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Intercultural competence in foreign language teaching

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МІЖКУЛЬТУРНА КОМПЕТЕНТНІСТЬ У НАВЧАННІ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

У статті розкрито розуміння міжкультурної компетентності у викладанні іноземної мови. Навчання культури у процесі викладання іноземної мови залишається невирішеною проблемою протягом багатьох років. Актуальність дослідження полягає у визначенні готовності викладачів англійської мови до формування міжкультурної компетентності на уроках англійської мови в школі. Викладачі іноземної мови є першими людьми, які знайомлять учнів з мовним та культурним розмаїттям світу, відкривають свідомість дитини для знань про інші культурні реалії, традиції, моделі поведінки, цінності тощо. Важливість формування полікультурної свідомості учнів пов'язано не тільки з країнами, мова яких вивчається, а й з іншими культурами, представники яких можуть спілкуватися іноземною мовою.

Однак, готовність вчителів іноземних мов до вирішення сучасних проблем суспільства, пов'язаних з розвитком міжкультурної компетентності учнів, недостатньо висвітлена у професійній педагогічній освіті.

Автори дослідили рівень готовності вчителів іноземної мови до формування міжкультурної компетентності учнів. У процесі дослідження було проаналізовано відповіді 78 вчителів іноземної мови з чотирьох областей (Львівська, Тернопільська, Івано-Франківська та Чернівецька області) за допомогою анкети. Дослідження показує розуміння вчителями поняття міжкультурної компетентності та культури, ставлення до формування міжкультурної компетентності, впровадження, та застосування на практичних заняттях з іноземної мови. У статті розкрито ставлення викладачів англійської мови до формування міжкультурної компетентності у процесі викладання іноземної мови. У результаті проведеного дослідження виявлено два профілі вчителів, іноземної мови – перші інтегрують культурну складову у навчання іноземної мови, другі не підтримують цю практику.

Ключові слова: міжкультурна компетентність; міжкультурна комунікація; навчання іноземної мови; шкала Лікерта; позитивно налаштовані вчителі; негативно налаштовані вчителі; анкета.

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

The article reveals the understanding of intercultural competence in foreign language teaching. Teaching culture in foreign language teaching has remained an unsolved problem for many years. The relevance of the study is to identify the readiness of the English language teachers to implement intercultural competence at English language lessons. Teachers of a foreign language are the first people who introduce pupils to the linguistic and cultural diversity of the world, open the child's consciousness to the knowledge of other cultural realities, traditions, behavioral models, values, etc. The realities of the modern world prove the importance of forming

pupils' multicultural consciousness, associated not only with countries of the target language, but also with other cultures whose representatives can communicate in the target language.

However, the readiness of foreign language teachers to meet the modern challenges of society, which is related to the development of intercultural competence in pupils, has not been sufficiently highlighted in professional pedagogical education.

The authors investigated the level of readiness of foreign language teachers for the development of intercultural competence in pupils. Data were collected from 78 foreign language teachers from four regions (Lviv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernivtsi region) by means of a questionnaire. Study presented teachers' understanding of intercultural competence and culture, attitudes to intercultural competence teaching, applications and actual teaching practices in foreign language classroom. The article reveals the attitude of the English language teachers to implementation of intercultural competence in foreign language teaching classroom. Findings revealed two distinct teacher profiles, i.e., the favourably disposed foreign language teacher, who integrate culture into their classroom practices and the unfavourably disposed foreign language teacher, who did not support this practice.

Key words: *intercultural competence; intercultural communication; foreign language teaching; Likert scale; favourably disposed teachers; unfavourably disposed teachers; questionnaires.*

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Introduction

In the world context, the importance of language as a communicative tool of culture lead to learning a foreign language from the term «communicative competence» to the term «intercultural competence», which transmits communication to the cultural dimension. The last term has been fixed in the current school languages curriculum compiled in Ukraine in 2001, taking into account the recommendations of the Council of Europe on language education. The need for the implementation of intercultural component in the educational process is reflected in the main state documents: «National Doctrine of the Development of Ukraine's Education in the 21st Century», «The Concept of Civic Education», «The Concept of 12-year General Secondary Education», «State Standards for Elementary, Basic and Comprehensive Secondary Education». All documents emphasize the need to educate a person of a democratic worldview that adheres to civil rights and freedoms, with respect to traditions, culture, religion and world languages. So the teacher's functions change, and his\her activity should be aimed at creating conditions for developing interculturally competent individuals.

