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## PREPARING FUTURE COACHES: FOREIGN LANGUAGE NEEDS IN SPORTS EDUCATION

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**Preparing future coaches: foreign language needs in sports education**

**Abstract.** This study examines the impact of English proficiency on coaching professional development in sports, particularly within multicultural and internationally driven contexts. While physical conditions and technical skills receive significant attention, the need for soft skills, especially foreign language proficiency, remains under-explored. Thus, foreign language skills support professional communication and access to global sports science resources. Based on a quantitative approach, during the research, students from two major departments of the Kazakh academy of sport and tourism participated in a survey to assess the perceived importance of foreign language skills in coaching and to define the correlation between them and the type of specialization. The findings highlight that across academic years and sports specializations, students recognize the importance of English for understanding technical sports terms, communicating within multicultural teams, and supporting continuous professional development. This research underscores the role of English proficiency in fostering not only individual competitiveness but also the broader professionalization of sports education, suggesting that language training should be integral to sports curricula.

**Key words:** foreign language education, effective communication, sports specialization, intercultural awareness, multicultural understanding, foreign language teaching, sports terminology.

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**Болашақ жаттықтырушыларды дайындау: спорттық білім берудегі шетел тіліне қажеттілік**

**Аңдатпа.** Бұл зерттеу жұмысы көпмәдениетті және халықаралық арена жағдайларында спорт саласында ағылшын тілін меңгерудің жаттықтырушылардың кәсіби дамуына әсерін зерттеуге бағытталған. Спорттық дайындық барысында студенттердің дене жағдайы мен техникалық дағдыларына үлкен назар аударылса да, болашақ спорт мамандығы студенттерінің шетел тілін меңгеру арқылы шетелдік коммуникативтік дағдыларының рөлі әлі де толық зерттелмегені анық. Шетел тілін меңгеру спорт мамандығы студенттеріне кәсіби қарым-қатынас жасауды және әлемдік спорт ғылымы ресурстарына қол жеткізуді жеңілдетеді. Зерттеу барысында Қазақ спорт және туризм академиясының екі негізгі факультетінің студенттері сауалнамаға қатысып, шетел тілінің жаттықтырушыларға қажеттігін бағалап, бұл қажеттіліктің олардың мамандығына байланысын анықтады. Нәтижелер студенттердің академиялық жылына және спорттық мамандануына қарамастан, ағылшын тілін техникалық спорт терминдерін түсіну, көпмәдениетті ортада жұмыс істеу және кәсіби дамуды қолдау үшін маңызды деп танитынын көрсетті. Осы зерттеу ағылшын тілін меңгерудің спорт білімінің кәсібиленуіне ықпал ететінін және шетел тілін үйренуді спорттық оқу бағдарламаларының ажырамас бөлігіне айналдыру қажет екенін көрсетеді. Бұл зерттеу спорт білімінің кәсібиленуіне ықпал етіп, болашақ жаттықтырушылардың халықаралық деңгейде өз орнын табуына мүмкіндік беретін шетел тілін меңгерудің маңыздылығын көрсетеді, сондықтан тілдік дайындық спорттық оқу бағдарламаларының ажырамас бөлігі болуы тиіс.

**Түйін сөздер:** шетелдік білім беру, тиімді қарым-қатынас, спорттық мамандану, мәдениаралық түсінік, көпмәдениетті түсінік, шетел тілін оқыту, спорт терминологиясы.

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**Подготовка будущих тренеров: потребности в изучении иностранных языков в спортивном образовании**

**Аннотация.** Данное исследование направлено на изучение влияния владения английским языком на профессиональное развитие тренеров в условиях многонациональной и международной спортивной среды. Несмотря на то, что в ходе спортивной подготовки уделяется значительное внимание физическому состоянию и техническим навыкам студентов, роль иноязычных коммуникативных навыков у будущих спортивных специалистов все еще недостаточно исследована. В свою очередь, знание иностранного языка определенно облегчает профессиональное общение и доступ к мировым ресурсам спортивной науки. В настоящем исследовании приняли участие студенты двух основных факультетов Казахской академии спорта и туризма, прошедшие анкетирование для оценки значимости владения иностранным языком в профессии тренера и определения его зависимости от специализации. Результаты исследования показали, что, независимо от учебного курса и спортивной специализации, студенты считают английский язык важным для понимания спортивной терминологии, для работы в многонациональной команде и поддержки профессионального развития студентов. Тем самым, данное исследование подчеркивает и определяет важность владения английским языком для профессионализации спортивного образования и возможности будущих тренеров найти свое место на международном уровне, по этой причине языковая подготовка должна стать неотъемлемой частью спортивных учебных программ.

