

APPLICATION OF INTERCULTURAL SKILLS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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The purpose of this article is to investigate the relationship between intercultural strategy and the objectives of foreign language processing. This research tends to tackle the crucial methodology question of how intercultural competence elements are integrated into the process of learning a foreign language. Its importance stems from the recognition that the acquisition of a new language requires comprehension of how one’s language and culture relate to the target language and culture. As a result, the methodology now focuses precisely on the development of intercultural communication skills rather than on the acquisition of basic language-use skills in a chosen language. Language is a medium through which culture is expressed. Language symbols encode a nation’s knowledge of history, philosophy, economics, medicine, and other fields. Numerous studies conducted by linguists revealed that language intellectualization is seen as a way to enhance learners’ efficiency by providing them with in-depth knowledge. Words with substantial intellectual load are perceived by learners as aiding in the growth

of intercultural competence due to their semantic capacity and relevance in transferring knowledge and decoding cultural symbols. The internationalisms as means of “natural” language intellectualization were well received by the respondents since students don’t have to exert much effort to incorporate them into their active vocabulary. Given that participants, according to the findings, mainly did not see the value in dealing with unfamiliar foreign vocabulary units offered without explanation, they nonetheless responded extremely favorably to internationalisms. Within the presented research, one of the crucial elements of the university curriculum that gives students a clear advantage over their peers is cited as the teaching of bilingual interaction skills.

This article also deals with the results of quantitative research on tolerance that used questionnaires filled out by students of non-philological faculties. First, it demonstrated the respondents’ comprehension and acceptance of foreigners’ mistakes directly related to their inability to speak or write in the target language properly, and second, it indicated that there is, to some extent, a negative attitude toward faults linked to cultural ignorance or unawareness.

Keywords: *intercultural competence, language intellectualization, internationalism, bilingual learner.*

Problem statement. One of the 21st century’s fastest-growing criteria for higher education is a cross-border international exchange. Students today communicate across geographic, linguistic, cultural, digital, and educational boundaries as they work to develop their critical thinking abilities, independent thinking skills, and skills in recognizing causes and effects while figuring out their place in a constantly evolving social environment.

Technologies must be developed in a way that guarantees more advanced methods of communication in the information society. Given the steady rise of worldwide partnerships, world tourism, and an increase in the number of foreign projects and business visits, there is a need for efficient strategies to improve communication, both verbal and nonverbal, online and in person, taking place without boundaries. On the one hand, the COVID-19 period has forced a choice to place certain limitations on live communication, which was once thought to be the standard in people’s lives. The major method of communication with many prospective participants started to be an unrestricted connection and access to the global network. The coronavirus pandemic has reinforced and raised to a new level the relevance of communication comprehension and flexibility, which are closely connected with the national worldview. On the other hand, an individual’s communicative behavior must also adjust to new

conditions. This highlights the issue of communication obstacles when individuals experience hesitancy or uncertainty before expressing something, such as judgments about age, gender, religion, societal roles, values, etc. Understandably, this is most noticeable in international communication. Moreover, incorrect communication models can result in anxiety, an inferiority complex, and eventually the incapacity to communicate.

The urge for cross-cultural, cross-generational, and cross-religious communication alters social norms, culture, and educational objectives. Graduates who can quickly observe and comprehend, think creatively, extract and evaluate the vast scope of information offered throughout the world in many languages are in great demand. Motivated learners broaden their knowledge frontiers, immerse themselves in new language environments, increase their vocabulary, build various types of memories (short-term, long-term, explicit, implicit, episodic, procedural), and improve their cognitive capacity. Yet, misunderstandings or unexpected outcomes might occur from a lack of knowledge of the cultural customs and norms in a multiethnic society. Consequently, higher education institutions' goal in teaching foreign languages is to provide favorable learning environments for the target language and assist students' personal development by exposing them to the culture of the people whose language they are studying. Understanding how a target culture relates to one's own culture is a necessary component of learning a foreign language. In other words, understanding international communication requires developing intercultural competence. Nonetheless, there is disagreement about how and how much culture should be covered in the study of foreign languages.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In the last two decades, investigations on the integration of language and culture, interdependence of cultural awareness and language learning have been done by Arasaratnam & Doerfel (2005), Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman (2003), Daerdorff (2006), Parmenter (2003), Greenholz (2005), Koehn (2002), Byram (2003), Stone (2006), Chung & Chow (2004), Nault (2006), Alptekin (2002), Chao (2009), Sung & Chen (2009, 2014), Cheng (2012), Stapleton (2000), Young & Sachdev (2011), Zarate (2004), Pascarella & Terenzini (2005). Based on fundamental theory, empirical evidence, validated hypotheses, and substantial findings, these studies, however, explore the matter from the viewpoints of the teachers, but investigations on the students'

perspectives regarding the elements of intercultural competence are rather limited.

