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DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF FUTURE DOCTORS OF PHILOSOPHY IN MEDICINE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOUTH KOREA'S EDUCATIONAL POLICY

ФОРМУВАННЯ АНГЛОМОВНОЇ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ МАЙБУТНІХ ДОКТОРІВ ФІЛОСОФІЇ У МЕДИЦИНІ В КОНТЕКСТІ ОСВІТНЬОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ ПІВДЕННОЇ КОРЕЇ

The article presents a comprehensive analysis of the formation of English communicative competence among future Doctors of Philosophy in medicine within the context of South Korea's educational policy. Based on the study of university policies, national programs, and standards, it is demonstrated that foreign language training is an integral component of the country's higher education system and is regarded as a strategic factor in the internationalization of the academic environment. The study shows that English in Korean universities functions not only as a subject of study but also as a key tool for scientific activity, professional self-expression, and intercultural communication.

It was found that South Korean universities are characterized by a high degree of systematization, flexibility, and orientation toward international assessment standards. The requirement to demonstrate English proficiency through standardized tests (TOEFL, IELTS, TEPS) ensures objectivity in selection and promotes academic mobility. The combination of formal requirements with practical opportunities to use English in research and academic activities plays a significant role in the development of English-language competence. A substantial portion of dissertations, publications, and conferences is conducted in English, which fosters the development of academic writing skills, oral communication, and intercultural interaction.

The effectiveness of mentoring systems and specialized courses aimed at improving academic writing, preparing research presentations, and developing professional communication skills has been identified. It is emphasized that the integration of foreign language training with research activities contributes to the formation of functional communicative competence, which directly supports the research productivity of doctoral students.

In summary, South Korea's foreign language education model is based on a combination of national policy and institutional autonomy, allowing flexible adaptation of language training to the specific needs of different academic fields, particularly medicine. It is concluded that the South Korean experience represents an effective example of an integrative approach that combines academic mobility, practical orientation, and international cooperation. Prospects for further research include an in-depth analysis of pedagogical technologies, digital platforms, blended learning methods, and mentorship models that enhance the development of English communicative competence in medical PhD programs.

Key words: English communicative competence, Doctor of Philosophy, medical education, South Korea, educational policy, internationalization, academic mobility, academic writing, mentorship, scientific communication.

У статті здійснено комплексний аналіз особливостей формування англomовної комунікативної компетентності майбутніх докторів філософії у галузі медицини в контексті освітньої політики Південної Кореї. На основі вивчення університетських політик, державних програм та стандартів доведено, що іншомовна підготовка є невід'ємною складовою системи вищої освіти країни та розглядається як стратегічний чинник інтернаціоналізації академічного простору. Показано, що англійська мова у корейських університетах виконує функції не лише навчального предмета, а й ключового інструмента наукової діяльності, професійного самовираження й міжкультурної комунікації.

З'ясовано, що університети Південної Кореї характеризуються високим рівнем системності, гнучкості та орієнтації на міжнародні стандарти оцінювання. Вимога підтвердження рівня володіння англійською мовою через стандартизовані тести (TOEFL, IELTS, TEPS) забезпечує об'єктивність відбору та сприяє академічній мобільності. Значну роль у розвитку англомовної компетентності відіграє поєднання формальних вимог із практичними можливостями застосування англійської мови у навчально-дослідницькій діяльності. Показано, що значна частина дисертацій, публікацій та конференцій реалізується англійською, що стимулює розвиток навичок академічного письма, усного мовлення та міжкультурної взаємодії.

Виявлено ефективність менторських систем і спеціалізованих курсів, спрямованих на вдосконалення академічного письма, підготовку наукових презентацій і розвиток навичок професійного спілкування. Наголошено, що інтеграція іншомовної підготовки з науковими дослідженнями сприяє формуванню функціональної комунікативної компетентності, яка безпосередньо підтримує наукову продуктивність аспірантів.

Узагальнено, що модель іншомовної освіти Південної Кореї базується на поєднанні державної політики з автономією університетів, завдяки чому забезпечується гнучке пристосування мовної підготовки до потреб конкретних наукових напрямів, зокрема медичного. Зроблено висновок, що досвід Південної Кореї є ефективним прикладом інтеграційного підходу, у якому поєднуються академічна мобільність, практична орієнтованість і міжнародна співпраця. Перспективи подальших досліджень полягають у поглибленому аналізі педагогічних технологій, цифрових платформ, змішаних форм навчання та моделей наставництва, які забезпечують розвиток англомовної комунікативної компетентності у програмах на здобуття ступеня доктора філософії медичного профілю.

Ключові слова: англомовна комунікативна компетентність, доктор філософії, медична освіта, Південна Корея, освітня політика, інтернаціоналізація, академічна мобільність, академічне письмо, менторство, наукова комунікація.

