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10.51889/2960-1649.2025.63.2.013*MOLDIR KURMASHEVA<sup>1</sup>, AINUR ZHORABEKOVA<sup>2\*</sup>, MARZHAN DUISENOVA<sup>1</sup>*<sup>1</sup>*O. Zhanibekov South Kazakhstan Pedagogical University (Shymkent, Kazakhstan)*<sup>2</sup>*M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University (Shymkent, Kazakhstan)*

\*Address of correspondence: Ainur Zhorabekova, Department of Foreign Languages for Technical Specialties, M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University, 5, Tauke Khan Av., Shymkent, 160012, Republic of Kazakhstan, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2697-8077>,  
E-mail address: [ainur-zhorabekova@mail.ru](mailto:ainur-zhorabekova@mail.ru)/Tel.: +7 775 545 7307

### Professional-Oriented Competence of Future Teachers in the Context of Digital Adaptive Learning

#### *Abstract*

**Introduction.** The study addresses the critical importance of teacher skills and competences in shaping educational quality and future generations, focusing on revealing the essence and structure of professionally-based competences that prospective foreign language teachers should acquire to work effectively with digital adaptive technologies in their future profession. The research recognizes that improving teacher training programs and maintaining high teaching standards are essential for sustainable national development. **Methodology and Methods.** Data was collected using a structured Likert Scale questionnaire administered to 68 participants who rated a set of 25 competences. The research employed descriptive statistical analysis as the primary analytical approach, with the Friedman test utilized to reveal essential differences between professionally-based competences of prospective foreign language teachers. **Results.** The findings demonstrated that in-service teachers considered methodical competence as the most important professionally-based competence. The Friedman test revealed significant differences between various competences, with highest ranks assigned to competences related to effective lesson planning and classroom time management, while contemporary approaches such as hybrid learning models received the lowest rankings. The lower ranking of competences related to adaptive learning models indicated gaps in current teacher training programs. **Scientific novelty.** The research provides comprehensive analysis of the competence structure required for prospective foreign language teachers working with digital adaptive technologies, establishing a hierarchy of professional competences and identifying previously unrecognized gaps between traditional teaching skills and contemporary digital approaches in teacher preparation. **Practical significance.** The study reveals the need for focused professional development in teacher training programs, particularly in areas related to adaptive learning models and hybrid teaching approaches, providing evidence-based recommendations for improving the quality of foreign language teacher preparation to meet modern educational demands.

**Keywords:** EFL teacher competences, professionally-based competence, digital learning tools, adaptive learning technologies, digital teaching skills, pre-service teacher training.

**Introduction.** Training highly qualified specialists plays a crucial role in strengthening a country's competitiveness on the global stage. Quality education and professional training not only enhance the standard of living but also contribute to Kazakhstan's successful integration into the global community. It is no coincidence that President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, in his address to the people of Kazakhstan titled "A Just Kazakhstan: Rule of Law, Economic Growth, Public Optimism," emphasized the

importance of training specialists in line with modern economic development trends: "Providing qualified personnel is the most pressing task... Professionalism must always come first in our society. The new quality of our nation is being shaped by specialists in their respective fields" (Tokayev, 2024). In this regard, the further development of the pedagogical education system based on the best domestic and international practices remains a burning issue. It is necessary to improve the training

level of pre-service teachers, prepare competent specialists who meet modern requirements, and establish a high-quality education system.

