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Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication

**RELEVANCE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MARKET**

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the actual topic of intercultural communication as a factor in the competitiveness of Russian specialists in the international labor market. In the modern world, for specialists (especially for positions of a managerial nature), it is necessary to know foreign languages and, the rules of communication, the linguistic and cultural characteristics of each participant in communication. The research methodology is based on a systematic approach and includes the methods of the general scientific group (analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction), as well as a number of special methods: content analysis of scientific literature on the research topic, sociological survey, statistical analysis. The materials of the study were the answers of students to a survey in three non-linguistic specialties of the 1st year of a non-linguistic university. As a result of the empirical study, it was revealed that intercultural communication as a special section in the course of a foreign language, using the example of English as a language for special purposes, allows to achieve a significant improvement not only in the language students' competence, but also in deeper knowledge of the specialty chosen by students. The competitiveness of specialists with intercultural communication skills was assessed at a high level compared to those students who were not taught the rules and principles of intercultural communication. In general, the author came to the conclusion that in non-linguistic universities it is necessary to actively introduce a course of intercultural communication for students of both the humanities and natural sciences.

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1. Introduction

The research relevance is lay in the fact that the modern labour market is undergoing changes determined by globalization processes and universal informatization. Various content has become available to a person, allowing him to improve his level of professionalism, gain new knowledge and learn languages. Given these trends, the requirements of employers and personnel policy have increased, and therefore today the competitive specialist is the one who not only possesses professional skills, but is also able to work in accordance with the social order of the international labour market. In the context of global world relations in various areas of human life, new phenomena have arisen in the field of multilingualism: at present, bilingualism and multilingualism have appeared (Hanukaev, 2022; Malyuga & Tomalin, 2017). At the same time, a special branch appeared in linguistics as the study of speech communication in conditions of cultural and linguistic contacts. Some researchers believe that there are more people who speak two languages in the modern world than people who know only one language (Irwin, 2020). The author recognize bilingualism as a normative phenomenon, since it is the most striking result of intercultural communication in the international labor market (Irwin, 2020). Bilingualism as a complex phenomenon of linguistic and non-linguistic factors of human speech behaviour has received the most complete coverage in the language theory. Language contacts occur where two or more language structures meet directly or indirectly in their speech use by the same people.

1.1. Theoretical concept

The concept of intercultural communication is that communication occurs mainly at the interpersonal level: thanks to the intercultural communication skills, students receive relevant knowledge that contributes to the understanding of other cultures. Also at the heart of teaching intercultural communication is the idea that intercultural communication is essentially intergroup, not interpersonal; this trend stems from socio-psychological aspects, the fundamental element of which is intergroup communication.

Contacts of different cultures have become part of the daily speech practice for many people, especially those who work in a multicultural environment. Also, the international exchange of students and specialists among different countries is a factor in the intercultural communication development, and, as a result, an incentive for learning a second or several foreign languages. Without the ability to communicate in a foreign language, it is impossible to receive and continue education in foreign universities. Knowledge of a foreign language allows people to get the necessary information. Therefore, for a modern specialist, competent knowledge of a foreign language in the framework of professional communication becomes very important.

Intercultural communication skills are especially necessary for students of non-linguistic universities, since they receive knowledge only in the «Foreign language» general program, without detailing and in-depth study - including English for international communication.

1.2. Basic approach to intercultural communication

It is difficult to say that foreign languages as a means of intercultural communication are almost never self-sufficient in speech communication: «the needs of communication force speakers of the same language to enter into direct or indirect contact with speakers of neighbouring or culturally dominant languages» (Ishihara, 2021).

The whole variety of intercultural communication concepts can be distinguished as two levels of categories: the first level concerns knowledge of the second language as a native, and the second level means strong differences in the degree of knowledge of two languages when the second language as a foreign one is used in a natural communicative situation. These two levels are the basis of the narrow (first) and broad (second) understanding of communication. One way or another, intercultural communication takes place when an individual is able to effectively carry out verbal communication in a foreign language.

The problem of intercultural communication is being developed within the framework of a functional approach, when considering the diverse and important functions that it performs in society. The study of the structure of languages must be accompanied by attention to the language functions, especially the sociological one.