**Ключевые слова:** иноязычное образование, эффективное общение, спортивная специализация, межкультурная осведомленность, понимание многонациональных культур, преподавание иностранных языков, спортивная терминология.

**Introduction.** Physical conditions of sportsmen are highly valued among researches in the theme of professional sport. Many researchers have studied and made valuable contribution in the sphere of physical fitness as well as in career development of athletes [1, 2]. The gap is that beyond professional attributions of sportsmen, their soft skills in career transitions require deep research study. This concept is followed by growing demand for language skilled athletes due to international competitions, cross-border training and multicultural communication. Foreign language competence is highly recognized as essential skill in cross-cultural communication. Athletes and coaches must navigate in different cultural environments, being able to communicate to receive both scientific and professional information in original language. This requirement underlines the significance of foreign language communicative competence of professions of sport. Hryban (2023) outlines that language skills are essential within facilitating effective communication, exchanging information, building relationships among athletes [3]. It is because coaches are responsible for providing feedback, motivating athletes and developing a strong command of language. Slipenko (2022) also claims that English proficiency is crucial for organizing and managing international competitions at different levels [4]. In this regard the implementation of active methods and technologies is necessary, and it is important to create language supportive practices to assist athletes in learning English [5]. One of the valuable abilities in the sports profession is communication skills, which are the core of understanding and, according to the authors, improve athlete performance [6]. Hence, due to the demand of good communication within the team, it is essential for both coaches and athletes to improve foreign language competence. As in many cases, team members of any club have backgrounds of various cultures. The demand for language skill among sports profession arises globally. Therefore, Valentina Đorić (2020) emphasizes the importance of English as a lingua franca within intercultural society [7]. This point of view is supported by Kieran A., File (2022), who highlights the importance of foreign language in sports [8]. The author defines the usage of foreign language as essential for giving feedback to players, which develops the demand for language usage in coaching and creates team dynamics. Additionally, Alamgir Khan., Muhammad Zafar and et al. support the crucial demand for effective communicative skill in sport education, highlighting the effective performance of athletes [9]. The effective communication leads to successful transfer of knowledge where precise information is needed for high-performance of

athletes [10]. Therefore, **the purpose** of our study is to define to what extend the English proficiency influence coaching professional development and how sports area of specialization affects to. In order to achieve this aim, the following **objectives** of the study were set:

- to evaluate students' attitudes toward English proficiency in coaching, focusing on its perceived importance across different academic years and sports specializations;
- to examine the correlation between sports specialization and the necessity of English proficiency, identifying whether different coaching fields require varying levels of foreign language skills.

In sports education, the role of foreign language proficiency is recognized as essential due to importance of professional communication and development in the field. Within continuous influence of globalization to all spheres as well as to sport, foreign language skills are required for athletes, sportsmen, coaches to engage in the arena of international sport. This pattern can be developed within three main aspects: professional communication, intercultural competence and scientific awareness.

Many researches in the field of sport is tightly connected with development of foreign language communicative competence. As Slipenko (2022) states about effective organization and conducting international sporting events in this framework [4, p. 63]. Volynkina et al. (2022) support the idea of effective enhancement of teamwork and problem-solving skills of athletes due to foreign language proficiency [11]. They emphasize foreign language education in the development of soft skills to be able to address problems effectively in the sport and fitness sector by improving professional competitiveness. Hence, foreign language proficiency lies as a bridge in effective development of professional skills of athletes beyond their physical conditions and professional techniques. In international sports context, while participating competitions, intercultural competence of athletes enables smooth communication between different cultures. Mariia Vorobel et al. state the crucial role of foreign language skills while coaching and consultations for future specialists-athletes [12]. During different trainings, competitions and conferences, athletes communicate with people from various cultural background, where intercultural competence opens easy ways to build connection. Therefore, Hristakieva (2022) points out foreign language competence as a facilitating tool in engaging in international activities [13]. Furthermore, the ability to communicate in diverse cultural environment is becoming important as sports globalization continues

to grow day by day [14]. Another aspect of athlete's English proficiency is facilitating the selection of scientific information during their professional life. As Nastas Natalia claim, foreign language skills are essential criteria to foster collaboration in the global sports community because they enable athletes to communicate in scientific language within the framework of profession [15].

