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Nataliia Kolodiichuk
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3051-8121
Taras Shevchenko Regional Humanitarian Pedagogical Academy
of Kremenets, Kremenets
kolornata@gmail.com

# Toward a Definition of Foreign Language Lexical Competence

## Definicja obcojęzycznej kompetencji leksykalnej

**Summary:** The paper covers problems related to the basic content of the definition of foreign language lexical competence (FLLC) and in particular the FLLC of middle school students. It surveys the history and the current state of the problem in recent foreign language (FL) teaching. The article is based on research studies and followed by the theoretical background. It presents in brief the process of defining communicative competence (CC) and lexical competence (LC) as its counterpart which started in the late 1960s. The paper describes the development of some linguistic findings on communicative language competence. Several important definitions and a framework of CC are presented. This paper contains the definitions of "competence," "FL competence," "FLCC," "FLLC." The proposed definition suggests that FLLC of a student of the middle educational level is defined as his or her cognitive, practical, motivational, reflexive-behavioral ability. FL lexical activity is based on the acquisition of a certain lexicon within the age period, adequate use of lexemes, the appropriate use of figurative expressions, phraseological units. The study

concludes by highlighting the main features of the FLLC of students in the middle stage of learning a FL.

**Streszczenie:** W artykule poruszono problemy związane z główną treścią definicji obcojęzycznej kompetencji językowej na podstawie badań przeprowadzonych w szkole. Artykuł został poświęcony studiom nad historią i aktualnym stanem problemu nauczania języka obcego. Opiera się na badaniach naukowych, towarzyszą mu podstawy teoretyczne. Tekst podsumowuje proces określania kompetencji komunikacyjnej i kompetencji leksykalnej jako części składowej, który rozpoczął się pod koniec lat sześćdziesiątych. Artykuł zawiera opracowanie kilku językowych konkluzji na temat komunikatywnej kompetencji językowej. Przedstawiono szereg ważnych definicji i strukturę kompetencji komunikacyjnej. Ten artykuł zawiera definicję „kompetencji", „obcojęzycznej kompetencji językowej", „obcojęzycznej kompetencji leksykalnej". Zaproponowane definicje wskazują na to, że na poziomie średniego wykształcenia obcojęzyczna kompetencja leksykalna ucznia jest definiowana jako jego zdolność poznawcza, praktyczna, motywacyjna, refleksyjno-behawioralna. Aktywność leksykalna oparta jest na opanowaniu określonego słownictwa w pewnym okresie wiekowym oraz na odpowiednim wykorzystaniu leksemów, właściwym użyciu wyrażeń figuratywnych, idiomów. Badanie kończy się pokazaniem najważniejszych osobliwości obcojęzycznej kompetencji leksykalnej uczniów na poziomie szkoły.

## Introduction

At the current stage of Ukraine's integration into Europe, the study of modern European languages becomes of particular importance. It is considered in the Common European Framework of Reference for Language: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR) that the aim henceforth is not just to study a language but to obtain the ability to communicate fluently in the target language, namely, the acquisition of foreign language communicative competence (FLCC), which is the basis of the communicative approach, or communicative language teaching, to the study of foreign languages (FLs).

Global trends in the modernization of secondary education are characterized by the fact that knowledge ceases to be the main goal of study. The development of students' ability to use knowledge in various life situations is given priority instead. Strengthening of the action-oriented component in educational content actualizes the need to form key and subject competences in students during the middle component of their schooling, i.e., grades 5–9, that will be necessary for their life activity and successful self-realization.

The issue of the practical orientation to language learning is still actual nowadays, since the aim is not the mastering of theoretical grammar knowledge, but vocabulary practice activities, the development of oral and written speech. The mastery of any foreign language is defined, foremost, by lexical competence (LC), since it is the scarcity of vocabulary and lexical mistakes which can cause communicative failings and incomprehension (Lewis, 1993; Meara, 1996; Shamov, 2005, *inter alia*). The study of LC acquisition by middle-grade students is considered in the context of the problems of school language education in Ukraine. The main issue is providing conditions for the development of a communicatively competent student who is capable of integration into the world's linguistic and cultural space, while maintaining her/his own sense of national and cultural identity.

