

The Role of Intercultural Communication in the Process of Learning Foreign Languages

Alsu H. Vafina*

Kazan Federal University, Kremliovskaya str, 18, 420008, Kazan, Russia

Alexandra V. Srukova

Kazan Federal University, Kremliovskaya str, 18, 420008, Kazan, Russia

Ilhamiya I. Galimzyanova

Kazan State Conservatoire named after N. Zhigano, Ulitsa Bol'shaya Krasnaya, 38, Kazan, Respublika Tatarstan, Russia

Abstract

This article with a general methodological orientation was to present the specific nature of forming foreign competence in teaching foreign languages to the students of humanitarian specialties of higher educational institutions. To this end, the results of teaching a foreign language based on the cultural concept was presented. This approach in the language mastering system dictates a teacher to select materials for study in accordance with socio-cultural, linguistic-cultural, and intercultural information relevant to professional interests of students of a particular specialty. The definition of not so much linguistic but the personal traits of the trainee as an area of proximal development also contribute to the formation of a specialist adapted and capable of implementing their professional competences regardless of geographical barriers. The novelty of the proposed approach is to integrate the earliest forms of language mastering with the extracurricular form of work at university. It includes the work on attracting students to communicate with native speakers or with representatives of a different culture through their unifying language in natural communication situations (meetings, scientific debates, and student exchange programs). A purposeful implementation of this approach also allows developing professional, social, and intercultural competencies of students in their inseparable trinity.

Keywords: Intercultural communication; Foreign language; Personal integration; Cultural studies; Intercultural space; Continuous education.



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1. Introduction

Intercultural communication is the process of communicative interaction between individuals and groups who have cultural differences. The main changes observed in politics, economy, and culture indicate that the growth of key indicators in these fields is due to the degree of effectiveness of the implementation of intercultural communication. In such conditions, the issues related to attracting foreign partners and associates are becoming more and more popular, which in turn raise the need to implement different projects at international level. This form of globalization is impossible without the availability of highly qualified specialists fluent in the norms of intercultural communication (Lystvin, 2005) (Sysoev, 2003). This condition, imposed on the personnel reserve, actualizes the issue of language training of students necessary for the implementation of intercultural integration (Alpeisova *et al.*, 2018). Learning a foreign language becomes a kind of enculturation, where one acquires new cultural frames of reference and a new world view, reflecting those of the target language culture and its speakers. Proponents of this view perceive foreign language teachers as 'gatekeepers' who equip their learners with the four competencies of communication -grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies- with a view towards enabling them to gain access to educational or economic opportunities within the target language setting (Alptekin, 2002). Although different researchers like Yu (2014) and Qin (2014) had attempted to examine the effect of intercultural communication in the process of learning foreign languages, none of them offer a theoretical framework for the role of intercultural communication in the process of learning foreign languages for Russian students.

2. Methodology

In this article, description method was used to present the results of pedagogical experience in teaching a foreign language to the students of humanitarian specialties. The description method allows presenting the main forms of work used by a teacher. This method is also supplemented by the analysis method of the experiment results, as well as by the application of an integrative approach to learning in the implementation of intercultural dialogue. The method design also allows recreating an effective model of teaching a foreign language by applying and integrating lessons and extracurricular forms of work that meet professional interests of trainees. The systematization of the data obtained are also implemented during abstraction, comparison, and cognitive synthesis, acting as the integral components, which form the basis of theoretical processing of the experiment results.

*Corresponding Author

3. Results and Discussion

Preparing students for cooperation with the foreign partners, integrating individuals into systems of the world and national cultures, and intellectual and communicative development of personality of future specialists as the learning objective are also reflected in the State Educational Standard of Higher and Vocational Education and the Law of the Russian Federation "On Education". As well, the Declaration on Creation of the European Higher Education Area by 2010, adopted within the framework of the Bologna Process, focuses on the need to improve teaching foreign languages in order to ensure students' readiness to live and work in a multilingual world.

Obviously, a good mastery of a foreign language is not yet a guarantee of successful and effective communication with foreign partners; therefore, the intercultural competence of trainees is a necessary component of the latter. In this regard, within the framework of the new educational paradigm, the task is to revise the specialist training system in the formation of a secondary linguistic personality: teaching foreign languages should be also carried out on the basis of the basic principles of intercultural communication (Shmeleva *et al.*, 2017).

The intercultural communication is the totality of specific processes of interaction between people belonging to different cultures and languages. It occurs between the interaction partners, who not only belong to different cultures but also realize the fact that each of them is "different" and each one perceives the partner's alienity (Antúnez *et al.*, 2012).

To successfully organize the process of language training of the future specialist, the priority should be given to the formation of the student's foreign culture. In this case, an acquaintance with the socio-cultural environment of both native and studied culture will contribute to the most successful formation of the integration process. The formation of a sociocultural image of the studied country should be carried out in the process of implementing the interdisciplinary mastery of cultural studies of the target-language country (Chernova, 2005).