The aim of the article. University students frequently have the same cultural background and speak the same language among academic groupings. However, the inflow of international students into Ukrainian universities makes it possible to compare the findings of their language and cultural views with behavioural models of Ukrainian students, obtained through questionnaires and other methods of analysis, as well as observe the fundamentals of interaction in multicultural groups. As a result, the purpose of this article is to investigate the intercultural method as a foundation for identifying the strategies and guiding ideas for learning foreign languages more effectively.

Presentation of the main research material. Following several stages of development, including the Grammar-Translation Method in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Audio-Lingual/Audio-Visual Method in the 1940s, and the Communicative Approach beginning in the late 1970s, FLT methodology has come up with the Intercultural approach since the 1980s, which balanced all the elements of the process of effective language teaching while emphasizing the limitless potential for the development of a language personality. Neuner describes the experience of speaking with an 11-year-old and getting his opinion of a certain English textbook [7]. The young respondent was quite critical in his responses to Neuners' questions, but he made no notice of mistakes in either syntax or vocabulary. Instead, he analyzed the characters' actions and made observations about how they saw certain issues. Consequently, Neuner concluded that each student has a unique perspective on the subject they are studying. We can never be certain what genuinely piques pupils' interest and attracts their attention and how they learn [7: 36]. It turns out that by acquiring teaching materials, the student receives a piece of the sociocultural context or, to put it another way, participates in the "worldview" of the language environment being studied (by contrasting it with his own, acquired through prior experience), without paying attention to the process of learning grammar and vocabulary themselves.

We conducted a questionnaire survey among second-year students of Ukrainian philology and international students at the Medicine department to determine the type and character of the challenges that higher education students face in the context of intercultural dialogue (the language of education for future doctors is English). Students were

instructed to read a typical list of barriers to effective cross-cultural communication. The participants were required to rate each position on a scale of 1 to 100, depending on how much it was an obstacle for each of them personally, where 1 meant the lowest level and 100 was the maximum level of discomfort and self-doubt. To measure the problem's complexity in terms of the speaker's attitude toward it, as well as to evaluate the extent of their psychological obstacles a wide range of 1 to 100 was chosen. This would allow the teacher to adjust teaching tools and methods most productively, based on information about psychological obstacles for the student.

Thus, the participants were asked to evaluate the following positions: "1) finding a topic for conversation; 2) defining and comprehending the term "intercultural communication" itself (since it is difficult or ambiguous); 3) a lack of continuous interaction with people from other cultures; 4) a limited vocabulary; 5) complicated grammar rules; 6) a lack of experience with the customs and etiquette of another country; 7) a shortage of time and resources for education and self-education; 8) apprehension that a positive outcome won't come quickly; 9) tension and discomfort experienced during the intercultural dialogue; 10) your option".

A comparative analysis of the results showed that the greatest discrepancies among philologists and medical students were found due to positions "8) apprehension that a positive outcome won't come quickly" (Doctors/D – 10%, Philologists/Ph – 65%) and "9) tension and psychological discomfort experienced during the intercultural dialogue" (D – 10%, Ph – 90%). The first distinction is related, in our opinion, to the purposeful choice of philologists. Entering a university, they hope to quickly achieve a respectable outcome and begin learning about the outside world through a foreign language. At the same time, doctors perceive awareness of the culture and language of another country to a great extent as a tool for information exchange and cooperation with international partners and organizations, in other words, they begin to learn the language through the world of the profession. The second discrepancy, we believe, is connected with philologists' awareness of their high degree of responsibility in intercultural dialogue. The positions "3) a lack of continuous interaction with people from other cultures" (D – 60%, Ph – 70%) and "4) a limited vocabulary" (D – 50%, Ph – 40%) showed the lowest coefficient of difference. As it turned out, these positions are important for the success of intercultural

communication for the participants of both groups, that is, regardless of the degree of awareness and mastery of knowledge, speakers are equally concerned about the imperfection of their skills when it comes to another culture.