The *object* of the research presented in the paper is conceptualization of FLLC.

The *aim* of the research is to study the problem of the definition of FLLC acquisition by students of secondary education level.

The *methods* used in the research included analytic literature review, research sources and document analysis and synthesis.

Different aspects to the problem of competence have been studied by such scholars as Dzvinchuk (1999), Khutorskoi (2003), Kozakov (2003), Lozova (2002), Markova (1996), Raven (2001), Tatur (2004), Zymniaia (2003) and others. The essence and structure of FLCC have been ascertained by Andrienko (2009), Arkhipova (2006), Bibikova (2006), Hez (1985), Izoriia (2008), Kopylova (2009) as well as by the experts of the Council of Europe (2001). However, the results of the analysis of these and other sources available indicate that the examination and clear determination of the FLLC construct of middle school learners, namely, the formulation of a definition which will enable a simple operationalization of that construct has not yet been the subject of scientific research.

Consequently, this fact has predefined the topic of our paper.

### Defining competence, competency and competent in linguistics

While defining the concept of "FLLC," we draw attention to the notions of "competence," "competency" and "competent." "Competence" is a disputable term in the branch of knowledge of general and applied linguistics. It was presented for discussions of language application and second or FL acquisition in the early 1970s (Habermas, 1970; Hymes, 1972; Jakobovits, 1970; Savignon, 1971). Competence is determined in relation to the expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning and regards both psycholinguistic and sociocultural outlooks for second language teaching research to elucidate its progress (Savignon, 1972). The notion of "competency" stands for good knowledge of something; the powers range of an organization, an institution or a person in the explanatory dictionary of Busel (2001). David Dubois (1998) recommends the interpretation of competency as features such as knowledge, skills, mentality, thought templates, and something related, which if applied either solely or in different cohesions, leads to effective completion.

Thomas Gilbert's interpretation (1996) of human competence as a deserving implementation is a function of the relation of estimable achievements to efficacious behavior, measuring specific and objective turning points delineating what people have to fulfill to successively attain or surpass the purposes for their role, team, department and whole organization. "Competence is the acquisition of knowledge skills and abilities at a level of expertise sufficient to be able to perform in an appropriate work setting (within or outside academia)" (Harvey, 2004–2019, p. 19). In the State standard of secondary education (2011), which is aimed at implementation of the tasks in secondary educational institutions and which defines the requirements for the teaching of the middle school students, the concept of "competence" is used in the sense of the student's acquired integrated ability in the process of learning, consisting of knowledge, skills, experience, values and attitudes, which can be implemented holistically in practice. In the Great Explanatory Dictionary of Contemporary Ukrainian, the notion "competent" is interpreted as having sufficient knowledge in a field; being well aware of something; clever; based on knowledge; qualified; having certain powers; full-fledged, sovereign (Busel, 2001).

The concept of "competence" is defined by researchers as the ability of a person to perform practical activity, and "competency" is identified as a content component of this ability which is conveyed in the form of knowledge and skills (Safonova, 1993).

Furthermore, Holovan (2008) believes that competency is a certain norm, the achievement of which can testify to the possibility of the correct solution of a task, and competence is the assessment of the norm achievement (or failure to achieve). Zabolotska (2008) considers "competence" as an integrated personal action-oriented category, which is formed during training as a result of a combination of initial personal experience, knowledge, modes of activity, skills, personal values and the ability to use them in the process of productive activity in relation to a range of objects and processes to a certain field of human activity.

Nikolaieva (2010) indicates that in Ukrainian education the notion of "competence" is operated in the sense proposed by European countries. Competence is defined as the ability to successfully meet individual and social needs, act and perform set tasks. Each competence is built on a combination of knowledge and skills, as well as attitudes, values, emotions and behavioral components, that is, everything that can be mobilized for an active action.