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, there is a growing demand for teachers who can effectively integrate cutting-edge technologies and digital learning platforms into their instructional practices. Educators must not only be proficient in using these tools but also possess the ability to adapt the learning process to meet the diverse needs of each learner. The shift toward student-centered learning underscores the necessity for teachers who can personalize instruction, foster student motivation, and create engaging, interactive learning experiences (Levin et al, 2024). Therefore, higher education institutions must prioritize the training future educators who are equipped with the skills and competences required to navigate and leverage digital platforms, ensuring a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

This increasing demand is in line with the competency based approach which shifts the focus from the simple measurement of a learner's knowledge to the assessment of his or her ability to use it in the real world. The main purpose of this framework is to guarantee that the education system is able to address the changing needs of the labor market by training graduates who are fully-equipped and competent to meet the requirements of the workplace (Kunanbayeva, 2010). Mineyeva et al (2022) are right that in the 21st century-the era of digital reality-it is wrong to consider a teacher as just a "supplier of knowledge". On the contrary, a teacher has to enable every learner and bring out the best in every learner. Due to the dynamics in the education system, it is important to establish the professionally-based competences that a foreign language teacher should acquire in the 21st century.

Taking into consideration the relevance of the competency based approach in training future teachers and the needs of the labor market, the purpose of this paper is to identify the professional competences of the future foreign language teacher in the context of digital adaptive learning. The article looks at the theoretical foundations of professional

competences in foreign language teaching and reports on the perceptions of in-service foreign language teachers on these competences.

This study poses two research questions:

1. What is the meaning and structure of the term 'professionally-based competence of future foreign language teachers'?
2. Which professional competences of foreign language teachers are required in the context of digital adaptive learning?

The competency based approach enhances the primary purpose of foreign language teaching to train professionals who are not only knowledgeable but also competent to face the challenges of the world of work. This approach helps graduates to be ready for future career, easy transition to society and enhanced mobility (Orynbayeva, 2024). The professional competence of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers is a complex and evolving concept that plays a critical role in affecting teaching effectiveness and students' learning outcomes. Professional competence means the improvement of educational and instructional practices where the main attention is paid to the quality of teaching. It is essential for the development and improvement of the field of education.

Beside subject matter and pedagogical knowledge and skills, teachers are expected to demonstrate professional competence. This includes regulating the process of learning and teaching, from classroom discipline to integrating the latest pedagogical strategies, using new and creative ways of presenting lessons, and evaluating learners' achievements. Teachers should always be ready to incorporate new materials that are in conformity with the current educational trends. Improving teaching practices is an urgent issue that requires immediate attention. (Channa et al., 2024) The development of professional competence is a process of teacher education, integrating technology into teaching and professional reflection (Marisa et al., 2024). There are various interpretations of the concept of "professional competence" of a teacher in pedagogical literature. Before exploring the essence of the concept "professional competence", we decided

to look up the definition of this word in the Collins dictionary, which states that competence is the ability to do something well or effectively (Collins Dictionary, n.d.).

According to Turlybekov et al (2024) the professional pedagogical competence of future EFL teachers is a comprehensive combination of attributes that encompass their personal and socio-moral background. It also demonstrates their ability to cultivate motivation, knowledge, and practical skills within their professional field. Fakhrutdinova et al (2020) explains that professional competence of a teacher can be considered as a professional or personal characteristic of a teacher that guarantees high scientific and pedagogical activity. Similarly, Belonozhkina (2009) writes that the professional competence of a foreign language teacher expresses the unity of their theoretical and practical readiness to carry out pedagogical activities. Bondar et al (2024) sticks to the idea that the professional competence of a teacher is a fusion of expertise (specialized, methodical, psychological, and pedagogical training), creativity (innovative approaches to the learning process, and the effective use of teaching tools and methods) and art (performance and public speaking).

Thus, the analysis of sources has allowed us to define the concept of professional competence of a future foreign language teacher as a combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, and readiness for future teaching activities, as well as for the application of innovative approaches, methods, and teaching tools. In addition, we have identified that there are various classifications of the professional competences of a future foreign language teacher. According to Kunanbayeva (2015), the competency model comprises four sequentially integrated blocks of competences within the educational process: Professionally-oriented, Professionally-based, Professionally-identifying competences and Intercultural-international professional communication.