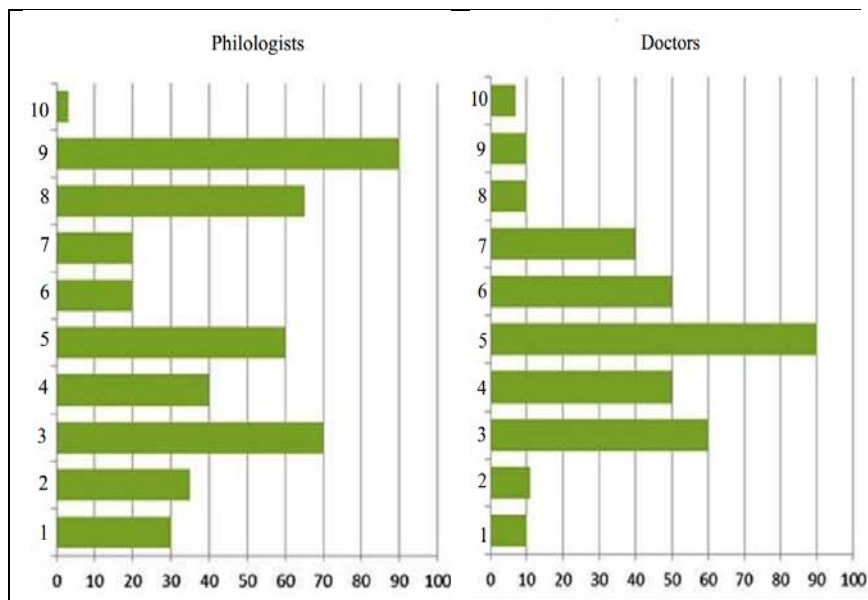


Table 1. Application of intercultural skills in foreign language acquisition
Таблиця 1. Застосування міжкультурних навичок у процесі опанування іноземної мови

Very few students, especially philologists, paid much attention to the tenth position, but “transition to distant learning” (D – 8%, Ph – 3%) prevailed among the personal options of the response. It, according to the respondents, became a barrier to direct interaction with speakers of a different culture. It is difficult to disagree with this since online communication has its own rules and aspects of participants’ interaction, and after years of traditional schooling, they have to get used to a new format in a distance education environment at university. However, two years of pandemic realities have taught learners to promptly adapt and seek out unusual, innovative ways to interact with information when using an electronic device. In the circumstances of digitalization and gamification of education, the gaming experience was helpful on the road to learning.

Intercultural competence is described by Jokikokko as “an ethical orientation that emphasizes particular ethically correct ways of being, thinking, and behaving” [6]. A person who “crosses boundaries and is to some extent an expert in the transit of cultural property and symbolic values” is considered an “intercultural speaker” within the context of an intercultural model [4: 11]. Many theorists adopt an anthropological approach to their models of intercultural competence, treating the individual as the center of their scientific interests. This is because they are aware of how beneficial it is to determine what is relevant in the context of cultural variety. No one methodology can accurately assess an individual’s intercultural abilities, just as there is no one unique definition of intercultural competence. According to the setting, each model incorporates the idea of intercultural competence. The five categories that might directly or indirectly affect students’ learning in terms of educational outcomes are therefore captured by the model created by Pascarella [8]. One of these categories is the organizational and structural qualities of educational institutions. Another is the characteristics of the students themselves, such as their talents, personalities, ambitions, and ethnicity. The third reveals the connection with partners in socializing, such as with professors or classmates. The fourth category is the institutional setting itself. The fifth category measures students’ motivation and consequently achievements [8]. In this concept, the researcher highlights the importance of the organizational/structural attributes of the educational institution and the characteristics of the students having an interdependent impact on one another.

The five-dimension model created by Byram was introduced in 1997 and is referred to as the classic one. This approach focuses on five elements: 1) knowledge, 2) attitudes, 3) interpreting and relating abilities, 4) interaction and discovery skills, and 5) political education, including critical cultural awareness [3]. Having integrated the benefits of the listed models we hope to come up with a list of essential criteria. First, learning takes place in a two-way engagement, in which the learner’s motivation, aptitude, and environment all play important roles. Second, it should be emphasized that attaining a favorable outcome depends on the formation of the proper basis. Finally, the appropriate selection of circumstances for the right placement of accents and the potential for a prolonged independent assessment of intermediate and final outputs are crucial elements of developing intercultural competence.