According to the latest sociological poll, almost 70 % of Ukrainian citizens never traveled abroad and did not have direct contact with representatives of other cultures in a foreign environment. As Ukraine is facing the possibility of joining to the European Union, it is important to strengthen the readiness of its citizens to contact with different cultures. On such a social background, the responsibility of the teacher of a foreign language as «the intercultural mediator» substantially increased.

The relevance of the study is to identify the readiness of the English language teachers to implement intercultural competence at English language lessons at school. Teaching culture in foreign language teaching classroom has remained an unresolved problem for many years. Teachers of a foreign language are the first people who introduce pupils to the linguistic and cultural diversity of the world, open the child's consciousness to the knowledge of other cultural realities, traditions, behavioral models, values, etc. The realities of the modern world prove the importance of forming pupils' multicultural consciousness, associated not only with countries of the target language, but also with other cultures whose representatives can communicate in the target language.

However, the readiness of foreign language teachers to meet the modern challenges of society, which is related to the development of intercultural competence in pupils, has not been sufficiently highlighted in professional pedagogical education.

Multiple studies on learners' development of intercultural competence and cultural awareness in foreign language teaching have been conducted abroad (Belz, 2005; Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet 2001; Omaggio-Hadley (2001); Dogancay-Aktuna (2005). General problems of formation of intercultural competence as the ultimate goal of foreign language education have been conducted by N. Barishnikova, O. Goncharova.

Defining intercultural competence and identifying which cultural aspects need to be included in foreign language teaching classroom has been a challenge. Many researchers stress the close relationship between language and culture. The crucial concept of culture is that language and culture are inseparable (Byram & Morgan 1994; Brown, 2000; Kramsch, 2000). According to Brown, «A language is a part of culture and a culture is a part of a language». Therefore, they cannot be separated without losing the significance of either language or culture. Cultural component was considered to be supplementary to language teaching for a long time; nowadays it develops learners' ability to communicate with each other across linguistic and cultural boundaries. As language and culture are closely related to each other, the teaching of culture is seen as an integral and organized component of language teaching. Teaching communication without teaching culture might be enough for survival and routine transactions but communicative competence is incomplete without cultural awareness and understanding, without intercultural competence (Brown, 2000). Kramsch pointed out, that «culture is often seen as mere information conveyed by the language, not as a feature of language itself». Thus, she emphasized that culture is «the very core of language teaching» and «cultural awareness must then be viewed both as enabling language proficiency and as being the outcome of reflection on

language proficiency» (Kramersch, 2000, p. 8). Agar's term «languaculture» suggests that language and culture are merged and that language users draw on more than just vocabulary and grammar. Language is culturally loaded (Atay, 2005, p. 224). Agar used the term «rich points» to describe moments, in which people do not understand each other in certain situations and thus can cause intercultural misunderstandings. These rich points can be seen as cultural differences, which make culture become visible to an outsider. Using rich points in the classroom can aid in developing cultural knowledge, attitudes and an understanding of the native culture. Byram highlights the forward move from just communicating to exchange information to «understand and relate to people from other countries» (Byram, 1997, p. 5). Studies have been showing the importance of moving away from communicative language learning to intercultural competence (Aguilar, 2007; Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2009; others). Not only is the research arguing for a change in foreign language teaching and learning approaches, but the learners' development of intercultural competence has been highlighted in numerous studies (e.g., Belz, 2002; Byram, 1997).

More recently, intercultural competence has become the emphasis when discussing culture in the in foreign language teaching. Scholars have offered many competing definitions on intercultural competence. Reitenauer et al. defined intercultural competence as «the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts» (2005, p. 68). Byram described intercultural competence as the willingness to consider and respect other beliefs and behaviors «and to analyze them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging» (1997, p. 34). Similarly, according to Kramersch, is «an awareness and a respect of difference, as well as the socio-affective capacity to see oneself through the eyes of others» (2005, p. 553). A person who displays these competences is known as an intercultural speaker (Belz, 2002).