The professionally-based competences block is represented by the “basic competences,” which reflects the ability and readiness to engage in a specific professional activity (such as pedagogical, philological, etc.). This block

includes the formation of the following sub-competences: contextual-communicative, pragma-actualizing, conceptual competences and so on. Mendekenova et al (2024) claim that this block of competences can be considered as the primary one within this model—that is, these competences foster the preparedness and capability of future foreign language teachers to develop effective pedagogical practices, so they play a crucial role in their professional development. They are primarily formed during the third year of study. Therefore, at this stage, students should mainly focus on finding theoretical information about up-to-date teaching tools and methods. They should also read authentic and professional materials and learn to design teaching methods using modern educational technologies.

Several other researchers have also attempted to systematize the components of EFL teachers’ professional competence. For instance, Andreyeva (2022) defines six main components: communicative, linguistic, methodical, psychological-pedagogical, personal, and digital competences. Similarly, Titova (2022) identifies four core competences necessary for foreign language teachers in the digital era: professional-communicative, methodical-pedagogical, information-communicative, and universal competences. Among these, Evstigneyeva et al (2013) underscore methodical competence as the most critical, arguing that a well-chosen methodology bridges a future EFL teacher’s professional competences with effective instructional strategies. It encompasses the selection of teaching strategies, tools, instructional formats, and pedagogical approaches aimed at fostering learners’ knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes, emphasizing its practical application.

According to Koknova (2019), the methodical competence of a foreign language teacher includes:

- *Gnostic and Planning Component:* Accumulating linguistic and methodological knowledge, selecting and organizing educational materials, planning lessons, choosing effective teaching strategies, and fostering students’ communicative skills.

- *Communicative and Organizing Component*: Collaborating within the educational environment, engaging in teamwork, resolving conflicts, and applying communication strategies to structure learning effectively.

- *Diagnostic and Correction Component*: Assessing and adjusting learners' progress using evaluation criteria, diagnostic techniques, and assessment methods.

- *Motivational Developing Component*: Integrating advancements in pedagogy, engaging in continuous self-education, and utilizing ICT in teaching.

- *Reflexive Component*: Critically analyzing teaching effectiveness, refining methods, and maintaining work-life balance to prevent stress and burnout.

In the scientific literature, another competence that is regarded as one of the components of professional competences is digital competence. According to Kizrina et al (2022) digital competence of a EFL teacher is a set of specialized competences that enables teacher to integrate digital technologies into foreign language learning strategies, and ability to work successfully in a constantly evolving digital educational environment. With the advent of educational technologies like adaptive platforms, learning environments are no longer restricted by time or place. Consequently, it is essential for prospective teachers to become adept at using smart technologies as dynamic and interactive teaching tools (Ally, 2019).

Organizational competence involves the ability and readiness to set educational goals, plan their development, and take responsibility for achieving them. A future foreign language teacher should be able to:

- define clear and achievable educational objectives aimed at improving professional skills;

- strategically plan the development of these objectives by outlining action steps, focusing on results, and understanding the purpose and impact of their decisions;

- approach tasks responsibly by setting realistic goals, meeting deadlines, tracking progress, ensuring completion, and presenting achievements for evaluation and further application;

- regularly monitor students' progress at the beginning, middle, and end of the learning process to stay aware of their development and challenges (Vysotskaya, 2017).

Teacher conceptual competence implies the understanding of educational theories, subject matter, and pedagogical principles to design and implement instruction that supports student learning. It is the capacity to translate theoretical concepts into practice, to adapt concepts for different classroom situations, and to engage in reflective practice to develop educational outcomes. From this, it is clear that conceptual competence helps teachers to be able to make decisions, use new teaching strategies, and meet the diverse needs of learners. Shulman (2013) explained that conceptual competence is related to pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which combines the knowledge of the subject matter and the ways of delivering it to engage students in learning. Thus, the analysis of the literature on the research problem shows that there are currently various types of professional competences for future foreign language teachers, including communicative, linguistic, methodical, psychological-pedagogical, personal, digital, professional-communicative, methodical-pedagogical, information-communicative, universal, contextual-communicative, pragma-actualizing, conceptual competences and so on. This variety of professional competences directs the design of the training content for prospective EFL teachers at universities toward specific learning outcomes. They also characterize the graduate's readiness for successful work in a specific field of pedagogical activity and their ability to solve pedagogical tasks in a timely and high-quality manner.