Khutorskoi (2003) displays a three-level hierarchy of competences: key competences, general subject competences, subject competences. A set of key competencies is established by society. It is different for various countries and depends on the value orientations and outlook of a specific community.

So, the notions competency and competence are applied in an analogous manner to indicate the capability to do something correctly or efficiently. Competency is interpreted as a significant skill which is required to do a job, while competence is applied to represent the capability to do something properly.

## Communicative competence conceptualization process

The term communicative competence (CC) was coined by Dell Hymes in 1972. He considers it as the knowledge of both the rules of grammar and the rules of language use appropriate to a given context, and not only "the tacit knowledge of language structure" in the Chomskyan sense (1965). CC is competence of language application appropriate to the other participants of the communicative interaction and relevant to the specified social context and situation (Kurcz, 2004). Hymes (1972) distinctly indicated an alteration of priority among linguists away from the learning of language as a system in isolation, a focus seen in the Chomsky's work (1965), towards language acquisition as means of communication (cited in Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2008).

Consequently, CC manifests an alteration in focus from the grammatical to the communicative attributes of the language, that is, the functions of language and the process of discourse.

Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), Bachman (1990), Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995) have further elaborated Hymes' conceptualisation (1972) of CC. They endeavored to identify the particular constituents of the construct of CC (cited in Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2008). CC as the nucleus of communicative language teaching is the capacity to interact effectively with other participants of communication process. It is the capability to communicate in a personally efficacious and socially proper way (Jensen & Trenholm, 1988).

Thus, the term "CC" delineates the system of rules and strategies which learners must be able to use, provided that they are to apply a language for real intercourse (Doyé & Hurrell, 1997).

A broad variety of theories and models is elaborated for the usage of "competence" as the concept in language teaching, internalization, assessment and in other fields of language research (Bachman, 1990; Botha, 1981; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Chomsky, 1965; Hymes, 1972). A few of them are represented in Figure 1.

**Linguistic Competence (Chomsky, 1965)** impacted by de Saussure

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**CC (Hymes, 1972)** elaborated as contrasted with Chomsky's Linguistic Competence

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**CC (Canale & Swain, 1980)** borrowed Hymes' concept of CC
(Grammatical competence, Sociolinguistic competence, Discourse competence, Strategic competence)

↓

**Grammatical competence, Pragmatic competence (Widdowson, 1983)** notions of knowledge
and capability regard to all four of Hymes' criteria: possibility, feasibility, appropriateness, probability

↓

**CC (Bachman, 1990)** founded on the framework of Canale and Swain
(Organizational competence, Pragmatic competence, Strategic competence)

↓

**Communicative Language Competences** (CEFR, 2001)

*Figure 1.*
The chronological evolution of the linguistic research on communicative language competence.
Source: Malavska, 2016.

Communicative Language Competences were developed on the grounds of the abovementioned theories on CCs in the CEFR (2001).

Competence indicates the range of knowledge, abilities and peculiarities which enables a person to act (CEFR, 2001).

Jill Kerper defines CC as "the progressive acquisition of the ability to use a language to achieve one's communicative purpose."

CC is defined as suitable context grounded on the situation, the part of the participators and the suitable options of register and style. For instance, the diversity of language applied by persons in various jobs or professions can be either formal or informal; the application of jargon or slang may or may not be pertinent (Mora, 2018). In everyday English, people usually say that they *come across problems / difficulties* rather than *encounter problems / difficulties*, *come up against opposition / resistance* rather than *encounter opposition / resistance* and that they are *scared* rather than *afraid*: "Did you *come across* any problems?" "We *came up against* quite a lot of opposition from local people." "I'm *scared* of heights" (Mayor et al., 2009).

Van Ek (1986, cited in Doyé & Hurrell, 1997) has distinguished six components of CC: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, sociocultural competence, social competence.