Within specific features of sports environment it is required a diverse set of foreign language skills to communicate effectively. Both linguistic proficiency and intercultural competence are essential for engaging communication in sport. For example, H. Hryban (2023) includes understanding of phonetics, grammar and vocabulary to the key foreign language skills, which lead to effective communicative interaction with athletes [3, p. 109]. Another researcher points out oral and written communication abilities as important ones, as well as comprehension of specialized literature and proficiency in sports terminology. That is to say that specific terminology of sports theme inquires meta linguistic competence of athletes. Being able to understand specialized literature in sport science makes athlete-students to stay informed about the latest studies including training methodologies and scientific developments. The first access to those is through English language proficiency. Effective communication and the ability to discuss professional articles are essential for further engagements with colleagues. This opinion is highlighted by Serhiy Danylyuk who emphasizes speaking, writing and reading proficiency of athletes in foreign language [16]. Many authors state about importance of both official and informal communication relevant to international sports activities [12, p. 437], pointing out the effectiveness of knowledge of specialized sports vocabulary, comprehension of texts and the ability to perform professional actions in typical communication situations.

**Materials and methods.** This work studied the influence of English proficiency to coaching, professional development and foreign language skills, which are considered essential for fostering effective communication in multicultural sports environments. Quantitative approach was implemented to this study as it is "an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables" [17, p.32]. As the sampling decisions are determined in early stage of planning the research and connected to the study approach, for our work, we have chosen the purposive sampling including 171 students of the different faculty departments of Kazakh Academy

of Sport and Tourism. This method was chosen because it allows for the selection of participants whose educational and professional backgrounds align with the research objectives. Expense time and accessibility have been taken into account while designing the research. A limitation of this research is that it focuses exclusively on students from sports-related specialties, which may limit the applicability of the findings to non-linguistic faculties in other academic fields. However, this targeted approach allows for a deeper analysis of the specific language challenges faced by athlete-students making the results particularly valuable for sports education and training programs.

For data collection, the survey design was appropriate to our research. A survey design offers a quantitative or numerical analysis of trends, attitudes, or opinions within a population by examining a sample drawn from that population [18]. The survey held during the research was cross-sectional consisted of 3 sections including 10 questions to gather comprehensive data on: a) demographic appearance, b) the role of English proficiency in coaching, and c) specific foreign language skills for coaches. Section 1 included questions aimed to gather information regarding to participants' areas and year of study and self-assessed foreign language proficiency. Next objective was to identify participant's perception on the importance of foreign language skills for effective communication and cultural diversity in coaching. Questions of Section 3 explored specific language skills, including listening, comprehension and confidence in using professional vocabulary. Dillman et al. (1999) and Dillman and Bowker (2000) recommend that effective web-based surveys should consider that some participants may lack the ability to access or complete surveys containing complex programming features [19, 20]. Thus, the survey was implemented through Google Form and an invitation to participate was sent through email, social media and academic networks to ensure a diverse range of respondents across different sports disciplines and academic levels. Participants accessed the survey through a provided link, with the survey being open for two weeks. Reminders were sent out during the data collection period to encourage participation. Participants were assured of anonymity, enhancing the likelihood of responses.

The data of the research work was analyzed with the mean of open-source statistical software Jamovi. It was used for both descriptive and correlation analyses. Frequency distributions were calculated for each category variable, which allowed a clear

overview of the sample's demographics. As well as to compute the mean and standard deviation for each item related to the perceived importance of foreign language skills in coaching the software was implemented within the research. This step provided insight into the central tendencies and variability of responses, helping identify general patterns in participants' attitudes toward language skills. Further, to investigate relationships between key variables, correlation analysis was conducted using Jamovi's Correlation module. To see if questions that are intended to measure similar constructs are positively correlated, Spearman correlation was applied for variables that did not meet normality assumptions. For instance, we examined the relationship between participants' primary area of study or sports specialization (Section 1, Question 1) and their views on the importance of language skills in effective coaching (Section 2, Question 4). The correlation coefficients and significance values were provided, allowing us to determine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between these variables, which in turn offered insights into how area of sport might influence perceptions of its importance in coaching.

**Results.** This part of the work includes results of data collected from students of the Academy through survey on the professional and academic importance of foreign language proficiency. The results show academic years and type of sport in specializations influence their attitudes toward

foreign language learning. Based on the results of the research, we can assess the need of foreign language proficiency and the positive correlation between specialized sport type and how they determine foreign language proficiency important.