Based on existing approaches to the classification of professional competences and taking into account the goals and objectives of digital adaptive learning, we identified the following professionally-based competences of a future EFL teacher (Figure 1):

- 1) methodical competence;
- 2) digital (ICT) competence;
- 3) organizational competence;
- 4) conceptual competence.





**Figure 1: Professionally-based competences of future foreign language teachers in the context of digital adaptive learning**

Overall, the professional competence framework of prospective EFL teachers is a multifaceted construct that integrates pedagogical expertise and digital proficiency. The literature underscores that successful teacher training relies on a holistic approach that fosters both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, ensuring EFL educators are well-equipped to meet the evolving demands of modern language education.

**Materials and Methods.** This study employed a quantitative research method. The quantitative approach is a research method that relies on numerical data. It is often based on assumptions associated with realism, empiricism, and positivism. Social scientists using the quantitative approach rely on available data and survey techniques when studying and capturing human life realities (O’Leary, 2020). Surveys are the most common

method of collecting quantitative data, allowing for statistical analysis of the obtained data. They involve verbal or written communication with respondents to gather responses, thereby aiding in the investigation of a given issue (Sagintayeva, 2022).

A questionnaire was used as a main tool in gathering the data, which was conducted online using Google Forms. The participants indicated their level of agreement with the survey statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”. The sample for this study consisted of 68 people (Table 1): 24 school teachers (35.3%) and 44 University teachers (64.7%). The participants’ age ranged from 24 to 69, with a mean of 38.97 years of age (SD=9.7). The teaching experience of the respondents ranges from 2 to 44 years, with an average of 15.6 years and a standard deviation of 9.1.

Table 1. *Participants*

| <i>Occupation</i>  | <i>n</i> | <i>%</i> |
|--------------------|----------|----------|
| School teacher     | 24       | 35.3     |
| University teacher | 44       | 64.7     |
| total              | 68       | 100      |

For the development of the instrument, four professionally-based competences were considered: methodical, digital, organizational, and conceptual competences. These broad areas of future teacher professional competence were defined based on previous research studies (Kunanbayeva, 2015; Andreyeva, 2022; Titova, 2022; Evstigneyeva et al, 2013). The questionnaire was prepared in English and distributed digitally. Demographic data aimed to create a profile of the experts in foreign

language education. A total of 25 items were included, and participants rated each item on a scale from 1 to 5, indicating how important they believe each competence is for prospective foreign language teachers in the context of digital adaptive learning. The Cronbach’s alpha for the survey was 0.942, which shows strong internal consistency. For data analysis, the researchers primarily used descriptive statistics within SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). In addition, the Friedman test was

employed to rank the competence items. This test assigns ranks to values provided by the respondents. The mean rank for each item was then computed to determine the overall ranking of competences.

**Results.** The survey results offer valuable insights into the professionally-based compe-

tences that in-service teachers consider essential for the next generation of EFL educators. These competences span four main domains: methodical, digital, organizational, and conceptual.

Data on methodical competences as perceived by in-service teachers are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. *Data on methodical competences*

| Indicator  | mean | SD   |
|--|------|------|
| A future teacher should be   |      |      |
| - able to prepare supplementary materials using adaptive technologies  | 4.60 | .522 |
| - capable of using a variety of teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles  | 4.56 | .557 |
| - confident in using technology-driven assessment tools to track students' language progress and provide individualized feedback | 4.62 | .490 |
| - able to make Speaking and Listening tasks using adaptive technologies  | 4.60 | .550 |
| - able to plan the lesson effectively  | 4.78 | .484 |
| - able to create engaging digital lessons that tailored to each student's language level   | 4.44 | .655 |
| - able to make Reading and Writing tasks using adaptive technologies   | 4.57 | .581 |
| - able to differentiate instruction to accommodate students with special educational needs                                       | 4.49 | .611 |