Introduction. In the contemporary globalized educational landscape, proficiency in English has become not only a means of intercultural communication but also a vital prerequisite for researchers' professional self-realization. This is particularly relevant to the field of medicine, where English serves as the primary language of international research, clinical guidelines, publications, and professional discussions. For PhD candidates, English communicative competence functions not merely as a tool for academic writing but as a key factor in integrating into the global scientific community.

South Korea holds a leading position in higher medical education and scientific innovation, actively promoting the internationalization of its universities. Over the past few decades, there has been a clear tendency toward implementing English-medium graduate programs, especially within medical schools. This approach reflects the country's efforts to enhance the competitiveness of Korean researchers, expand international collaboration, and increase the visibility of scientific publications in high-impact journals. In this context, English communicative competence is regarded as a strategic component of professional training for future Doctors of Philosophy in Medicine.

Despite the growing body of research devoted to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), the issue of developing English communicative competence among PhD students in medical specialties remains relatively underexplored, particularly within the South Korean

context. The integration of language training into the research process, the use of English in interdisciplinary collaboration, and the impact of national educational policy on the communicative competence of doctoral students have not yet been sufficiently studied.

Therefore, the relevance of this topic lies in the need for an in-depth analysis of the role of English communicative competence in the professional training of future PhD holders in medicine, as well as in examining the South Korean experience, which may serve as a model for improving doctoral education frameworks in Ukraine and other countries.

The aim of this article is to analyse the university policies and national standards regulating the language training of PhD candidates in medicine in South Korea and to determine how English communicative competence is integrated into the system of professional training for future medical researchers.

Theoretical framework. An analysis of South Korea's university policies and state standards indicates that English-language education constitutes an integral part of the higher education system, particularly at the doctoral level in medicine (Byun et al., 2011; Yu et al., 2023). Since the early 2000s, the country has demonstrated a clear trend toward the internationalization of its educational environment, as reflected in national initiatives such as Brain Korea 21 (BK21) and BK21 Plus. These programs aim to enhance the global competitiveness of universities and attract international doctoral

students. One of their key priorities is the advancement of academic English as the primary medium of scientific communication and publication activity (Bolton et al., 2023; Wijnen-Meijer, 2023).

In most South Korean universities, English-language proficiency is regarded as a prerequisite for admission to doctoral programs and for conducting research activities. For instance, at Chonnam National University (2025), clear minimum English requirements are established for international or overseas doctoral applicants: TOEFL iBT 71, IELTS 5.5, TEPS, or other equivalent tests. Similar requirements are outlined in international admission guidelines, which stipulate that applicants must provide proof of proficiency in either English or Korean through an official, valid certificate. At the majority of graduate schools, applicants are required to submit the results of TOEFL iBT, IELTS, or TEPS, although some institutions also recognize other internationally accepted language tests or allow internal language examinations.

It is worth noting that there is a certain degree of variability in these standards. Some universities, such as Seoul National University, rely exclusively on international certificates, while others, including Yonsei University and Korea University, accept national Korean tests (such as TEPS) as well (Byun et al., 2011; Kim, 2012). This approach provides greater flexibility but also results in diversity within the assessment system. In several cases, universities allow exemptions from submitting language certificates if the candidate has obtained a previous degree from an institution where English was the medium of instruction or comes from a native English-speaking country.

One of the major challenges lies in the measurement of communicative competence. Most universities focus on standardized test results that primarily assess reading, writing, and listening skills, while speaking, academic rhetoric, and presentation abilities often remain beyond direct evaluation (Bolton, Botha, & Lin, 2024). Consequently, doctoral students who achieve high scores on TOEFL or IELTS may still experience difficulties when participating in conferences, academic discussions, or research presentations in English.

Additionally, it is worth emphasizing the role of technological platforms in supporting English-language communication. Many universities have created digital environments for discussing research projects, conducting online seminars, and hosting webinars in English, allowing PhD students to practice the language in a real research context

and develop skills for remote collaboration with international colleagues.

Another notable aspect is the differentiation of language requirements across faculties. Humanities and social science programs usually impose stricter English proficiency criteria, as the language serves as a tool for analytical reasoning and argumentation. In contrast, medical and STEM fields tend to emphasize comprehension of professional literature, thus giving less attention to productive communication skills (Wijnen-Meijer, 2023). As a result, PhD students in medical programs may demonstrate a strong theoretical understanding of their field but possess limited practical communication abilities, which can affect their participation in international academic exchange.

Formal language requirements undoubtedly ensure a basic level of quality control by setting a minimum threshold of proficiency. However, an analysis of the curricula at leading universities – such as KAIST, Sungkyunkwan University, and Ewha Womans University – reveals a relative lack of specialized courses dedicated to academic writing, scientific communication, or intercultural interaction at the doctoral level (Yu et al., 2023). In most cases, students acquire these skills informally – through collaboration in international research projects or by engaging in publication activities under the guidance of academic supervisors. The absence of structured training modules can lead to fragmented development of English-language competence, which may not fully align with the current demands of global academic mobility (Bolton et al., 2023).