Dogancay-Aktuna (2005) discussed how the field of intercultural competence can aid in preparing teachers of English to be more aware of their pupils' socio-cultural backgrounds and thus make more informed decisions. Cushner and Mahon (2009) also discussed intercultural competence in teacher education. The authors consider teachers in general and, just as Dogancay-Aktuna (2005), are concerned with the teachers' own intercultural competence and how they will manage a classroom with students of different cultural backgrounds.

The discussion on including intercultural competence in the classroom and making sure that intercultural competence is taught, rather than just communication, does not consider the actual intercultural competence of the teachers. Before intercultural competence can be included in foreign language teaching classrooms, the question of whether or not the teachers are interculturally competent needs to be answered. Cushner and Mahon (2009) began this point of discussion in their research. How and whether foreign language instructors actually teach intercultural competence in the classroom and how they feel about having to do so, still needs examination.

A study by Sercu and her colleagues has been conducted in 2005 on intercultural competence, investigating foreign language teachers from Belgium, Bulgaria, Mexico, Greece, Poland, Spain and Sweden in order to observe the willingness of these teachers to teach intercultural competence (Sercu et al., 2005). Continuing this research, Sercu (2006) examined whether the same teachers fulfilled «the requirement of foreign language and intercultural competence» (p. 56). In both studies the authors discovered the willingness of teachers to incorporate intercultural competence in the foreign language lessons; however, they felt that they were not trained to teach intercultural competence. Findings of the study revealed two distinct teacher profiles, i.e., the favourably disposed foreign language teacher, who believed in the importance of integrating culture into their classroom practices, and the unfavourably disposed foreign language teacher, who did not support this practice. Data further revealed that no clear relationship appeared to exist between teachers' beliefs regarding integration of culture and the way in which they actually shaped their teaching practices.

D. Atay (2005) from Marmara University, Turkey carried out a study on 65 Turkish teachers of English and found that participants were aware of the importance of the cultural dimension in language learning, yet they were also aware of their own lack of knowledge related to the target language culture and that the teaching culture actually involved more than what they could do. Research into innovation in education has shown that teachers' perceptions of the innovation, beliefs, and preferences, in short, their conceptions, determine the success of that innovation to a large extent. Thus, insights on teachers' conceptions are crucial to understand the way in which teachers currently perceive the advocacy to integrate intercultural competence teaching in foreign language education and the reasons underlying their actual practices. She continued the study in 2009, data were collected from 503 foreign language teachers by means of Sercu' questionnaire. The findings have revealed that language teachers seem to be aware of the role of the culture in foreign language education though they do not often integrate culture into their teaching in order to develop intercultural competence in their learners (Atay, Kurt, Camlibel, Ersin, & Kaslioglu, 2009).

A similar study was conducted in Islamic Azad University, Jahrom, Iran by A. Nemati and his colleagues in 2014 to investigate the opinions and attitudes of Iranian teachers of English on intercultural competence teaching to see how and to what extent these opinions and attitudes are reflected in their classroom. Application data were selected from 50 foreign language teachers by mean of questionnaire. The results revealed that language teachers were aware of the role of the culture in foreign language education though they do not often integrate culture into their teaching in order to develop intercultural competence in their learners. In overall, Iranian teachers had positive attitude toward teaching culture in the classroom. Teachers, similar to those in other studies, seemed to try, with varying degrees of success, to integrate the teaching of culture into the curriculum. Furthermore, the participants

felt that the curriculum did not allow for the inclusion of intercultural competence (Nemati, Marzban, & Maleki, 2014).

This research is relevant to Ukraine, thus integration into European space is inevitable, it is the teachers of a foreign language that are tangible as nobody else to the formation of the intercultural component of the younger generation. Most scholars have emphasized the need of formation the intercultural competence by teachers of a foreign language at school, which should become part of pupil's personality in modern world.

The study aimed to investigate the opinions and attitudes of Ukrainian teachers of English on intercultural competence teaching and to see how and to what extent these opinions and attitudes are reflected in their classroom applications, as reported by the teachers. The aim of the study was to enrich the understanding of what foreign language teachers in Ukrainian schools think about intercultural competence in teaching. The research questions were: 1) How do the foreign language teachers in Ukrainian schools interpret the concept of «culture» in their teaching practice? 2) How do they see and specify the cultural objectives of their teaching? 3) What do they do to attain these objectives? Our goal was to explore how foreign language teachers make use of this potential in order to promote intercultural competence and understanding.