The analysis of methodical competences highlighted several key strengths. On average, the overall mean score for all methodical competences was 4.58. The highest-rated competence was 'A future teacher should be able to plan the lesson effectively' ( $M = 4.78$ ,  $SD = 0.484$ ), underscoring the critical importance of thorough lesson planning. Next comes competence related to 'being confident in using technology-driven assessment tools' ( $M = 4.62$ ,  $SD = 0.490$ ) and 'preparing supplementary materials using adaptive technologies' ( $M = 4.60$ ,  $SD = 0.522$ ), reflecting the growing

emphasis on digital tools in education. Competences involving the use of adaptive technologies for Speaking and Listening tasks ( $M = 4.60$ ,  $SD = 0.550$ ) and Reading and Writing tasks ( $M = 4.57$ ,  $SD = 0.581$ ) were also well-regarded by participants. However, the lowest-rated one among methodical competences is 'creating engaging digital lessons tailored to each student's language level' ( $M = 4.44$ ,  $SD = 0.655$ ), which suggests a potential area for improvement. The experts' assessment of digital competences is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Data on digital competences*

| Indicator   | mean | SD   |
|---|------|------|
| A future teacher should be  |      |      |
| -ready to integrate modern technology (e.g., interactive tools, online resources) into lessons  | 4.62 | .547 |
| - able to use AI-Powered Learning Tools to enhance language learning  | 4.49 | .658 |
| - familiar with adaptive platforms and resources for teaching foreign languages   | 4.47 | .610 |
| - aware of digital safety and ethical issues related to using technology in education   | 4.54 | .558 |
| - demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate and select digital resources (e.g., apps, platforms, AI tools) for effective foreign language teaching | 4.56 | .655 |
| - ready to use learning management systems (LMS) to organize course materials and communicate with students   | 4.50 | .702 |

Digital competences were generally rated positively, with all mean scores above 4.4 (average mean for all digital competences is 4.53). The highest-rated item was “integrating modern technology (e.g., interactive tools, online resources) into lessons” ( $M = 4.62$ ,  $SD = 0.547$ ). Skills related to ‘using AI-powered learning tools’ ( $M = 4.49$ ,  $SD = 0.658$ ) and ‘familiarity with adaptive platforms’ ( $M = 4.47$ ,  $SD = 0.610$ ) were next highly appreciated ones

by the participants. Additionally, respondents identified ‘the ability to critically evaluate and select digital resources’ ( $M = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 0.655$ ) and ‘the use of learning management systems (LMS)’ ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.702$ ) as valuable skills for pre-service teachers, highlighting the growing importance of digital proficiency in education. An overview of organizational competences according to experts is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. *Data on organizational competences*

| Indicator  | mean | SD   |
|--|------|------|
| A future teacher should be able to   |      |      |
| - organize extra-curricular activities using Adaptive Learning platforms   | 4.38 | .734 |
| - organize a lesson using Hybrid Learning Models with Adaptive Techniques  | 4.24 | .794 |
| - organize a lesson using Blended Learning Models with Adaptive Techniques | 4.40 | .756 |
| - build positive relationships with students and encourage confidence      | 4.65 | .567 |
| - manage classroom time effectively to maximize student learning           | 4.72 | .514 |
| - adapt lesson plans to meet the needs of diverse learners                 | 4.57 | .630 |

When it comes to organizational competences, ‘managing classroom time effectively’ comes top of the list ( $M = 4.72$ ,  $SD = 0.514$ ), highlighting the importance of efficient time management in teaching. Close behind was ‘building positive relationships with students’ ( $M = 4.65$ ,  $SD = 0.567$ ), emphasizing the value of strong teacher-student connections. Flexibility in ‘adapting lesson plans to diverse learners’ also received solid support ( $M = 4.57$ ,  $SD = 0.630$ ), showing that adaptability is a

key skill for educators. However, competences related to innovative teaching methodologies, such as ‘organizing lessons using Blended Learning Models’ ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 0.756$ ) and ‘Hybrid Learning Models’ ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.794$ ), were rated lower. This discrepancy might indicate a potential gap in practical experience with these new approaches. Overall, the average mean for organizational competences was 4.49. The information on how respondents perceive conceptual competences is given in Table 5.