The research development of intercultural communication in further employment in the international labour market goes in three directions:

1) studying the language situation in the country of future employment (especially important for students of non-linguistic universities);

2) clarification of conceptual scientific categories from the point of their functional use, formulation of a classification according to the socio-linguistic principle, proposal of a methodology for studying the culture of a foreign language;

3) the study of intercultural communicative speech practices, especially the influence of language contact on the levels of language contact that we have identified, as well as clarification of the content of some concepts in terms of functionality, the creation of classification schemes on a sociolinguistic basis, the development of methods for studying foreign linguistic culture.

2. Problem Statement

- i. Intercultural communication is a necessary tool not only for most international jobs, but also for higher education to prepare students for their future profession at a higher level, especially in countries where many young people are forced to emigrate in order to find work (Shiryayeva & Litvishko, 2022).
- ii. Knowledge of a foreign language is closely correlated with the knowledge of intercultural communicative rules (Monaghan, 2020). So, language learning contributes to international mobility, which, in turn, is highly valued by employers, and also increases intercultural «flexibility» in the international labour market.

- iii. The gap in knowledge and skills of intercultural communication makes the employee not customer-oriented, which becomes a barrier to making contacts with people from different cultures.
- iv. The above factors determine the expediency of intercultural communicative competence formation (Malyuga et al., 2018). Namely, when employees develop good communication skills and intercultural understanding, intercultural communicative competence is formed.
- v. Thus, intercultural communication helps to become «more sensitive to cultural differences», thus, employees of an organization providing services or goods, subject to intercultural communication skills, impress customers, which is especially important for the modern multicultural environment inherent in almost all countries.
- vi. It should be emphasized that according to research by analysts (Watson, 2019), satisfied consumers report their positive experience to an average of five acquaintances, while an unsatisfied client reports their negative experience to twice as many recipients. So, expert statistics highlight the importance of communication skills as one of relevant competencies in conditions of international labour market (Yuges, 2020).

3. Research Questions

- i. What is the intercultural communication role on the competitiveness of future specialists in the international labour market?
- ii. What is the impact of intercultural communication on the quality of interpersonal communication in the workplace?
- iii. What is the effect of intercultural communication in job performance quality?

4. Purpose of the Study

The research goal is to identify, with the help of a survey among 1st year students of a non-linguistic university, the level of intercultural communication before and after a special course of classes on intercultural communication skills within the discipline «English language».

5. Research Methods

5.1. Research materials

The materials of the study were the questionnaires of 1st year students in a non-linguistic university. The general sample was 750 people. Three groups were selected from it by the method of mechanical sampling (every tenth student of the 1st year of different non-linguistic specialties).

The empirical study involved 75 students (representative sample). The students were divided into two experimental and one control groups. The survey questionnaire contained questions on the following criteria:

- 1) the impact of intercultural communication on the specialists' competitiveness in the international labour market;

- 2) the impact of intercultural communication on the quality of interpersonal communication in the workplace;
- 3) the impact of intercultural communication on the quality of work performance.

5.2. Research methods

The research methodology is based on a systematic approach and included the methods of the general scientific group (analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction), as well as a number of special methods: content analysis of scientific literature on the research topic; method of sociological questioning; method of statistical analysis. The data collected during the empirical study were processed using the Neural Designer program, a software tool for advanced, predictive and prescriptive analytics.

Table 1. Research methods by groups and research objectives

Method group	Research objectives
General scientific methods	Scientific synthesis of the information received Research of scientific literature on the research topic
Special methods	Sociological research, Statistical analysis survey results

The empirical study consisted of the following stages: questionnaire compilation, preliminary examination of the intercultural communication level; conducting a series of classes on the course of intercultural communication during the second semester of study (within the academic discipline «English language»); conducting a re-survey among a representative sample; processing of the received results.

With the help of the program, all the obtained qualitative data on 50 questionnaires (for two experimental groups of respondents) were converted into a quantitative format according to three criteria: competitiveness of specialists in the international labor market; the quality of interpersonal communication in the workplace; quality of work performance.

Table 2. Research criteria for identifying the impact of intercultural communication skills

Criterion	Rating scale
The impact of intercultural communication on the competitiveness of specialists in the international labour market	1-3 low level
The impact of intercultural communication on the quality of interpersonal communication in the workplace	4-6 average level 7-10 high level
The impact of intercultural communication on the quality of performance of official duties	

At the first stage of the study, we assessed the level of intercultural communication of students in three groups: two experimental groups and one control group. As a result, we have obtained an overall average level as a starting point and a platform for comparing further results. All received answers were evaluated according to the method of the average score for each of the questionnaires, then the average score was derived for each group according to the three criteria studied. Each of the criteria was evaluated

on a 10-point scale according to the following principle: 1-3 low level of influence; 4-6 medium level of influence; 7-10 high level of influence. All scores were calculated based on respondents' answers.