Methods

For the purpose of the study 78 (seventy-eight) foreign language teachers from four regions (Lviv region (20), Ternopil region (25), Ivano-Frankivsk region (19) and Chernivtsi region (14) were asked to fill in questionnaires. Some of them were also met in person. Background information on the participants comes from the first questionnaire, which included a demographic section. According to the results of the demographic part 94 % of teachers have complete higher education (BA degree, Specialist, 5 of them MA degree), 6 % of teachers worked in rural areas with incomplete higher education (junior specialists). According to the results 2 % of the teachers were between 25 and 30, 28 % were between 31 and 40, 55 % between 41 and 50, and 15 % between 51 and 65 years of age. Foreign language teachers were from public schools, all women. The foreign language taught in secondary schools was English.

Data for the present study were collected in 2018 years by means of a questionnaire developed by Sercu (2005). The questionnaire, consisting of nine sections, aimed to investigate teachers' views on the role of culture in foreign language teaching and the extent to which their teaching practice can be characterized as directed towards the attainment of intercultural competence and a cultural approach. In the study the respondents were given statements and asked to assess the level of importance of each on Likert scale. The format of a level Likert scale was: 5-point, 4-point and 3-point scales, depending upon the purpose of the question.

Cronbach's alpha is the most common measure of internal reliability when you have multiple Likert scale questions in a questionnaire. So the questionnaire was piloted with 18 randomly selected teachers for reliability purposes and the Cronbach

coefficient was found to be 0.8. Data were analyzed based on the frequencies for each section. Calculations were done using a standard deviation (SD) to make it possible to compare averages.

The t-test (Student's t-test) was used to compare means of A and B groups to find if they are different from each other and how significant the differences are. The t-test also showed if those differences could have happened by chance.

Results

Our results are presented on the basis of Lies Sercu et al. (2005) concept of the «unfavorably disposed» as opposed to the «favourably disposed» foreign language teachers. Sercu revealed that some of the teachers are in fact «favourably disposed» while others are «unfavourably disposed» towards including intercultural competence in their classroom practice and that their dispositions depend on their beliefs, training, research interests and so on.

Each profile can be identified by means of a number of characteristics. The profile of the «favourably disposed teacher» can be characterized as genuinely intercultural, and is based on the conceptual definition of intercultural competence that includes knowledge, skills and attitudes that a foreign language teacher should possess to be able to teach intercultural competence. Foreign language teachers should be sufficiently familiar with the foreign cultures associated with the foreign language they teach as well as have the diverse and frequent contacts with those cultures. In addition, a «favourably disposed teacher» should know his/her own culture well to explain both similarities and differences between cultures to students. Moreover, he/she should be aware of stereotypes that students may have towards another culture(s) and of methods to address them in the classroom. A «favourably disposed teacher» should be well trained in selecting appropriate content and materials that can foster students' intercultural competence acquisition. With respect to attitudes, the «favourably disposed teachers» should look forward to the integration of intercultural competence teaching in foreign language education. They should clearly see the objectives of foreign language education in terms of both language learning and intercultural competence acquisition and be willing to work towards achieving these objectives. Moreover, they should take into account their students' perceptions and attitudes regarding foreign cultures as the departure point while designing the learning process. «Unfavourably disposed foreign language teachers» believe that it is impossible to integrate language and culture teaching.

The authors express the hypothesis that in the present study two groups of teachers will also be presented – «Favourably disposed teacher» (group A) and «Unfavourably disposed teacher» (group B), moreover, group A will be more numerous than group B.

The first section of the questionnaire asks foreign language teachers to provide some personal data, presented earlier.

From second to ninth sections contain branched questions with many sub-questions in 17 pages, which makes it impossible to submit replies in the tables within

the same section of the questionnaire. Therefore, the authors are inclined to cover the most important issues and results within each section of the questionnaire.