The section 1 identified the demographic appearance of participants of the survey. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics including students' year of study, their perceived significance of foreign language (FL) learning and specialization (where 1 is for Faculty of Olympic Sports, 2- Faculty of Professional Sport and Martial Art) in the context of sports education. The mean year of study is 1.85, with the median and mode both indicating that a majority of respondents are in their first year, suggesting that foreign language attitudes are captured early in the students' academic journey. The mean FL significance rating of 3.80 (on a likely 5-point scale) reflects a generally high regard for foreign language proficiency, with both the median and mode at 4.00, further underscoring a strong acknowledgment of its importance for career and academic purposes. The standard deviations indicate moderate variability in the significance of foreign language ratings (0.858). In addition, it can be observed that the need for foreign language proficiency varies across students' specializations. The results provide a basis for a comprehensive analysis of students' attitudes toward foreign language learning and emphasize the importance of integrating it into professionally-oriented curricula.

Table 1 – Descriptive appearance of participants

Description	Year of study	FL significance	Specialization
N	172	172	172
Average	1.85	3.80	1.77
Median	1.00	4.00	2.00
Mode	1.00	4.00	1.00
Standard deviation	0.991	0.858	0.795

The data below (table 2) indicates that most first-year students begin with an elementary level of language proficiency (39.5%), while a noticeable shift toward higher proficiency levels such as pre-intermediate, intermediate, and advanced occurs by the third year. However, a substantial portion of third-year students still remains at lower levels, suggesting that current language programs may not fully support the progression needed for all

students to reach higher competencies. This trend highlights the importance of implementing targeted and intensive language training that aligns with the students' professional needs in sports. By enhancing language education, institutions can better prepare students for effective communication in international and multicultural environments, ensuring they possess the necessary language skills to succeed in their future careers.

Table 2 – Language proficiency of students

Language proficiency	Year of study	Number of students	% from total	total %
Elementary	1	68	39.5%	39.5%
	3	36	20.9%	60.5%
Pre-intermediate	1	2	1.2%	61.6%
	3	16	9.3%	70.9%
Beginner	1	20	11.6%	82.6%
	3	8	4.7%	87.2%
Intermediate	1	0	0.0%	87.2%
	3	11	6.4%	93.6%
Advanced	1	0	0.0%	93.6%
	3	2	1.2%	94.8%
Upper-intermediate	1	9	5.2%	100.0%
	3	0	0.0%	100.0%

**Discussions.** Section 2 of the survey included questions on b) the role of English proficiency in coaching and c) specific foreign language skills for coaches. The figure 1 of the pie chart shows responses from participants regarding the importance of a coach's ability to understand technical sports terms in a foreign language for effectively conveying training instructions. The majority of respondents view this skill as highly significant:

39.5% rated it as “Very Important” (5) and 36.1% rated it as “Important” (4). A smaller proportion of respondents were neutral (12.2%), while only a minimal percentage rated it as “Unimportant” (2) or “Very Unimportant” (1). This distribution suggests a strong consensus among respondents on the importance of foreign language skills in coaching, particularly for understanding and communicating technical terms effectively.

**How important do you think it is for a coach to understand technical sports terms in a foreign language to convey training instructions effectively? (1- Very Unimportant, 2- Unimportant, 3-Neutral, 4-Important, 5-Very Important)**

147 responses

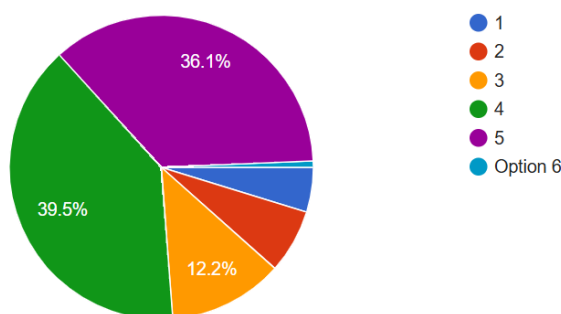


Figure 1 - Importance of understanding technical sports vocabulary

The pie chart illustrates responses from participants on the perceived value of foreign language skills for coaches to understand and respect the diverse cultural

backgrounds of athletes. A large majority of respondents regard these skills as highly valuable, with 44.9% rating them as “Very High Value” (4) and 39.5% as “High

Value” (3). Only a small percentage rated this skill with lower values, with 9.5% selecting “Neutral” (2) and very few choosing “Low Value” (1). These results indicate strong support for the importance of foreign language skills in fostering cultural understanding and respect within the coaching profession, highlighting the relevance of language training to help coaches work effectively in multicultural sports settings.