6. Findings

6.1. Result of the study in the first respondents' group

As a result of the study in the first respondents' group, the following results were obtained (Figure 1). As can be seen from the data in Figure 01, after conducting classes in intercultural communication, the students of the first experimental group showed an increase in the level of proficiency (from low to high) in speech etiquette, speech linguistic culture and the principles of intercultural communication.

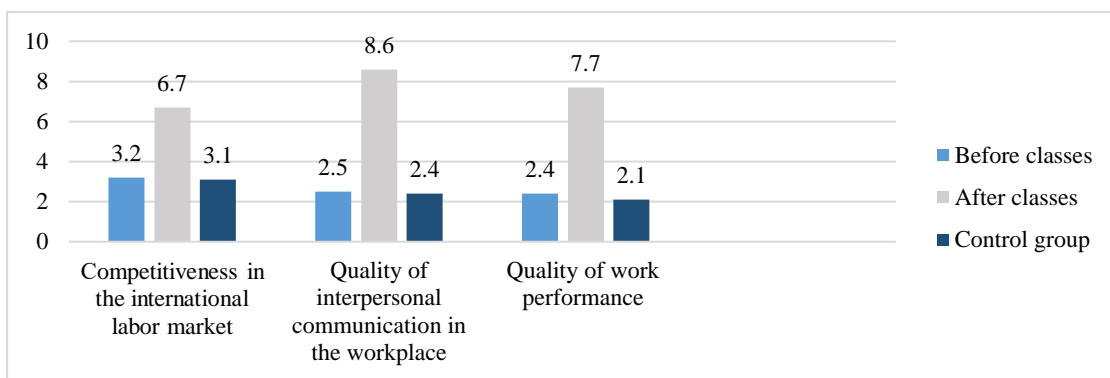


Figure 1. Assessment of the intercultural communication level in the 1st respondents' group before and after a special series of classes (compiled by the author using the Neural Designer program)

The increase is especially noticeable compared to the control group. As a result of the classes, it was possible to increase the level of interpersonal communication of future specialists in the international labor market, and the level of competitiveness doubled.

6.2. Results in the second respondents' group

Similar results were obtained in the second group of 1st year students of a non-linguistic university.

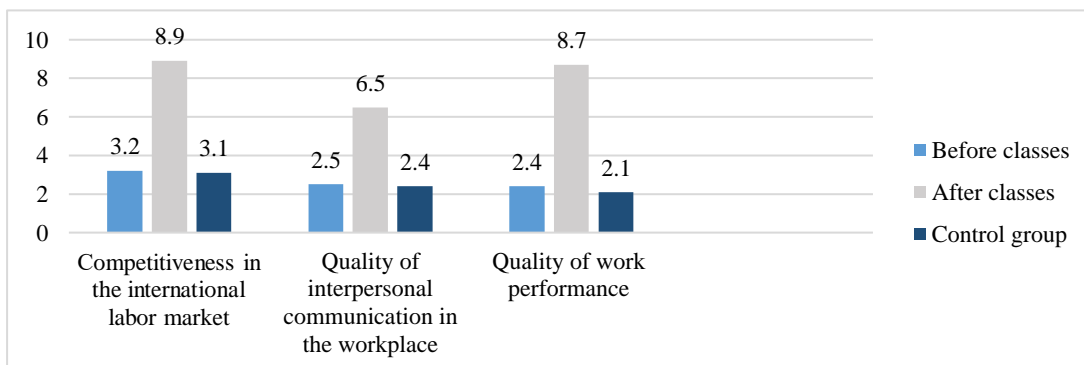


Figure 2. Assessment of the intercultural communication level in the 2nd respondents' group before and after a special series of classes (compiled by the author using the Neural Designer program)

As shown in Figure 2, the main achievement in the second group was the growth of competitiveness and communication on professional topics. The level of intercultural communication has doubled compared to the results in the control group. In order to identify a general trend in the influence of intercultural communication skills on the three studied criteria that are significant for employment in international companies, we have compiled a summary diagram (Figure 3)