The questions in the second section concern their perceptions of what they try to achieve with students. Teachers were given eight possible objectives of foreign language teaching and asked to rank them in order of importance through assigning each objective a number between 1 and 8. Teachers assign the number «1» to the objective which they consider most important, «2» to the objective which they consider second in importance, and so on. As their first priority, 51 teachers out of 78 selected «Enthuse my students for learning foreign languages», second most important priority was «Promoting the acquisition of a level of proficiency in the foreign language that will allow the students to use the foreign language for practical purposes», as their third priority, teachers indicated «Assisting my students to acquire a level of proficiency in the foreign language that will allow them to read literary works in the foreign language». Finally, the last priority was «Assisting my students in developing a better understanding of their own identity and culture». One of the questions in second section asked to indicate their opinions about the average distribution of teaching time over «language teaching» and «culture teaching». As can be seen from the results presented in Table 1, the number of teachers who do not include the cultural component almost coincides with the number of teachers, which accounts for 20 % of studies in the study of cultural dimensions. As can be seen from the results presented in Table 1, the number of teachers who do not teach the cultural component almost coincides with the number of teachers who focus on the cultural component 40 % of the teaching time. Most foreign language teachers (46) distributed teaching time 80 % over «language teaching» and 20 % over «culture teaching» in secondary schools. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of teaching time over «language teaching» and «culture teaching» in language teaching classroom

Distribution of teaching time over «language teaching» and «culture teaching» in secondary schools	Number of teachers	% of teachers
100 % language teaching – 0 % culture teaching	13	17 %
80 % language teaching – 20 % culture teaching	46	59 %
60 % language teaching – 40 % culture teaching	14	18 %
40 % language teaching – 60 % culture teaching	1	1 %
100 % integration of language-and-culture teaching	4	5 %

The questions in the third section concern students' various aspects of their learning of foreign languages. Most foreign language teachers (67) selected as the first priority «My students are very motivated to learn the foreign language I teach», second most important priority was «My students think learning the foreign language I teach is very difficult», a priority that gained the least number of support was

«My students have a very positive attitude towards the people associated with the foreign language I teach».

The essential questions in the third section was «How frequently do you think your students are in contact with the foreign country primarily associated with the language you teach most hours?». Most foreign language teachers (54) selected as the first priority «Use the Internet to learn more about the foreign country», as the second «Travel to the foreign country (holiday with family)», than «Watch one of the country's television channels», a priority that gained the least number of positive answers was «Read literature written by authors living in the foreign country or originating from the foreign country».

The questions in the fourth section concern foreign language teachers' familiarity with the foreign culture(s) associated with the foreign language they teach. As teachers are expected to help their students to gain intercultural competence, they need a thorough understanding of the target language culture(s). Thus, to gain insights about teachers' knowledge on target language culture(s), the respondents were asked how much they know about the history, geography, political system, daily lives and routines, living conditions, food and drink, youth culture, education, traditions, literature, music, politics of the target language culture(s) as well as international relations (political, economic and cultural life). Teachers indicated how familiar they were with each aspect on a 4 point Likert scale ranging from «Very familiar» to «Sufficiently», than «Not sufficiently» and finally «Not familiar at all». The analysis of the results revealed that teachers had some knowledge about the above mentioned characteristics of foreign cultures.

The analysis of the mean scores revealed that the teachers asserted they had certain knowledge of foreign cultures, the standard deviation (SD) = 0.39.

Also teachers were asked to indicate how frequently they get connect with the foreign culture on a 3 point Likert scale; «Often» (3 points), «Once in a while» (2 points), «Never» (1 point). All teachers had contacts with the target language culture in Ukraine, seldom abroad.

The fifth section of the questionnaire *concerned* teachers' classroom applications. Teachers were given examples of practices related to culture teaching and asked to indicate to what extent they were applying in their classrooms. The respondents were given kind(s) of culture teaching activities they practice during classroom and asked to assess the level of frequency on a 3 point Likert scale: (3=often, 2=sometimes, 1=never). Teachers indicated positive attitude to CD-ROMs, videos, the Internet as illustration of some aspects of the foreign culture, they are also pleased to share the information they have heard about the country, culture, and the traditions of a foreign culture. The following activities were the least approved: inviting a person originating from the foreign country to the classroom; participating in role-play situations in which cultures meet; discussing with students about stereotypes regarding particular cultures and countries or regarding the inhabitants of particular countries.