Table 5. *Conceptual competences*

| Indicator   | mean | SD   |
|---|------|------|
| A future teacher should   |      |      |
| -comprehend the concept of Digital Adaptive Learning  | 4.47 | .743 |
| - be familiar with psychological and pedagogical theories behind adaptive learning                    | 4.51 | .723 |
| - be familiar with the principles of foreign language acquisition and their implications for teaching | 4.62 | .599 |
| - be aware of current trends and research in foreign language teaching                                | 4.59 | .674 |
| - be able to foster students’ critical thinking skills through language learning activities           | 4.63 | .621 |

In case of conceptual competences, it is apparently seen that “familiarity with principles of foreign language acquisition” ( $M = 4.62$ ,  $SD = 0.599$ ) and “foster students’ critical thinking skills through language learning activities” ( $M$

$= 4.63$ ,  $SD = 0.621$ ) are highly rated among respondents. Correspondingly, “being aware of current trends in foreign language teaching” is recognized as a vital skill too ( $M = 4.59$ ,  $SD = 0.674$ ). However, competences related

to “comprehending the concept of Digital Adaptive Learning” ( $M = 4.47$ ,  $SD = 0.743$ ) and understanding the “psychological and pedagogical theories behind adaptive learning” ( $M = 4.51$ ,  $SD = 0.723$ ) had more moderate ratings. The average mean for conceptual competences is 4.56. The mean ranks of 25

professionally-based competences for future foreign language teachers, as evaluated by 68 participants, are presented in Table 6. The competences were ranked based on their perceived importance in teaching practice. The Friedman test was utilized to calculate the rankings to ensure statistical reliability.

Table 6. *Mean ranks of competences (n=68)*

|    | Competences   | Mean rank |
|----|---|-----------|
| 1  | Ability to plan the lesson effectively  | 15,38     |
| 2  | Ability to manage classroom time effectively to maximize student learning   | 14,95     |
| 3  | Ability to foster students' critical thinking skills through language learning activities   | 14,18     |
| 4  | Ability to build positive relationships with students and encourage confidence  | 14,12     |
| 5  | Being familiar with the principles of foreign language acquisition and their implications for teaching                                | 13,88     |
| 6  | Ability to integrate modern technology (e.g., interactive tools, online resources) into lessons                                       | 13,60     |
| 7  | Being aware of current trends and research in foreign language teaching   | 13,57     |
| 8  | Ability to make Speaking and Listening tasks using adaptive technologies  | 13,54     |
| 9  | Ability to prepare supplementary materials using adaptive technologies  | 13,49     |
| 10 | Readiness to use technology-driven assessment tools to track students' language progress and provide individualized feedback          | 13,46     |
| 11 | Ability to critically evaluate and select digital resources (e.g., apps, platforms, AI tools) for effective foreign language teaching | 13,32     |
| 12 | Ability to make Reading and Writing tasks using adaptive technologies   | 13,29     |
| 13 | Ability to adapt lesson plans to meet the needs of diverse learners   | 13,24     |
| 14 | Capability of using a variety of teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles  | 13,03     |
| 15 | Being familiar with psychological and pedagogical theories behind adaptive learning   | 12,90     |
| 16 | Being aware of digital safety and ethical issues related to using technology in education   | 12,87     |
| 17 | Ability to use learning management systems (LMS) to organize course materials and communicate with students                           | 12,57     |
| 18 | Ability to comprehend the concept of Digital Adaptive Learning  | 12,41     |
| 19 | Ability to use AI-Powered Learning Tools to enhance language learning   | 12,32     |
| 20 | Ability to differentiate instruction to accommodate students with special educational needs   | 12,24     |
| 21 | Being familiar with adaptive platforms and resources for teaching foreign languages   | 12,07     |
| 22 | Ability to create engaging digital lessons that are tailored to each student's language level   | 11,86     |
| 23 | Ability to organize a lesson using Blended Learning Models with Adaptive Techniques   | 11,55     |
| 24 | Ability to organize extra-curricular activities using Adaptive Learning platforms   | 11,38     |
| 25 | Ability to organize a lesson using Hybrid Learning Models with Adaptive Techniques  | 9,79      |