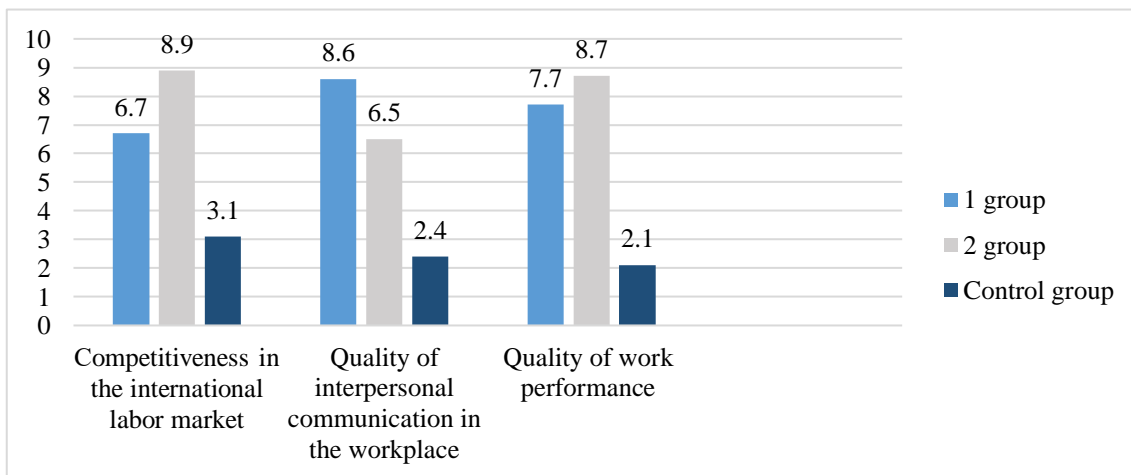


Figure 3. Assessment of the level of intercultural communication of two groups of respondents before and after a special series of classes (compiled by the author using the Neural Designer program)

Thus, we can conclude that it is necessary to introduce a special course in intercultural communication for students of non-linguistic universities, increasing the specialists' future competitiveness in the international labour market.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Discussion

The results of our study are confirmed in the papers by such authors as (Abrams, 2021; Aridah, 2021; Baryshnikov, 2020; Bratt-Paulston et al., 2020; Busch, 2021; Cho, 2020; Dervin & Jacobsson, 2021; Pavlovskaya, 2021). The works by these authors indicate the problems of intercultural communication the skill forming in the workplace; problems of lygophobia in non-standard work situations; the problem of working in international labour collective. All these issues were investigated by the authors on the examples of large and medium-sized international companies.

Partially, our results were reflected in the works by (Diadyk & Zagrebina, 2020; Eginli, 2016; Escalle, 2021; Guessabi, 2021; Irwin, 2020; Ishihara, 2021; Klyukanov, 2017). In the researches by these authors, ways of solving the problems in intercultural communication in large international companies are indicated with the help of special courses for non-native English speakers.

The problem of the intercultural communication skill increasing among future specialists is analyzed at a theoretical level in the works by such authors as (Lepeshkina & Zamurueva, 2020; Monaghan, 2020; Mosed et al., 2021; Negedu & Ojomah, 2021; Peng, 2021; Shenoy-Packer, 2017). At

the same time, the authors recommend using both quantitative and qualitative methods for assessing of intercultural communication level.

In those works, (Ten, 2022; Thompson & Taylor, 2020; Trenholm, 2020; Turistiati & Rusmana, 2018; Watson, 2019) confirm our conclusion that in order to increase the competitiveness of specialists in the international labour market, it is necessary to study the intercultural communication principles and the linguistic culture peculiarities of communicators.

Nevertheless, despite the extensive historiography of the topic, there is not enough empirical research on the issue of intercultural communication in the scientific discourse for further employment of specialists in the international labour market.

7.2. Conclusion

On empirical study results we can make the following conclusions:

1. Intercultural communication as a special learning course in the academic discipline «Foreign language» (on the example of English) allows to significantly increase the level of students' intercultural communication for future employment in the international labour market.

2. For increasing of Russian specialists' competitiveness in the international labour market, it is necessary to introduce a course of intercultural communication into the universities' curriculum, since only theoretical knowledge of a foreign language does not allow using it as an effective tool for communication in an international work team.

3. Intercultural communication as a set of communication skills with foreign communicators is becoming the most demanded property for a future specialist in almost all areas of labour relations.

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