The second part of the fifth section of the questionnaire deals with *intensive use* of some cultural aspects applying in classrooms on a 5 point Likert scale: (5=I deal with it, 4=I touch upon it, 3=I never touch upon it, 2=Extensively, 1=Once in a while). The results have shown that it is not about intensive use, but rather more a partial mention in English lessons about daily life and routines, living conditions. Most teachers, on the question of intensity of use, first realized the lack of cultural dimension in teaching activities applying in classrooms. Only 26 % submitted information about the values and beliefs of foreign culture, history, geography and political conditions. The analysis of the mean scores revealed that the teachers sometimes carried out the above mentioned practices, the standard deviation (SD) = 0.21.

The questions in the sixth section concern foreign language teaching material. Our results show that the majority of the participants do not have to follow the textbook strictly, moreover they can choose their own textbook according to some criteria (fact that additional materials come with the book (workbook, listening materials, tests, video, etc.): the layout; the price; the degree to which the textbook meets the curricular requirements; the degree to which the book is attuned to the level and the age of students; the degree of matching between the amount of materials offered and the number of hours to teach). Only 4 % of teachers do not have any selected textbooks to follow or they prepare the materials themselves. Moreover, most English teachers tend to use additional materials like videos, the internet. There is no doubt that these materials help them to motivate the students, respond to their need for authenticity and break the monotony of the classroom, providing the students with up-to-date material. Thus, many teachers reported that they were not satisfied with the cultural component of their textbooks.

The questions in the seventh section concern exchange programs and participation in international exchange projects. All respondents believed that exchange projects have a positive effect on the attitudes and perceptions of students regarding foreign countries, foreign cultures and foreign people. But unfortunately English teachers and their students are not involved in the exchange programs at the moment. The questions from this section have led teachers to find the exchange programs for both, them and their students, which we consider to be a positive result.

The questions in this eighth section concern intercultural activities and projects, other than exchange projects. The respondents believed these activities have a positive effect on the attitudes of students regarding foreign cultures and foreign people and they have expressed a tremendous desire to organize cross-curricular, intercultural or multicultural activities within their schools.

The final ninth section deals with intercultural foreign language teaching and is a series of statements, ranging from «I agree completely – Agree to a certain extent – Undecided – Disagree to a certain extent – Disagree completely» on a 5 point Likert scale. Statements were as follows: «In a foreign language classroom, teaching culture is as important as teaching the foreign language», «Intercultural education is best undertaken cross-curricular», «Foreign language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity», «I would like to provide ad-

ditional cultural information on other cultures and peoples» etc. The analysis of the results shows a positive attitude of teachers to the intercultural foreign language teaching in the education of a foreign language. The analysis of the mean scores revealed that the teachers have a positive attitude to the intercultural foreign language teaching, the standard deviation (SD) = 0.41.

Having worked out all nine sections of the questionnaire and analyzed the answers of the teachers of English, we came to the conclusion that 61.5 % of participants (48 teachers) represent the profile of «a favourably disposed teacher» (group A), 38.5 % of participants (30 teachers) represent the profile of «the unfavourably disposed teacher» (group B).

We used Student's t-test to know whether variables were normal. Group A – 61.5 % ± 5.5 %; group B – 38.5 % ± 5.5 %, the probability factor t equals 3.07 ($p < 0,01$). Thus the difference between group A and B was significant, the obtained indicator is reliable.

Discussion

After analyzing the results in the current study we feel that participants lack the appropriate knowledge and skills to successfully teach culture. Some of them also express criticism towards language teacher education and teaching materials, which, in their opinion, does not pay enough attention to this dimension of teaching culture. This mismatch of the results obtained with the envisaged profile of the foreign language competent teacher, is not surprising in modern Ukrainian educational system regarding teachers' working conditions. However, in view of the fact that the objective of language learning is no longer defined in terms of the acquisition of communicative competence in a foreign language, rather, it is defined in terms of the intercultural competence (Council of Europe, 2001), the recommendation to teach intercultural competence has been around the world since at least the 1980s, it is somewhat surprising why teachers primarily display a «foreign language teacher profile» or a «foreign language-and-culture teacher» profile instead of the expected «foreign language and intercultural competence teacher» profile. Can it be explained by its inappropriate curriculum and the lack of professional literature? Can it be explained by the very fact that previous educational programs have failed to prepare today's teachers' intercultural competence teaching? Or maybe textbooks are not appropriately equipped, taking into account intercultural approaches? While the research illustrates the importance of including intercultural competence and culture in foreign language classrooms, concrete approaches are lacking today.

