consistent themes emerged across all interviews. A primary focus was international competitions and officiating. At the elite level, all official communications at major tournaments are conducted in English. Coaches emphasized the need to participate in technical meetings, comprehend official briefings, clarify rules with international referees and judges, and effectively manage potential protests or appeals. Another universally cited application was the coordination of joint training camps and sparring sessions. Preparing a national team frequently involves organizing international camps, where English serves as the lingua franca for negotiating logistics, discussing sparring parameters with foreign counterparts, and communicating directly with international athletes to manage training goals.

Furthermore, as highlighted by Coach 4 and Coach 9, English proficiency is essential for attending professional seminars hosted by regulatory bodies. These events are mandatory for securing the licenses and accreditations

required to participate fully in sanctioned sporting events. Additionally, Coach 1 emphasized the language's role in professional networking, noting that proficiency is vital for forging relationships between international teams and ensuring future collaborative opportunities.

Beyond understanding the contexts in which English is used, it is necessary to categorize the specific linguistic tools coaches rely on. The vocabulary required for professional coaching is highly specialized and can be divided into distinct functional categories, as outlined in Table 1. It includes language required for participation in international events, cross-cultural communication, professional development, and other use cases.

This matrix serves as a structural blueprint for developing a comprehensive communication manual tailored specifically for sports professionals. By systematically categorizing these lexical domains, it becomes possible to design targeted training materials that equip coaches with the precise linguistic tools required for every area of international collaboration.

Table 1.

**Types of Language Required by a Sports Coach for Professional Activity**

Language Category	Specific Applications & Vocabulary Types
<b>Technical &amp; Biomechanical Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding highly specific sports terminology and biomechanical vocabulary.</li> <li>• Using precise language for physical execution, including terms like "draw," "bulk up," "overlap," "zonal marking", etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Tactical &amp; Strategic Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering rapid tactical instructions during live matches.</li> <li>• Articulating complex game plans and strategies within tight timeframes.</li> <li>• Understanding sports terms and jargon.</li> </ul>
<b>Interpersonal &amp; Psychological Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modulating tone and vocabulary appropriately when speaking to an international referee versus motivating a diverse player cohort.</li> <li>• Expressing empathy, providing constructive criticism, and managing an athlete's psychological state.</li> </ul>
<b>Sports Science &amp; Medical Lexis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehending complex medical reports.</li> <li>• Engaging with academic language and peer-reviewed sports literature.</li> <li>• Understanding specialized terminology in fields like exercise physiology, sports psychology, data analytics, and nutritional science.</li> </ul>
<b>Administrative &amp; Management Jargon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the terminology required for negotiating international contracts.</li> <li>• Understanding vocabulary related to international sports management.</li> <li>• Mastering the specific jargon of anti-doping regulations.</li> </ul>
<b>Media &amp; Public Relations Discourse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting international press conferences.</li> <li>• Navigating complex media coverage and articulating coaching philosophies during post-match media interviews.</li> </ul>

**6. CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The conducted research substantiates that foreign language competence is a critical component of the professional profile of modern sports coaches. In the context of globalized sports, proficiency in a foreign language, predominantly English as a lingua franca, extends beyond basic conversational ability. As demonstrated, it is an absolute operational necessity for participating in international competitions, coordinating joint training camps, acquiring professional licenses, and accessing advanced sports science literature.

The empirical findings, derived from interviews with 12 national team coaches, quantitatively confirm this high demand (yielding

an average importance score of 9.08 out of 10) and qualitatively categorize the specific linguistic tools required for effective coaching. These functional categories range from highly technical biomechanical and tactical vocabulary to nuanced interpersonal, psychological, and administrative language.

Despite this demonstrated need, the study reveals a significant gap in the current systemic framework of professional development. The absence of specific foreign language requirements in the Ukrainian professional standard for sports coaches, combined with the fact that university-level English for Specific Purposes courses are primarily aimed at undergraduate students, leaves current practicing

professionals without targeted linguistic support in their ongoing careers.

To address these challenges, it is recommended to update national professional standards to explicitly include foreign language competence as a formalized qualification for elite-level coaching. Furthermore, higher education institutions and sports federations must collaborate to develop specialized continuous professional development programs. These programs should focus directly on the specific language categories identified in this study.

Prospects for further research include the development of standardized diagnostic tools to accurately assess the domain-specific language proficiency of practicing coaches. Additionally, future empirical studies should focus on designing and testing targeted educational modules, potentially utilizing adapted CLIL methodologies, that are targeted specifically to adult learners and practicing specialists in high-performance sports environments.

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### ВАЖЛИВІСТЬ ІНШОМОВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ ДЛЯ МІЖКУЛЬТУРНОЇ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ ТА СПІВПРАЦІ У СПОРТИВНОМУ ТРЕНЕРСТВІ

Ця стаття розглядає іншомовну компетентність (FLC) як критичний, багатовимірний компонент професійного профілю сучасних спортивних тренерів. У глобалізованому спорті володіння англійською мовою як *lingua franca* є абсолютною необхідністю для ефективної міжкультурної комунікації, професійної мобільності та доступу до міжнародних наукових ресурсів. Незважаючи на впровадження *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)* та *English for Specific Purposes (ESP)* у вищій освіті, сучасні підходи переважно орієнтовані на

студентів бакалаврату. Відповідно, існує системний розрив щодо безперервного мовного розвитку практикуючих фахівців, що підкреслюється відсутністю чітких вимог до FLC у професійному стандарті тренера в Україні.

Щоб усунути цю емпіричну прогалину, дослідження аналізує експертні інтерв'ю з дванадцятьма тренерами національних збірних команд. Кількісні результати демонструють майже повний консенсус щодо необхідності англійської мови: тренери оцінили її важливість у середньому на 9,08 із 10. Якісно дослідження визначає сфери застосування FLC з високим рівнем відповідальності: орієнтація на великих змаганнях, координація спільних тренувальних зборів, отримання регуляторних ліцензій та взаємодія з рецензованими науковими публікаціями у сфері спорту. На основі цих результатів дослідження представляє функціональну матрицю, що класифікує спеціалізовані мовні інструменти, необхідні тренерам, у шість окремих доменів: технічна та біомеханічна лексика, тактична мова, міжособистісна та психологічна комунікація, медична лексика, адміністративний жаргон і дискурс зв'язків із громадськістю. Дослідження доходить висновку, що оновлення національних професійних стандартів із чітким включенням FLC є необхідним. Крім того, університети та спортивні федерації повинні співпрацювати для розроблення спеціалізованих програм безперервного професійного розвитку, адаптованих для дорослих у середовищі високих досягнень. Подальші дослідження мають зосередитися на розробленні стандартизованих діагностичних інструментів для оцінювання доменно-специфічного рівня мовної компетентності серед практикуючих тренерів.

*Ключові слова:* діяльність тренера, професійна діяльність, спорт, інішомовна компетентність, спортивне тренерство, ESP, CLIL, міжкультурна комунікація.

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