

MSC 2020**International Scientific and Practical Conference «MAN. SOCIETY.
COMMUNICATION»****STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE FORMING
SYSTEM BY MEANS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

Boris Soldatov (a)*, Natalya Soldatova (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) Don State Technical University, Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation, bsoldatov@rambler.ru

(b) Russian Customs Academy, Rostov Branch, Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation;
Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration under the RF President Rostov Branch,
Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation, natalya.nsoldatova@yandex.ru**Abstract**

The purpose of the article is to identify the pedagogical potential of the educational process aimed at students' intercultural competence forming and development. Intercultural competence can be defined as an adequate interaction between communication participants belonging to different cultures. The research methods used were: theoretical analysis of scientific publications; questionnaires; statistical processing of survey data; analysis of students' educational activities. An example of a modeled communicative situation has been the project work on the topic "Intercultural communication" developed by the authors basing on the material of the "Foreign language", "Foreign language in the field of law" disciplines. Basing on the research results the authors of the article arrive at the conclusion that in order to develop a student's personality and form his / her intercultural competence, special conditions must be observed: to teach a foreign language in an inextricable connection with the norms of behavior in the country of the language being studied; to use simulated communicative situations; to deepen background knowledge. The theoretical and practical significance of the article lies in the fact that the results of the research will allow to create curricular and methodological materials complexes being implemented in classroom and extracurricular forms of work and allowing students to form and develop intercultural competence.

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Keywords: Background knowledge, communicative situations, dialogue of cultures, foreign language and culture relationship, intercultural competence



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1. Introduction

At present, due to the expansion of economic ties, Russia's integration into the world information space, and the awareness of the need for mutual understanding and cooperation in matters of culture, education, and pedagogical integration, intercultural communication has become particularly relevant. In addition, the current socio-pedagogical situation requires purposeful forming students' intercultural competence. Higher education institutions create opportunities for non-conflict interaction of individuals in multicultural world. Forming students' intercultural competence assumes educational content cultural orientation. Intercultural communication involves successful use of background knowledge about the cultural characteristics of different cultures representatives, as well as a set of skills based on existing intercultural communication differences in the process of communicating with native speakers (Mukharlyamova et al., 2018).

The study and understanding of intercultural competence is facilitated by close interaction with communication culture that is typical for representatives of different language groups. Knowledge of a foreign language, being any individual's general culture component, contributes to familiarization with the world culture. Learning a foreign language helps to expand information both about the native country's culture and the one of the language being studied. Learning another country's culture contributes to individual's creative and scientific self-realization. The interaction of cultures, i.e. cultures dialogue, implies mutual understanding and tolerance on the part of communication partners, identification of similarities and differences in cultures, and contributes to adaptation in another culture. From methodological point of view, the cultures dialogue involves creating didactic conditions for foreign and native cultures comparative study, application of such techniques as problem solving, presentations, project methods, role-playing games, and discussions.

2. Problem Statement

Knowledge of a foreign language without the knowledge of the cultural component and readiness for intercultural communication is not timely and irrelevant. Intercultural competence can be defined as an adequate interaction between communication participants belonging to different cultures.

To develop students' intercultural competence, both foreign language and cultural characteristics knowledge and the ability to interact effectively in intercultural communication situations are crucial. For students being prepared to perform intercultural communication, both practical and theoretical developments in this area are necessary. The above mentioned statement has been proved by the students' intercultural communication readiness diagnostic indicators study through the questionnaire method application.

3. Research Questions

3.1. What is intercultural competence?

3.2. Why is it important to develop students' intercultural competence?

3.3. What are the most effective methods to be used for students' intercultural competence development?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present research is to identify the pedagogical potential of the educational process aimed at students' intercultural competence forming and development.

5. Research Methods

To solve the practical research problems, we have analyzed the scientific and pedagogical literature on the intercultural communication theory S. G. Ter-Minasova, I. I. Khaleyeva, N. D. Galskova (Ter-Minasova, 2008), language education in the world and national cultures studying context E. S. Polat, I. B. Vorontsova (Polat, 2008), innovative educational technologies (Safonova, 2019). The analysis allowed us to conclude that students' intercultural communication forming system should be considered as tools and methods combination influencing student's communicative culture development.

Forming intercultural communication skills is to be considered on the information accumulation basis reflecting the students' global international interaction importance understanding depth and their readiness for constructive cultures dialogue. We have chosen the questionnaire method as information collection means.