The Friedman test made it possible to reveal essential differences between the professionally-based competences of prospective foreign language teachers ( $\chi^2 =$

79.561,  $df = 24$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). The highest ranks were assigned to competences related to effective lesson planning and classroom time management, while the use of contemporary



approaches such as hybrid learning models received the lowest rank.

**Discussion.** The study focused on four components of the professionally-based competences: methodical, organizational, digital, and conceptual. The results show that on average, methodical competences were rated higher than the other ones ( $M=4.58$ ). This result is in line with Evstigneyeva et al. (2022) who argued that methodical competence is the most important for prospective EFL teachers. Conceptual competences are the next essential set of abilities ( $M=4.56$ ) which indicate that future educators should be knowledgeable and have a correct understanding of the theoretical foundations of pedagogy, language acquisition and teaching. This competence enables the teacher to make rational decisions in teaching practice. Although the digital competences were ranked third with the mean score of 4.53, the difference between them and conceptual competences is very small. This means that both types of competences are considered nearly equally important for the future EFL teachers. It is not surprising because the role of the digital skills in the 21st century is clear. In the contemporary society, digital competence is critical for teachers as it helps them to incorporate technology into the classroom and engage students. According to Nagel et al. (2023), the use of digital tools is no longer a luxury but a necessity for educators. The least graded competences were organizational ( $M=4.49$ ). That may be due to the uncertainty or lack of practice with implementing the latest instructional strategies, which highlights a major area for improvement.

As a result of Friedman test some valuable insights into the professionally-based competences were provided. In-service foreign language teachers, as experts in foreign language education, had to assess the skills and abilities which are vital for future EFL teachers. The results highlight a clear prioritization of traditional pedagogical skills over digital competences, indicating that respondents are probably rather conservative and prefer the conventional way of teaching than the technology-rich classroom.

The list of competences ranked according to the Friedman test begins with “planning the lesson effectively”, “managing classroom time effectively” and “fostering students’ critical thinking skills through language learning activities,” and concludes with “organizing a lesson using Blended Learning Models with Adaptive Techniques”, “organizing extra-curricular activities using Adaptive Learning platforms” and “organizing a lesson using Hybrid Learning Models with Adaptive Techniques”. Among the 25 competences examined, “planning the lesson effectively” emerged as the most important professional competence for future EFL teachers. Lesson planning represents a fundamental methodological competence. Naufal et al. (2024) emphasize that an effectively planned lesson serves as a roadmap that provides a clear and appropriate pathway for achieving educational objectives.

Surprisingly, competences that are directly connected to digital adaptive learning such as the ability to incorporate modern technology into teaching (13.60) and the willingness to employ technology-based assessment tools (13.46) were rated lower than expected. This indicates that although technology is viewed as useful, it is not considered as important as basic teaching skills by the participants. It is also important to note that certain competences that are related to adaptive learning such as the ability to make use of AI-powered learning tools (12.32), familiarity with adaptive platforms (12.07), and the ability to create engaging digital lessons tailored to students’ language levels (11.86) were even lower. These findings may be explained by the fact that there is a lack of integration of digital adaptive methodologies into current teacher training programs.