Thus, the demand for language skills also pertains to the need for coaches to engage in ongoing professional development. Coaches are encouraged to participate in training programs that enhance their understanding of sport science and coaching strategies, which often require a solid foundation in the language of the discipline [21].

Figure 2 illustrates responses from participants on their perceived value of foreign language skills for coaches to understand and respect the diverse cultural backgrounds of athletes. A large majority of respondents regard these skills as highly valuable, with 44.9% rating them as “Very High Value” (4) and 39.5% as “High Value” (3). Only a small percentage rated this skill with lower values, with 9.5% selecting “Neutral” (2) and very few choosing “Low Value” (1). These results indicate strong support for the importance of foreign language skills in fostering cultural understanding and respect within the coaching profession, highlighting the relevance of language training to help coaches work effectively in multicultural sports settings.

**In your opinion, how valuable is it for coaches to have foreign language skills that help them understand and respect the diverse cultural backgrounds of athletes? (1-Low Value, 2-Neutral, 3-High Value, 4-Very High Value)**

147 responses

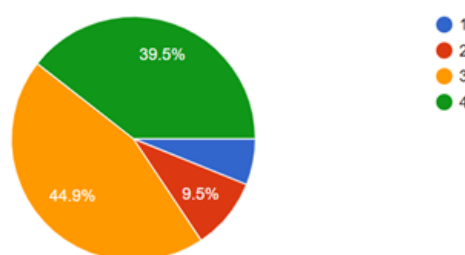


Figure 2 - Foreign language proficiency and cultural diversity

Therefore, the role of art and culture in international sports ceremonies emphasizes the importance of intercultural communication, which is facilitated by foreign language skills. These ceremonies serve as platforms for cultural exchange and understanding, highlighting the need for sports professionals to engage with diverse artistic expressions and cultural narratives [22]. Moreover, the integration of foreign language education into sports management curricula is vital for preparing graduates to meet the demands of a globalized labor market. Research indicates that sport management graduates should not only have subject-specific knowledge, but also generic competencies, including intercultural communication and language proficiency [23].

The contingency tables below (table 3) and results of the  $\chi^2$  test (table 4) reveal a significant relationship between the type of sport and the significance of foreign language (FL significance). Students participating in sports like football, basketball

and volleyball report the highest significance for foreign language (scores of 4 and 5), whereas sports such as wrestling and power lifting show lower significance ratings for foreign language. This may indicate a higher demand for foreign language skills among students in team sports, where international collaboration and communication are more relevant.

Thus, as shown in Table 4 the  $\chi^2$  test showed a high value ( $\chi^2 = 204$ ,  $p < .001$ ) confirming a statistically significant relationship between the type of sport and perceptions of foreign language significance. This suggests that students from different sports disciplines perceive the importance of foreign language proficiency in their professional activities differently. These results emphasize the need to tailor foreign language training programs to the specific needs of each sport, considering varying levels of necessity for international communication and access to global information across sports disciplines.

Table 3 – FL significance according to each type of sport

Forms of sport	FL significance					Amount
Type of sport	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Volleyball	0	4	1	37	0	42
Basketball	0	0	2	19	12	33
Football	0	0	0	39	15	54
Wrestling	0	7	11	3	0	21
Judo	0	2	9	1	1	13
Powerlifting	1	3	1	1	0	5
Mixed wrestling	0	2	0	1	0	3
Total	1	18	24	101	28	172

Table 4 – Results of  $\chi^2$  test

Тест $\chi^2$			
	Meaning	df	P
$\chi^2$	204	44	<.001
N	172		

Many researchers emphasize that communicative techniques in English language learning significantly enhance language skills and confidence among students specializing in sports, thereby improving their proficiency in using specialized terminology essential for effective communication in team sports [24].

**Conclusions.** In conclusion, this study highlights the essential role of English proficiency in the professional development of future coaches within the context of modern sports education. As sports become increasingly globalized, the ability to communicate effectively in English is essential not only for understanding technical sports terminology, but also for fostering intercultural awareness and professional collaboration across multicultural environments. The findings from the survey, conducted at the Kazakh Academy of

Sport and Tourism, underscore that students recognize the importance of foreign language skills for their professional growth, both as coaches and as contributors to the broader sports community. It is evident that English proficiency enhances communication within diverse teams, supports continuous learning, and opens doors to international opportunities in coaching and sports science. Therefore, integrating foreign language training into sports curricula is vital for preparing athletes and coaches to succeed in a globalized sports industry. The research supports a more comprehensive approach to language education of sport faculty students, as foreign language skills become an indispensable component of sports education that can significantly impact career development and the professionalization of sports.

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