The survey has been performed among 150 Russian Customs Academy Rostov Branch first-year students studying at the Economic, Law and Customs Business faculties and belonging to different ethnic groups. The purpose of the survey is to determine the students' intercultural communication readiness level in the foreign language (English) learning process and to introduce new forms and methods in the education process for creating successful professional activity prerequisites in the globalization context. The research tasks included identifying the students' communication experience with other cultures representatives; choosing classroom and extracurricular activities contributing to intercultural communication experience accumulation; determining intercultural competence and foreign language knowledge advantages for professional self-improvement; defining classes types promoting effective communication with different countries representatives; sorting out experience the students would like to acquire in the English-speaking countries' language and culture learning process. Besides, students evaluated their own intercultural competence level at a percentage rate (Keshtova et al., 2019). Below is a sample of the questionnaire:

1. What is your experience in communication with other cultures representatives?
 - a) Fear
 - b) Uncertainty
 - c) No answer
2. What helps you to adapt to new environment?
 - a) Language knowledge
 - b) Traditions and customs knowledge
 - c) No answer
3. Is other countries' cultural characteristics awareness necessary for effective communication?

- a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) No answer
4. How would you assess your own intercultural competence level?
- a) 80-100%
 - b) 50-80%
 - c) 15-50%
5. What are the cross-cultural competence advantages for your professional development?
- a) Knowledge at the European level
 - b) Experience exchange
 - c) More communication freedom with other cultures representatives
6. What impact does foreign language learning make in the intercultural communication context?
- a) Increasing motivation to language and culture learning
 - b) Ability to navigate in a multicultural environment
 - c) Intercultural communication skills development
7. Do foreign language classes contribute to intercultural communication difficulties overcoming?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) No answer
8. What is necessary to be considered in the foreign language course for more effective communication between different countries representatives?
- a) Correspondence with native speakers
 - b) Visiting countries where the languages learned are spoken
 - c) No answer
9. Which activities promote intercultural communication experience accumulation?
- a) Role-playing games
 - b) Special trainings
 - c) No answer
10. What do you like most about dealing with the British and Americans?
- a) Restraint
 - b) Courtesy
 - c) No answer
11. What experience would you like to gain in learning the English-speaking countries language and culture?
- a) Ability to achieve your own goals
 - b) Communication skills development
 - c) No answer

The results of the present survey are of considerable interest in terms of different cultures representatives' attitude to culture, education and lifestyle. When communicating with representatives of other countries, 40% of respondents experience a sense of fear, 44% of interviewees feel uncertainty. 16%

of respondents would invite an intermediary for traveling to another country and helping them to communicate with the foreign language culture representatives.

58% of students believe that their knowledge of language, traditions and culture helps them in adapting to new communication conditions with foreign countries representatives. 42% of respondents note the motivation importance in study the foreign country's language and culture.

97% of students believe that knowing the other countries' cultural characteristics is necessary for effective communication. Only 19% of respondents rated their own cross-cultural competence level within the range of 80 to 100%; 48% of respondents believe that they have reached the level of 50 to 80%, and 33% of respondents have reached the level of 15% to 50%.

Recognizing the cross-cultural competence developing importance, students believe this will contribute to the European level knowledge acquisition (25%) and more communication freedom with other cultures representatives (48%).

76% of the surveyed students say that foreign language classes at the Russian Customs Academy Rostov Branch help them in overcoming the intercultural communication difficulties; 15% of respondents suggest that communication with native speakers should be introduced to the foreign language course curriculum; 87% of respondents would like to visit an English speaking country. The students surveyed believe that role-playing games (59%), special trainings (33%), and discussions (8%) will help them in gaining intercultural communication experience.

The intercultural communication development will contribute to communication skills acquisition (53%), achieving goals (33%), and career making (14%).

Thus, the survey results prove that the first-year students are ready to master the intercultural competence skills, since they realize that they live in the global world, and intercultural competence is necessary for successful communication between people in various life and activity spheres (Cranmer, 2017; Hinner, 2017). On the other hand, the scientific and pedagogical literature analysis coupled with the survey results indicate that the students' intercultural competence level can be defined as average. Students do not have sufficient ability to apply theoretical knowledge in cross-cultural interaction, but they are ready to cross-cultural communication skills development.

When learning a foreign language, students develop personal, professional and intercultural communication skills, which are a kind of a guide to the world of another culture. Forming students' readiness for intercultural communication based on background knowledge is necessary, as it contributes to adequate perception and speech production (Batarchuk, 2019; Tareva & Tarev, 2018).