CEFR (2001, p. 13) regards communicative language competence as containing a number of constituent parts: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic. Every of these constituents is posited as containing, *inter alia*, "knowledge and skills and know-how." The linguistic competences enable language users to distinguish phonological, lexical, syntactical frameworks of the language and to apply them for the purpose of forming lexical units and sentences (Malavska, 2016). They contain lexical, phonological and syntactical knowledge and skills and other aspects of language as a system, separately from the sociolinguistic significance of its varieties and the pragmatic purposes of its implementations. The element, regarded here from the viewpoint of a present individual's communicative language competence, concerns not merely the scope and property of knowledge (for instance with reference to phonetic divergences made or the scope and accuracy of lexicon) but also to cognitive arrangement and the manner this knowledge is stored (namely the different associative networks in which the speaker collocates a lexical item) and to its approachability (activation, recall and availability). "Knowledge may be conscious and readily expressible or may not" (for instance, once more concerning proficiency of a phonetic system) (CEFR, 2001).

The notion competence applies to the complex of the different kinds of knowledge and skills people have to rely on. It may be useful for practical purposes to classify competences according to the scheme presented below (Figure 2):
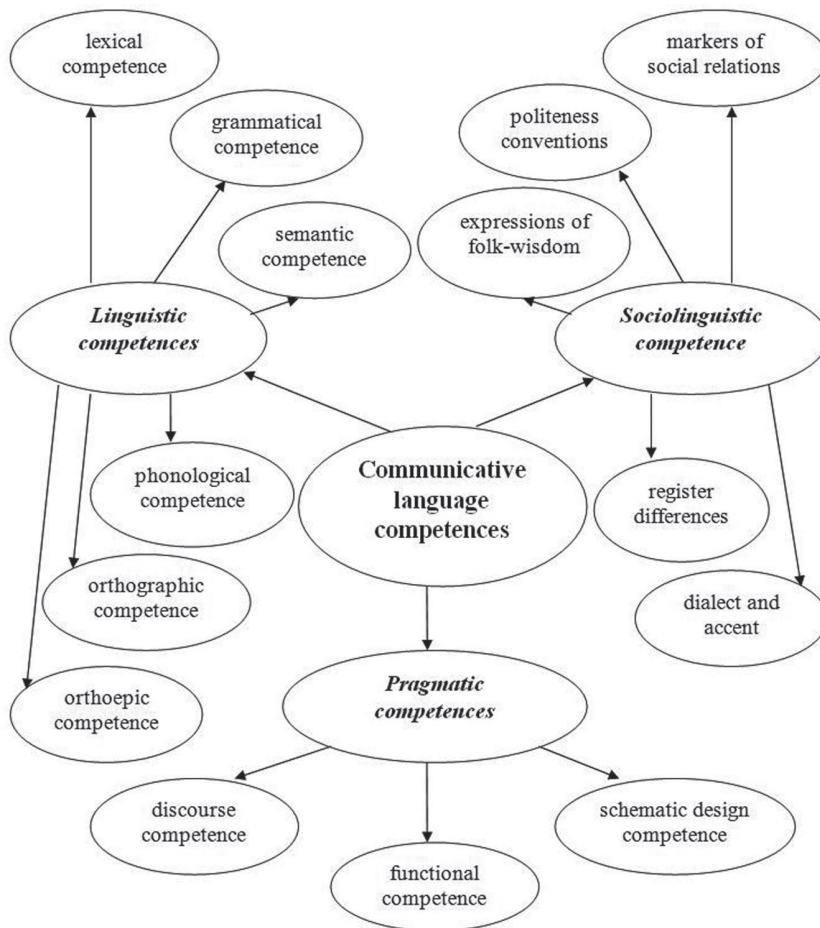


*Figure 2.*
Schematic Representation of Communicative Language Competences.
Source: Bailly et al., 2001, p. 25.

Consequently, CC is the learner's capacity to comprehend and employ language suitably to converse in an authentic (instead of simulated) social and school setting, which requires the mastery of the production and

comprehension of communicative acts or speech acts that are relevant to the needs of the second language learner.

