

**FOREIGN STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION  
COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE FRAMEWORK  
OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

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The article is devoted to the development of foreign students' communicative abilities and skills in the framework of intercultural communication. Components of communicative competence are considered. Recommendations are proposed on the ways of encouraging students to master their intercultural competence on the basis of cultural differences.

**Key words:** awareness of cultural differences, communicative competence, intercultural communication.

**Волкова А.Г. Розвиток комунікативної компетенції іноземних студентів в умовах міжкультурного спілкування.** Стаття присвячена розвитку комунікативних умінь та навичок іноземних студентів в умовах міжкультурного спілкування. Розглядаються компоненти комунікативної компетенції. Подаються рекомендації щодо опанування студентами міжкультурною компетенцією з урахуванням соціокультурних розбіжностей.

**Ключові слова:** комунікативна компетенція, міжкультурна комунікація, усвідомлення культурних розбіжностей.

**Волкова А.Г. Развитие коммуникативной компетенции иностранных студентов в условиях межкультурного общения.** Стаття посвящена развитию коммуникативных умений и навыков иностранных студентов в условиях межкультурного общения. Рассматриваются компоненты коммуникативной компетенции. Представлены рекомендации относительно овладения студентами межкультурной коммуникативной компетенцией с учетом социокультурных различий.

**Ключевые слова:** коммуникативная компетенция, межкультурная коммуникация, осознание культурных различий.

The modern world being characterized by dynamic development of intercultural contacts, students' arrival in a new country to continue their studies has become a widely spread phenomenon. Yet, such arrivals are likely to be accompanied by numerous differences in cultural values, beliefs, and traditions, which can result in a multitude of problems of various kinds. It is these facts that constitute the relevance of the given paper. The development of international students' communication skills in the time of increasing intercultural contacts is a pedagogic issue which has attracted attention of modern researchers [1; 2; 3; 4]. But in many works, a rather important aspect is missing. What we mean is obligatory taking into account the students' awareness of both similarities and differences in socio-cultural spheres of two countries.

Thus the **objective** of the given paper is to analyze the development of foreign students' communicative abilities and skills in the frameworks of intercultural communication, giving undivided attention to the role played by a set of cultural differences in shaping the way the students acquire their intercultural competence.

It is commonly accepted, that for the foreign students coming to Kharkiv, the Russian language is above all a tool of instruction. At the same time,

what matters is understanding that the language is primarily a verbal expression of the socio-cultural environment wherein students are instantly immersed. The representatives of the countries participating in joint projects related to language education and headed by the Council of Europe have been for years in active cooperation, keeping on implementing common European principles of learning, teaching, and assessment. Those who share the European cultural values are united by the common desire to improve the quality of communication among those who represent a large variety of cultures, which promotes the democratic citizenship development.

There is no doubt that communication pervades all human existence. The Common European Framework of References for languages employs the term “social agents”. First and foremost, it refers to the users of language who have to perform certain tasks in specific environment and particular sphere of activity [6: 9]. It should be noted that the same term also applies to those who are learners through a foreign language. Of course, viewing the participants of the learning process as “social agents” reflects the core principle of the action-oriented approach to learning. Within just this kind of a modern approach to language education, which was adopted by the Council of Europe and reflected in the Common European Framework of References for languages, the decisive role is assigned to the concept of “plurilinguism.” It is from the plurilinguistic point of view one believes that increase in individual linguistic experience in terms of its cultural aspects is likely to contribute to the individual’s communicative competence formation. And in doing so all language skills and experience will serve as an incorporated part of this competence wherein languages are intertwined and interact [6: 4]. Hence, the purpose of language teaching is to develop the whole multitude of language skills in conjunction with the linguistic resources, in contrast to the improvement of a single target language only. Taking the above into consideration, we concentrate on analyzing the development of communicative abilities and skills of foreign students in the process of intercultural communication.