In the modern educational environment, various methods are used to develop students' intercultural competence:

- 1) Watching short films and videos illustrating one of the foreign language culture aspects, followed by discussing such issues as: cultural identity; stereotypes; celebrations, customs; family life; generations conflict; body language, gestures;
- 2) Computer presentations about the home country and foreign countries;
- 3) Studying situations on the topics reflecting various cross-cultural relationships;
- 4) Dramatizing different foreign country life situations;
- 5) Developing role-playing games with different cultures representatives;

- 6) Comparing an aspect of one's own culture with the same aspect from the other country's culture;
- 7) Discussing stereotypes regarding certain cultures;
- 8) Including problems related to cross-cultural competence in research work.

These working methods and techniques being implemented in the learning process and based on informing students about the country's history and culture, on monitoring their knowledge increase the students' motivation and interest in the country of the language being studied (Achilov & Makarova, 2016; Smakman, 2019).

6. Findings

The students' intercultural competence forming pedagogical system is a set of tools and methods influencing the student's personality and contributing to his (her) communicative culture development. The basis of cultural and communicative development is constituted by the methods inducing the student being a cultural values connoisseur and creator, e.g. intercultural communication values (Dmitrienko & Ershova, 2020; Muftakhudinova & Shayakhmetova, 2016). In the intercultural communication environment, intercultural competence reflects the students' ability to self-actualization in the cultures dialogue context. The intercultural competence forming process is a significant problem concerning students' readiness for intercultural communication.

Correspondingly, when forming communicative competence, it is necessary to enhance students' readiness for communication, provided they possess the adequate intercultural communication skills. Since intercultural communication teaching includes training specialists possessing competence in intercultural relations, it is necessary to apply modelled communicative interaction situations between different cultures representatives in the education process.

An example of a modelled communicative situation is the project work on the topic "Intercultural communication" developed by the authors basing on the material of the "Foreign language", "Foreign language in the field of law" disciplines. The goals of the present project work can be formulated as follows:

- studying cultural differences in order to improve knowledge about the culture of the country being studied;
- developing the ability to analyse and solve cross-cultural problems;
- eliminating negative stereotypes;
- increasing tolerance to cultural diversity.

The task to be fulfilled by the students within the project framework was formulated as follows: "A company from the UK sends its representative to work at a Russian joint venture. For the UK representative to be able to conduct business efficiently and to feel comfortable in the Russian business environment, you are to conduct a business meeting and to prepare a presentation on the practice and peculiarities of conducting business in Russia. When preparing for the presentation, you are to focus on the following aspects:

- informing about the business conducting culture;

- presenting basic data and information about the country (for example, culture, economy, main exports and imports types);
- giving information about the transactions negotiating rules."

The next project work item is the discussion held between the Russian company representatives and the UK entrepreneur about different countries' traditions and realities which could cause a "culture shock".

After the project, the following results were summarized: the project tasks were practical, they had an applied value and were interesting to students; a system-based activity approach to learning was introduced, which resulted in students' creative abilities development. The results of the reflexive assessment are that students have mastered the intercultural communication problem studying techniques, learned to prove their point of view on the designated problem, to formulate their own conclusions, and acquired new knowledge in the course of solving the problem proposed by the teacher.

The project resulted in the conclusion that setting problems, authenticity and interactivity that were inherent in this project contributed to increasing the students' readiness level to develop intercultural communication skills.

The experience of the projects described proves that activities such as discussions, case studies related to culture learning, help students to improve the ability to carry out intercultural communication, which means:

- developing verbal and non-verbal intercultural communication;
- overcoming language barriers in intercultural communication;
- applying strategies for improving intercultural communication (Beketova et al., 2018; Melchers, 2016; Vetoshkina & Kolkhonyan, 2018).

7. Conclusion

In the era of globalization, socio-cultural processes contribute to the intercultural communication development. Currently, the problem of intercultural communication is being considered from both linguistic and pedagogical points of view. The inclusion of intercultural communication in the foreign languages teaching context has become mandatory due to changes in the educational paradigm.

Studying the students' intercultural competence forming problem allowed us to conclude that foreign language teaching should involve familiarizing students with background knowledge that is characteristic of social groups, since students get acquainted with the professional speech features. At the same time, teaching intercultural communication makes it necessary to possess background knowledge specific to a particular language community in order to develop students' ability to communicate openly in a multicultural society. Communication openness should be provided by the teacher, whose role is to bring studying a foreign language closer to real conditions and create an environment for its practical application.

Therefore, the pedagogical process aimed at developing a new type of personal culture, which is based on a complex system influencing activities and social interaction in the cultures dialogue context, helps to form students' intercultural competence.

The student's personality development as a cultural and educational environment representative, based on the dialogue principle, involves overall education process participants' interaction and the intercultural communication understanding as a factor for students to learn the cultural diversity norms in a multicultural foreign-language community.

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