## Lexical competence in the communicative competence framework

Over the past several decades, an increasing number of philosophers, psychologists, computer scientists and linguists have become persuaded that no thorough description of the competence in the area of word meaning can be provided without a connection between language and perception (Jackendoff, 1987; Jackendoff & Landau, 1993; Harnad, 1993; Marconi, 1994). Furthermore, it has been asserted that the borderline between lexical and encyclopaedic knowledge is not distinct (or may be entirely unavailable): the mode we employ, absorb and conceptualise objects is, in part, a kind of knowledge which relates to our LC and, moreover, is exactly what permits us to know the meanings of words and to apply them accurately (Goy, 2002).

In order to identify the meaning of LC, it is important to comprehend what it implies to know a word. Richards (1976) suggested the notion of "knowing a word": this, in his view, comprised knowing the level of feasibility of coming across a word in speech or print, the restrictions on its usage in conformity with its diversity in function and situation, the syntactic behavior related to the word, the word's underlying form and the derivations which can be made from it, the network of links between the word and another word in the language, the semantic signification of the word, and the sundry meanings related to the word. Largely preserving Richards' lexical knowledge structure, Nation (1990) added pronunciation as an essential constituent to make the structure more inclusive. Moreover, Nation (1990) stated explicitly the difference between the receptive and productive knowledge of vocabulary, specifying that production demanded a higher degree of vocabulary grasp than reception did. Subsequently, Nation (2001) reconsidered his early framework to indicate that the knowledge of a word or, namely, LC implicates three kinds of knowledge:

(I) knowledge of form (spoken form, written form and word parts);

(II) knowledge of meaning (form and meaning, concept and referents, and associations); and

(III) knowledge of use (grammatical functions, collocations and constraints on use).

Previously to Richards and Nation, Dale ([1965] cited in Read, 2000) elaborated the following four-stage scale to illustrate the differing levels of LC:

Stage 1: "I never saw it before."

Stage 2: "I have heard of it, but I don't know what it means."

Stage 3: "I recognize it in context…it has something to do with…"

Stage 4: "I know it."

It is crucial to indicate here that Dale elaborated this scale for first language users. For second language learners, Paribakht and Wesche (1993) produced a Vocabulary Knowledge Scale completely analogous to the one elaborated by Dale but having one supplemental stage: "I can use this word in a sentence."

LC, consequently, has been defined variously by diverse researchers depending on their standpoint of what represents vocabulary knowledge. But in spite of that, common to all the points of view is the realization that LC is multidimensional and learning a word is an intricate and progressive process (Choudhury, 2015).

Diego Marconi (1997) identifies LC as our ability to use words. LC as a component of CC is defined in the CEFR as the "knowledge and ability to use the vocabulary" (Nikolaieva, 2003).

Also, LC is the ability to retrieve a standard word instantly from long-term memory, depending on a specific speech task, and to put this word in the speech chain.

Jumanazarov (2018) states that attaining the top standard of progress of LC is revealed by the fact that a person effortlessly applies an amply considerable lexical stock in direct as well as indirect communication, applying phraseological phrases, proverbs and sayings inherent to the speech of native speakers. He supplements the definition of LC, introducing the following attributes: the confident knowledge and application of the polysemy of the vocabulary of the language being learnt, the diverse contexts of applying lexical units, including idiomatic, slang, humorous and culturally biased, i.e., nationally specific expressions and lexicon. Furthermore, he regards LC as the ability to identify the contextual meaning of a word, the framework of meaning and what is characteristically national in the meaning of a word, to contrast the extent of meanings in two languages.

LC forms the foundation of internalizing a FL. LC includes "the size of vocabulary and the thematic range." A proper command of vocabulary involves not merely the knowledge of words but also the capability to apply the words in relevant formulaic successions to make communication fluent (Sirkel, 2017).

In addition, Tanaka (2016) nonetheless underscores both intra-lexical competence (the capability to apply a word as wholly as feasible) and inter-lexical competence (the capacity to select a right word among semantically cognate words), which are evenly significant.

Jumanazarov (2018) believes that LC includes not only lexical knowledge, skills and abilities, but also – as a complex structural formation – involves language, speech experience and the personal characteristics of learners.