Furthermore, there is a noticeable trend toward creating interdisciplinary academic environments where PhD students from different fields join research groups. Such integration encourages the use of English as a universal tool for scientific communication and promotes the development of teamwork skills in international projects (Bolton, Botha, & Lin, 2024).

Another significant issue is the absence of a unified national framework specifically regulating language requirements for PhD students in medicine (Byun et al., 2011). South Korea's state education standards primarily emphasize general academic competencies without differentiating by discipline. Consequently, the linguistic training of doctoral students in medicine largely depends on individual universities or supervisors. While this autonomy allows institutions to tailor approaches to specific academic needs, it also complicates the harmonization of outcomes at the national level (Yu et al., 2023).

Additional systemic limitations include ambiguity in the equivalence of standardized tests (TOEFL, IELTS, TEPS), limited validity periods of certificates (usually two years), requiring students to retake tests, insufficient institutional support mechanisms for international students who need linguistic adaptation, an emphasis on receptive rather than productive language skills (Kim, 2012).

In this context, the experience of universities that have implemented integrated language training models appears particularly valuable. For example, Pohang University of Science and Technology (POSTECH) offers mandatory courses such as Academic English Writing and Research Presentation Skills for doctoral students. These programs combine linguistic and research preparation, contributing to the development of functional communicative competence that directly supports academic performance and scientific productivity.

The results of the analysis indicate that South Korea's university policy in the field of foreign language training for doctoral students is characterized by a high degree of systematization, flexibility, and alignment with international standards (Bolton et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2023). Verification of English language proficiency through internationally recognized tests ensures objectivity in assessment, promotes academic mobility, and enhances the global credibility of Korean research programs (Wijnen-Meijer, 2023).

An important advantage of this system is the combination of formal language requirements with ample opportunities for the practical use of English in academic and research activities (Byun et al., 2011). A significant portion of dissertation research, publications, and academic conferences is conducted in English, which enables future PhD holders to develop effective intercultural communication skills and professional self-expression in the global academic environment (Bolton et al., 2023).

Many universities actively promote academic writing courses, communication training programs, and international internship opportunities, which contribute to the practical improvement of linguistic proficiency (Yu et al., 2023). Well-functioning mentoring systems also play a key role: experienced professors and researchers provide doctoral students with guidance in preparing academic articles, abstracts, and presentations in English (Bolton, Botha, & Lin, 2024).

A major factor contributing to the success of this approach is the integration of foreign language

training with research activity. South Korean universities have created an academic environment in which English functions as a medium of professional communication, collaboration, and knowledge creation (Wijnen-Meijer, 2023). Active cooperation with international educational and research platforms facilitates continuous exchange of experience and contributes to the improvement of research training quality (Bolton et al., 2023).

Finally, it should be noted that the prospects for the development of English-language training in medical PhD programs are linked to the implementation of innovative pedagogical practices: digital courses, blended learning, and regular assessment of communication skills within academic projects (Yu et al., 2023). This approach enhances the effectiveness of learning and provides PhD students with the necessary competencies for a successful international research career (Wijnen-Meijer, 2023).

Conclusions and prospects for further research. Thus, the system of foreign language training for doctoral students in South Korea demonstrates coherence, strategic orientation, and practical effectiveness. It is based on a balance between national educational policy and institutional autonomy, which allows universities to tailor language preparation to the specific needs of different disciplines, including medicine. Emphasis on international assessment standards, the implementation of academic writing courses, and the development of mentoring and research programs in English together ensure a comprehensive approach to the formation of foreign language competence among future PhD holders.

The implementation of such a policy contributes to the preparation of highly qualified researchers capable of participating actively in global academic dialogue, presenting their research findings internationally, and engaging in scientific collaboration with foreign colleagues. Importantly, English in the South Korean educational context is regarded not merely as a subject of study but as a key instrument of research activity, professional self-expression, and intercultural interaction. This fosters the development of not only linguistic but also cognitive, sociocultural, and research competences essential for modern scholars.

A notable outcome of the Korean model is the successful integration of language training with research practice, the creation of a supportive academic environment for developing English-language skills, and the strengthening of the

international reputation of Korean universities. This system enhances the quality of research publications, increases doctoral students' participation in international conferences, and broadens opportunities for academic mobility.

Prospects for further research include a more detailed analysis of pedagogical technologies and educational strategies that effectively promote the development of English communicative competence in medical PhD programs. Future studies could also explore the efficiency of blended learning approaches, digital platforms for academic writing, mentorship models, and inter-university

collaboration frameworks. Comparative analysis of South Korea's experience with that of other countries where English-medium education plays a leading role in doctoral training would allow the identification and adaptation of best practices to diverse national educational contexts.

Overall, South Korea's experience demonstrates the effectiveness of an integrative model of foreign language training, combining academic mobility, practical orientation, and international cooperation. This approach fosters the formation of a competitive generation of researchers capable of active engagement in the global medical and scientific community.

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