Such a reflection on the implementation of student's language preparation, which is capable of carrying out the intercultural dialogue, also provides the basis for ascertaining the existence of a subject-oriented approach to the process of learning different culture when forming a foreign communicative competence in the system of higher humanities education. Nevertheless, this process cannot be implemented without reliance on cultural traditions and values embodied in archetypal consciousness of the knowers themselves. The formation of an idea of a new national and cultural base will be more successful, if the trainee will be able to rely on the already-formed material and spiritual values of the native language during training. The communicative competence of students of the humanitarian universities, which is a basis for familiarizing trainees with the culture of another people, will be effective in its implementation in real situations of intercultural communication. In this regard, attention should be paid to the formation of a cultural and educational space for self-determination, self-development, and self-realization of language personality (Galimzyanova, 2007).

When implementing such an activity approach to the implementation of the cultural dialogue in the course of language training of the student of the humanitarian profile (Lee, 2018) (Gabitov Azat *et al.*, 2017) it is possible to achieve interlingual, intercultural, and interpersonal communication. The active position of the subject of the integration process will be inextricably linked with their self-determination, self-development, and self-realization as a person.

In this case, the role of cultural competence as an integral component is growing in the implementation of intercultural communication. The cultural competence of the subject of intercultural communication also allows enriching primary ideas about the national specifics of the studied environment by extracting the necessary material from various information sources (books, films, periodicals, etc.). During lessons on learning a foreign language with students, a teacher should pay attention to involving the students in the practice-oriented situational dialogues (related to their professional interests) in the process of implementing intercultural communication (Sadykova and Dautermann, 2009). In this case, the teacher needs to pay attention to problematic education, which meets the demands made in terms of modern pedagogy. The problem training will also allow the student being involved in the natural form of communication and implementing the practical-oriented training at the same time. For example, when discussing the topic of the Silver Age in the development of Russian literature, it would be advisable to draw the attention of the student-philologist to those philosophical systems that have formed the basis of symbolism as an artistic system (the philosophy of Oswald Spengler, the ideas of Nietzsche, etc.) and discuss it in a foreign language. Thus, it will occur in the process of forming professional competence of a specialist in its inseparable unity with the linguistic development of the trainee. In this case, the teacher needs to advise students on how to resolve conflict situations that may arise from insufficient knowledge of language materials and lack of understanding of etiquette standards adopted in a particular culture. In this case, the main emphasis should be made on the non-verbal ways of communication. Such information can be obtained by students, provided that a practical-oriented course of regional studies is introduced into the curriculum. This discipline should be provided with the educational literature in which the regional information on the culture studied will be provided.

Such an approach is aimed at differentiated selection of adequate socio-cultural, linguistic-cultural, and intercultural information necessary for the implementation of professional communication at a sufficient cultural level.

To fulfill this approach, two key objectives are implemented: firstly, it takes place in the formation of quality professional competencies necessary for communication in a foreign society; secondly, high educational saturation of the course allows forming an adequate specialist in the field of a foreign language.

Thus, implementation of three basic competencies can be observed: professional, social, and intercultural.

In this case, professional competence is reduced to the availability of sufficient knowledge and skills necessary for the implementation of professional activities. It is a readiness for the implementation of verbal communication with the means of another iconic culture. At the same time, it is necessary to talk about the implementation of not only a communicative act, but the implementation of integrative activities, which is based on a symbiosis of signs of native culture with the components of another society. As a result, there is a process of intercultural communication in the intercultural space, characterized by a special role of the communicant, who has the ability to adequately comprehend the situation from the positions of both target and native culture (Fattakhova *et al.*, 2017).

The presence of the formation of social competence presupposes the willingness of a specialist to cooperate in the intercultural space (Krylov, 2014). In this case, a trainee studying a foreign language should have sufficient psychological, cognitive, and behavioral abilities necessary for effective interaction with representatives of a different culture. This knowledge should be based on that relevant to intercultural communication in the society.

With the knowledge of cognitive and communicative styles of other linguocultural communication, the formation of intercultural competence in the future specialist can be illustrated. The presence of adaptation to the perceived culture, the definition of a value model of behavior that is adequate to the priorities adopted in another culture, and the ability to respond to a similar situation with a corresponding behavior model indicate that there is a specialist with the skill of ethnocentric assessment of their partner's behavior in the intercultural communication.

4. Summary

In conclusion, it should be noted that the implementation of partnership and cooperation strategy between cultures is now becoming one of the most important studies in the field of intercultural communication. In addition to a variety of lecture works which provide the formation of the main aspects of communicative competence among the students of humanitarian specialties, there is much attention to the out-of-class works. Along with this, the methods of active involvement of students in the situation of intercultural communication are of great importance such as reception of foreign guests, holding joint events, participation in other cultural events (holidays, rituals, competitions, quizzes, olympiads, etc.). Undoubtedly, an invaluable contribution to the successful mastery of the skills of intercultural communication is given by meetings, conversations, and personal experience of communication with representatives of other cultures. Assuredly, the most effective method of successful development of the intercultural communication skills is a trip abroad.

5. Conclusion

According to the research results made by Russian and foreign scientists, as well as the findings in this article, the need for intercultural competence and foreign professional competence is growing in the society. The recognition of the society's needs for intercultural communication and for knowledge of a foreign language stimulates a purposeful foreign language communication development of personality and training young people in terms of norms and rules of relationships with representatives of other linguistic sociocultural communities. It also appears as a social order for forming the personality of a graduate of any educational institution and can be implemented in the process of continuous education.

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