The three systems for measuring intercultural competence are established based on the components of those models. The three main categories of intercultural competence are intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural tolerance since learning a language is a process of acquiring symbols and coding systems (as well as a process of obtaining cultural knowledge and attitudes). The idea that tolerance is exceptionally important is supported by the findings of a study conducted among 24 second-year students from Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates. Regarding their attitudes about students from various national backgrounds who could engage in wrongdoings and misdeeds during their intragroup interactions, the participants were given a list of two sets of statements to estimate the level of their loyalty.

Respondents were questioned about how they reacted to lexical, grammatical, and stylistic faults as well as the behavioral shortcomings of their interlocutors related to religious or political beliefs, family traditions, and customs. The majority of respondents noted the acceptability of linguistic errors in their native language made by their group mates at the level of 81,6% (“Partly appropriate” – 22,5%, “Appropriate” – 48,1%, and “Strongly appropriate” – 11%). Only 18.4% of participants voted negatively (“Strongly inappropriate” – 3,7%, “Inappropriate” – 6,5%, and “Partly inappropriate” – 8,2%).

As opposed to language issues, respondents treated cultural issues more strictly, classifying them as 1) “Strongly inappropriate” – 7,9%, “Inappropriate” – 21,6%, “Partly inappropriate” – 38,8% (for a total of 68,3%), and 2) “Partly appropriate” – 16,1%, “Appropriate” – 10,8%, and “Strongly appropriate” – 4,8% (for a total of 31,7%). This shows that despite having a fair amount of general tolerance in their educational setting, a third of learners (31,7%) are not yet prepared to be tolerant when it comes to their cultural heritage.

We acknowledge that the existing curricula in contemporary educational institutions are more and more often based on the requirement for intercultural literacy. It is because intercultural competence is implicitly taught by being included in other university courses. The youth who learn as much in their second or third language as they do in their first perform better in class and develop their general intellectual capacity. Institutions that provide multilingual education to their students currently come out ahead. When students are instructed in a variety of subjects in a second language, such as English, this helps

them become more interculturally competent and increases their mental capacity. Bilinguals, according to Ellen Bialystok, manage mental disorders better [5].

In the 1930-s, Leonard Bloomfield defined bilingualism as the total control of two languages [2]. Since then, numerous investigations have found that bilingual children performed better on both verbal and non-verbal tasks. Scientists have been interested in this idea, which is associated with various social categories. There is no common understanding of what constitutes total mastery of two or more languages, even though its fundamental components have been defined in a variety of ways. Yet it is fairly evident that bilingualism is by no means a combination of two monolinguals in the personality of one speaker.

This was demonstrated by an experiment carried out by a team of psycholinguists working with a group of bilinguals [1]. The participants who speak both English and German were asked to retell information given in both languages. It turned out that the interviewees used English to retell a part of the information presented in English and applied German to the German part of the data without delay or hesitation. It proves the fact that bilingual people are better and more easily able to switch between languages. Moreover, the participants were instructed to decode the symbols of a made-up language and explain the meaning of certain words. Bilinguals who, according to their affirmatives, did not strive to study or compare roots and flections but instead behaved spontaneously displayed the greatest results. It proves that bilingual learners have the only language personality which is extended and developed depending on their intellectual growth.

We have discovered that language intellectualization has a considerable favorable impact on the process of learning a target language. We don't want to enforce the idea of establishing an environment that is conducive to learning but artificially intellectualized. Instead, we emphasize that selecting texts of a certain style and with a substantial level of intellectual load will help students develop essential communication skills and, as a result, will inspire them to pursue further study.

Thus, the findings from a questionnaire completed by second-year students revealed that learners were positively impacted by having to deal with materials significantly enriched with 1) units that intellectualize language denoting significant information on various

fields of social development such as business, culture, history, philosophy, information technology, medicine, and law (Strongly disagree – 0%, Disagree – 0%, Neither Agree nor Disagree – 7,7%, Agree – 30,8%, Strongly agree – 61,5%); 2) terminological units that are unclear in their meaning for foreign language learners (Strongly disagree – 0%, Disagree – 8,3%, Neither Agree nor Disagree – 33,3%, Agree – 25%, Strongly agree – 33,4%); 3) internationalisms (Strongly disagree – 0%, Disagree – 8,3%, Neither Agree nor Disagree – 8,3%, Agree – 33,4%, Strongly agree – 50%).