Conclusions

The research confirmed the hypothesis of availability of two clearly distinct teachers' profiles regarding the integration of intercultural competence in foreign language education – group A «favourably disposed foreign language teachers» predominates by one fourth the group B «the favourably disposed foreign language teachers». Each group can be identified by means of a number of characteristics. Group B believed that it is impossible to integrate language and culture teaching. Teachers also believe that intercultural skills cannot be acquired at school. Even they

see a negative effect – intercultural competence teaching reinforces pupils' already existing stereotypes. In addition, these teachers believe that it is only when there are ethnic minority community children in one's classes that one should teach intercultural competence. Group A, by contrast, believed that teaching culture is as important as teaching the foreign language, and that it is possible to integrate both. In their opinion, intercultural competence teaching makes pupils more tolerant. These teachers prefer an approach that is cross-curricular and are convinced that teachers of every subject should teach intercultural competence, not only foreign language teachers. Also 5 % of group A can even be called as «foreign language-and-culture teachers», since along with focusing primarily on the acquisition of communicative competence in a foreign language; they also teach culture to enhance their pupils' familiarity with the foreign culture.

The findings also indicate that the majority of participants (62 %) are moving towards becoming interculturally competent teachers, although at present their profile does not meet all expectations regarding knowledge, skills and attitudes that had been put towards the desirable profile of «a foreign language-and-culture teacher» or a profile of the expected «foreign language and intercultural competence teacher». Moreover, according to Table 1 at present 74 % of all participants distributed less than 20 % of teaching time on culture teaching in language teaching classroom. And here is the question of the ratio of self-perception of a teacher as a representative of group A and the time he/she spends in a language teaching classroom on a cultural component?

The findings of the present study were consistent with those of Sercu et al. (2005), Atay et al. (2009) and Nemati et al. (2014). Similar to Turkish, Iranian teachers, as well as Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Belgian teachers defined the objectives of foreign language above all in terms of the acquisition of the ability to use the foreign language for practical purposes. Similarly, school teachers prioritized language teaching objectives over culture teaching objectives. Regarding the objectives of culture teaching, Ukrainian teachers supported the skills like helping students gain knowledge and skills necessary for life in general, favored the development of openness and tolerance and defined culture teaching more in terms of passing on knowledge than providing intercultural skills.

This study leads us to a number of recommendations regarding what can be done at different levels. Education programs should include a cultural aspect in their curricula, such as a course on intercultural communication, in order to equip prospective teachers with intercultural awareness and intercultural competence. Both pre- and in-service teachers can be provided with examples of how language and culture teaching can be integrated, and encouraged to explore alternative ways of culture teaching. The national guidelines could be an effective mediator in considering other factors that influence the content of intercultural competence material for foreign language classrooms.

At the level of textbooks and teaching materials, our results show that the majority of the participants do not have to follow the textbook strictly; moreover,

they also tend to use additional materials like audio and video tapes, the internet, song lyrics, maps and photographs. There is no doubt that these materials help them to motivate the students, respond to their need for authenticity and break the monotony of the classroom, providing the students with up-to-date material. Thus, many teachers reported that they were not satisfied with the cultural content of their textbooks. This highlights the need for textbook authors to carefully consider the content that promotes intercultural competence skills needed in foreign language learning.

At the teacher development level, our results show that teachers' beliefs affect their conceptions of specific teaching situations and ultimately, their teaching practice. Without teachers' awareness and understanding of the main issues in intercultural communication, the students' progress is under threat. Thus, language teachers' intercultural skills cannot develop without appropriate teacher development and teacher education comes into the role to provide and equip them with the practical and theoretical support to fulfill those responsibilities. Ukrainian foreign language teachers need professional training that can provide them with opportunities to develop their beliefs to make them more compatible with teaching intercultural competence as well as provide tools for its teaching. In order to do so, teachers should be given increased opportunities for further education in order to be able to develop professionally and keep up the standard of their teaching. Moreover, in order to change their beliefs regarding culture teaching, teachers need to be exposed to alternatives for current teaching approaches. Professional development encourages self-reflection and also reflection with ones colleagues. Therefore, collegial co-operation is necessary for teachers to develop teaching strategies that will foster intercultural competence acquisition by their pupils.

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