Furthermore, the lowest rating is given to organizing a lesson using Blended and Hybrid Learning Models. These models combine in-person and online teaching and incorporate technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality to tailor the learning experience to each student. It is widely recognized that they focus on student-centered learning, flexibility, and active participation; however, they also pose challenges in terms of equity, adaptation

of the instructor, and maintaining students' interest (Mulenga et al., 2024). A possible explanation for these rankings may be teachers' limited awareness of up-to-date instructional methods.

These results indicate that teacher education is still in the process of transition: Traditional pedagogical strengths are still high, but the integration of digital adaptive methodologies is still in the process of development. This is in concurrence with Langreo (2024) who stated that although many educators are talented at conventional teaching, moving to digital tools and adaptive learning technologies needs more assistance and training. Consequently, teacher education is being criticized for not adequately preparing pre-service teachers to incorporate cutting-edge technology into their practice (Nagel et al., 2023). For this reason, teacher education programs should equally focus on the development of traditional teaching skills and the requirements for digital pedagogy.

While lesson planning and classroom management are still considered important priorities, there is a clear scope to enhance teachers' knowledge in the new patterns of instruction and technology assisted learning. This is particularly important as education moves more towards adaptive learning environments, as discussed by Levin et al. (2024). In order to close this gap, teacher training curricula could include specific units on adaptive learning technologies, digital resource identification, and the application of blended and hybrid learning models. The students would also benefit from practical applications of these areas, which would help teachers gain confidence in dealing with the changing educational environment. Simon et al. (2024) also supported this approach, explaining that integrating adaptive learning technologies into the curriculum can improve both teaching and learning processes.

**Conclusion.** This research aimed at discovering the professionally-based competences that prospective EFL teachers should possess. Methodical and conceptual competences are without a doubt, the most important for future EFL teachers; but, the role of digital technologies in education cannot be ignored,

especially in the present world. The results show that though the educators have understood the importance of the digital tools, these tools have not been fully integrated into the teaching processes. The lower ranking of competences related to adaptive learning models shows a gap in the teacher preparation programs and thus the need for focused professional development. To this end, future EFL teachers must be well-positioned to teach in the modern classroom, and teacher education programs should move beyond including these technologies and methods in a more holistic approach with strong foundational teaching skills. This will allow educators to gain actual practice using the latest technologies and teaching models to help them better handle the current language teaching environment. Strengthening these competences will not only increase teaching effectiveness but also improve student learning and productivity in the digital and adaptive learning environment.

Regardless of its contributions, this study is not without its limitations. The restricted sample size ( $n=68$ ) may limit the generalizability of the results to other teachers. Furthermore, the study used self-reported evaluations, which may lead to response bias. It is a good idea to use a mixed methods approach, including face-to-face interviews with in-service EFL teachers in the future studies. It may offer a better evaluation. Based on the results of the study, the next initiatives should be aimed at the development of the targeted training modules as well as practical workshops on the use of AI powered tools and adaptive learning platforms to enhance the future teachers' readiness to work in a changing classroom environment. In conclusion, if these future directions are addressed and the identified limitations are eliminated, educational institutions can contribute to developing a new generation of EFL teachers who are familiar with both the conventional teaching methods and the digital adaptive learning environment. This balance will enable them to fully meet the needs of their students and provide for better and more interesting language learning processes.

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#### Information about authors:

**Kurmasheva** Moldir, doctoral student of the Educational Program 8D01703 “Teacher training in foreign language: two foreign languages”, O. Zhanibekov South Kazakhstan Pedagogical University, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4965-8490, e-mail: kmoldir@mail.ru

**Zhorabekova** Ainur, PhD, associate professor, M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2697-8077, e-mail: ainur-zhorabekova@mail.ru

**Duisenova** Marzhan, PhD, Senior Teacher, O. Zhanibekov South Kazakhstan Pedagogical University, ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5684-7364, e-mail: abirbek.11@gmail.com