Due to their meaning scope, all three sorts of units intellectualize language. The findings show that, according to the participants' views, the first and third groups of words are fundamentally important for the development of foreign language competence. Regarding the second group, however, even though terms encode knowledge about meaningful areas of people's lives, students did not pay them much attention since they were difficult to understand and required extra effort to be studied.

Conclusion. Foreign language learning involves engagement with the sociocultural environment as opposed to the passive assimilation of data. As a result, culture should always be included in the framework of language acquisition as cultural understanding helps make language learning successful. The most recent explorations, however, emphasize that it is no longer relevant to discuss that acquisition of two or more languages forms two or more language personalities in one individual. Instead, learners can develop all these skills within the only language personality, which scope depends on students' intellectual capacity.

Words with substantial intellectual load are seen by learners as aiding in the growth of intercultural competence due to their ability and relevance in gaining knowledge and decoding cultural symbols. The internationalisms as means of "natural" language intellectualization were well received by the respondents since students don't have to exert much effort to incorporate them into their active vocabulary. We believe that bilingualism is one of the prominent goals in contemporary education. The findings of processing the tolerance questionnaires demonstrate that while participants view language errors with understanding, at the same time, they have a negative attitude toward cultural faults. Since we offered the tolerance test only to the students of non-philological faculties, we anticipate conducting further studies by contrasting their responses with those of the philologists.

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ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ МІЖКУЛЬТУРНИХ НАВИЧОК У ПРОЦЕСІ ОПАНУВАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

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Мета наукової розвідки – дослідити ефективність міжкультурного підходу як техніки оволодіння іноземною мовою. Дослідження актуалізує вирішення ключового методологічного питання: як елементи міжкультурної компетенції інтегруються в процес засвоєння іншомовної комунікативної стратегії. Актуальність проблеми лежить у площині усвідомлення ідеї про те, що опанування нової мови вимагає розуміння принципів співвідношення рідної мови й культури з цільовими мовою і культурою. З огляду на це вважаємо, що ракурс уваги сучасної методики зосереджений радше на розвитку навичок міжкультурного спілкування, ніж на набутті базових умінь в іноземній мові.

Виходячи з розуміння того, що мова є засобом вираження культури і в мовних символах зашифровано знання нації з історії, філософії, економіки, медицини та інших галузей суспільного життя, визначено, що інтелектуалізація мови розглядається як засіб підвищення ефективності іншомовної освіти шляхом збагачення активного й пасивного словника мовців одиницями, які мають значний науковий, культурологічний, історичний потенціал. Доведено, що залучення контекстів зі словами на позначення суттєвих цивілізаційних здобутків людства безпосередньо впливає на підвищення мотивації студентів до вивчення другої чи третьої мови. Виявлено, що інтернаціоналізми як засоби «природної» інтелектуалізації мови були добре сприйняті респондентами і сприяли формуванню зацікавленості в подальшому навчанні. Водночас, мовці переважно не бачили сенсу в роботі з незнайомими термінологічними одиницями, поданими без семантизації. Це пояснюється тим, що в роботі зі студентами першої групи не потрібно було докласти додаткових зусиль, аби віднайти контекстуальний смисл пропонувананих слів і сполук.

Визначено, що одним із ключових елементів університетської навчальної програми, який дає студентам очевидну перевагу над однолітками, є вироблення навичок білінгвальної або мультилінгвальної взаємодії. Заразом, у статті представлено результати дослідження ступеня прояву міжкультурної толерантності в мультиетнічних групах.

Установлено, що, на відміну від поблажливого ставлення респондентів до мовних помилок, яких припустилися одногрупники з іншого культурного середовища, негативне сприйняття недоліків, пов'язаних із їхнім культурним невіглаством чи необізнаністю, було визначено як неприпустиме переважною більшістю опитаних.

Ключові слова: білінгв, інтелектуалізація мови, інтернаціоналізм, міжкультурна компетентність.

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