Thus, LC involves knowledge of the means by which we can transform lexical units into meaningful expressions. LC is the ability to recognize and use the words of the language like the native speaker does. LC includes understanding of the diverse relationships among groups of words, i.e., knowledge of the combinatory capabilities of a word. A native speaker knows a series of different words in addition to any given word that can occur or combine with it. LC also entails comprehension of the usual (traditional) meanings of words.

Sirkel (2017) considers LC to be interpreted as vocabulary knowledge which includes knowledge of lexical elements and the ability of using them in the act of speaking. This competence deals with the manner words settle in the mind (the immense amount of words, an organizational structure of the mental lexicon). Co-ordination, collocation, superordination and synonymy are the fundamental connections which relate words in the mind. In such a way, words, regular word combinations, set phrases, phrasal verbs, compound prepositions and phraseological units are referred to as lexical elements.

Acquisition of vocabulary is the most tremendous and momentous objective that the language learner encounters. The grasp of vocabulary provides the successful acquisition, development and automatization of all types of speech activities. Vocabulary knowledge is understood not only as the set of linguistic data on a foreign word but also as the knowledge of programs for handling the word, i.e., definite strategies for usage of a foreign word.

Diego Marconi affirms that LC comprises two essential aspects: inferential and referential (Marconi, 1997). On the one hand, inferential competence implies how a word is connected to other words and linguistic expressions, i.e., it promotes how to draw conclusions, "to provide definitions, to paraphrase, summarise or translate a text," and so forth. It is, for instance, to know that apples are hard round fruits that have red, light green or yellow skin and are white inside; that something which is free does not cost you any money; that in order to surf somebody has to ride on waves while standing on a special board, etc. (Mayor et al., 2009, pp. 69, 694, 1775). On the other hand, referential

competence indicates what people require to use words in the world as they perceive it, i.e., to name things, to recognize the things which have been named by others, and so on.

LC can be subdivided into levels. The level of LC acquisition determines the ability of a learner to solve problems related to the correct use of a foreign word in the act of practical communication on the basis of acquired knowledge of that word and appropriate skills.

A lexical skill (productive and receptive) supposes knowledge of the formal characteristics of a word, its semantic meaning and the functional characteristics determining the aim of communication necessary for the representation while speaking. The dominant term in the chain "purpose – meaning – form" is "purpose," which is stipulated by the place and role of vocabulary in the speaking activity.

Teaching speaking and writing is intimately linked with learning vocabulary and assumes the process guided from content of meaning to the form and application of a word; whereas teaching listening and reading conjectures the presentation the form of a word and subsequently its meaning and application (Gizyatova, Kochemasova & Zabolotskaya, 2016, p. 59).

Gizyatova, Kochemasova and Zabolotskaya (2016, p. 60) consider the FLLC of a learner as the basis of his CC. They are interdependent and form a so-called "the dynamic unity": LC evolves in the process of communicative activity of an individual, and conversely, CC progresses as LC develops.

Thus, LC is an essential component of FLCC, as lexical skills ensure functioning of the following types of language skills: writing, speaking, reading, listening and translation. In order to develop a high level of LC, learners needs to acquire the knowledge of vocabulary which allows them to use an extensive amount of lexical units both in direct and indirect communication and to exploit phraseological units and proverbs of the FL typical for native speakers.

## Theoretical foundation and definition of the FLLC of the student of the middle educational level

The aim of the secondary school curriculum is not to teach a FL but to teach students how to communicate in a target language (The Cabinet of Ministers in Ukraine, 2011). This both implies and explains why the strategy recommended for such teaching is based, or should be based, on communication and more directly oriented towards the acquisition of real communication skills.

Jan Van Ek considers communication skills to be made up of partial or subordinate skills (Van Ek, 1986).

Linguistic competence is a significant component in the ability to communicate as it represents detailed knowledge of linguistic forms (words, structures and phrases) which are necessary for the execution of linguistic acts in relevant communicative context (Doyé & Hurrell, 1997).

Thus, LC is an aspect of both linguistic competence and communicative competence.

The main purpose of the teaching is to teach students to communicate in a FL in typical real-life situations within the framework of the learned syllabus materials. The ability of students to communicate in a FL is ensured by the development of their FLCC, which comprises several components: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic competence, etc. These components also include a number of competences.

Linguistic competences consequently include language knowledge (lexical, grammatical, phonetic and orthographic) and appropriate skills.

Sociolinguistic competences relate to the sociocultural stipulations of language application. Through its relation to social customs (rules of courtesy, norms managing relationships between generations, sexes, classes and social groups, linguistic codification of certain basic rituals in the operation of a community), the sociolinguistic constituent rigorously influences all language communication between representatives of various cultures in spite of the fact that participants may usually not be aware of its impact.

Pragmatic competences are focused on the functional application of linguistic resources (output of language functions, speech acts), drawing on scenarios or scripts of interactional exchanges. It additionally relates to the mastery of discourse, cohesion and coherence, the determination of text types and forms, irony and parody (CEFR, 2001, p. 13).

Discourse competence as a constituent of pragmatic competences includes four types of competences in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Discourse competence entails the knowledge of how to compose and understand oral or written texts in the modes of speaking/writing and listening/reading, correspondingly.

Acquisition of speech skills is impossible without the mastery of linguistic material (phonetic, lexical, and grammatical). But the mere knowledge of the linguistic material does not ensure the acquisition of speech skills. It is necessary to have habits for the output of acquired material and recognition of information. Speech habits are an integral part of speech skills.

Some of the above-mentioned competences may be even more detailed. LC includes lexical knowledge and lexical skills in speech (Nikolaieva, 2002).

Bruce Stirling suggests that a subjective argument that successfully persuades demonstrates coherence. Coherence implies your assertion is comprehensible and consequent since it indicates *proficiency*. Proficiency denotes skill and knowledge of English. Skill implies ability whereas knowledge implies theory; "*skillfully applying your knowledge of English = proficiency = coherence.*" Errors will denote a lack of proficiency (Stirling, 2016).

Considering the components of LC in more detail, we determined that lexical speech skills are the skills of intuitively correct development – the use and understanding of FL vocabulary on the basis of verbal lexical ties between auditory and speech motility and graphic forms of the word and its meaning, as well as the connections between the words of a FL (Shatilov, 1986).

Working in an action-oriented approach, we consider a skill as being a set of abilities required for the completion of a definite action, instead of the action itself. Hence skills are considered as an aspect of competence. Activities, then, relate to a class of actions (Bailly et al., 2001).

Thus, the author finds that the FLLC of the student of the middle educational level is defined as her/his ability to perform a cognitive, practical, motivational, reflexive-behavioral FL lexical activity which is based on the acquisition of a certain lexicon within the age period, with adequate use of lexemes and the appropriate use of figurative expressions and phraseological units.

We consequently conclude that the concept of "FLLC of the middle school student" is much broader than the notions of lexical "knowledge" and "skills," since it contains the orientation of the person, the flexibility in thinking, her/his ability to overcome stereotypes, predict speech situations, which are characterized by independence, purposefulness, strong-willed qualities. The LC of basic secondary school students is one of the integrative qualities of a person, which allows her/him to consciously and creatively carry out communicative and creative activities, develop the general level of her/his own speech culture and achieve successful and optimal life activity.

## Conclusion

In summary, this paper has proposed some initial directions toward defining FLLC for students of the middle education level. Thanks to comparisons, it found many common definitions and characteristics of FLLC determined by

Slav theoreticians and English-speaking ones. It is hoped that this attempt to define FLLC will serve to focus attention on some of the critical characteristics of the construct. The article outlines general characteristics of FLLC (skills, knowledge, lexical awareness). It has been proposed that the FLLC of a middle school student is her/his capacity for cognitive, practical, motivational, reflexive-behavioral FL lexical activity, which is founded upon the acquisition of the particular lexicon within the age period, the suitable use of lexemes and the proper application of figurative expressions and phraseological units.

Thus, this paper has offered a preliminary attempt to define FLLC for middle school students. Future research is required to refine this initial definition and to test its validity within the field.

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