The development of students’ multidimensional communication is affected not only by their skills and knowledge, but rather by individual identity, as well as values and motivations. It is natural that students may have different degrees of openness to new knowledge. They can also vary in being attracted by this knowledge. Thus, making the students get

interested in the discipline might be not the only problem to be solved. What also plays an important role is contribution to the overall development of the learners' interest in culture, history and traditions of the host country.

As we see it, acquiring the characteristic features of the culture whose language is being studied is carried out not exclusively during the language course classes, but also through involvement in extracurricular communication. Hence, we consider paying adequate attention to both the form and content of interaction between the teacher and students both in and beyond classes as a good recommendation for students to master their intercultural communicative competence. Besides, it can be added by thorough selection of training materials on cultural characteristics, values, rules of conduct and ethical standards of the representatives of the target language. What is more, one should take into account the individuals' roles, statuses, age, and gender identity.

It is worth comparing a variety of aspects concerning own and other cultures, which is expected to promote awareness of existing cultural differences. What might also be helpful is applying own experience and philosophical universals such as correlation of concepts "general" vs "individual", "one's own" vs "other's", as well as expressing one's own opinion on the possibility for existence of general ethical behavior in intercultural communication. The factors above are sure to promote the development of the students' communicative competence.

It is commonly known that communicative competence consists of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic components, each containing knowledge, abilities and skills. Therefore, through due linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills during the foreign students training, the students can succeed in mastering the communicative competence, which ensures the students becoming independent, modern and effective users of the other culture's language.

Linguistic competence includes phonological, lexical, and syntactic skills. Linguistic competence development takes place in the process of studying grammar and specialism language, along with training the skills of speaking and listening. What is more, seminars, discussions, and conferences contribute to the formation of socio-cultural competence.

Sociolinguistic competence is related to the socio-cultural environment wherein the language is used. Due to this very competence, the relationship is regulated among social agents belonging to a variety of social groups;

with the rules of politeness necessary for co-existence in society taken into account. In the formation of communicative proficiency an important role belongs to cultural competence as part of overall sociolinguistic competence. One knows that cultural competence is formed mainly in the course of analysis and interpretation of literary texts. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that philology students should be engaged in reading carefully selected texts. By all means this activity should be performed on a regular basis, with focus being on the detailed cultural and socio-cultural similarities and differences, as well as traditions prevailing in the students' native countries and the host country, whose language is being studied.

Practice shows that intercultural skills acquired by the foreign students regarding their new cultural environment contribute to continuous development of their intercultural competence.

Functional conditioning displays the pragmatic use of language competence. An important role for the success of communication belongs to one criterion of pragmatic competence – “cooperative principle”, which was introduced by the English language theorist P. Grice. This principle is known to be based on quantity, quality, relevance, and style as the requirements for the information and the way it should be transmitted in the process of communication [7: 46].

We share the view that “the more we learn about other cultures, the more we know about ours” [5: 10]. Throughout the training course in the frameworks of multicultural environment, foreign students engage in self-education as cross-cultural personalities.

In many cases, the intercultural identity development is seen as a crucial educational goal towards overcoming serious educational problems such as how to “reconcile” cultural relativism with ethical and moral integrity, which personality traits tend to encourage or discourage foreign language learning, how to help students to reinforce their strong points and overcome weaknesses [6: 106].

As indicated in the Common European Framework of Reference for languages, intercultural skills include the ability to lead native and foreign cultures to a common denominator, the ability to identify and use strategies for contact with other cultures, the ability to act as a cultural mediator between the native and foreign cultures in successful overcoming cross-cultural misunderstandings and conflicts, the ability to overcome related stereotypes [6: 105].

It should be pointed out that the degree of communicative competence affects the foreign student's adaptation to new conditions. Effective interpersonal interaction occurring in an environment that brings together representatives of different cultures requires the proper skills in socializing, which is currently considered as one of the world educational problems.

According to experts, social adaptation constitutes such mechanism of socialization which allows the individual to be actively involved in diverse structural elements of social environment through repeated standardized situations.

The formation of foreign language communicative competence serves as an effective means of social adaptation, which requires a set of specific adaptive problems to be worked out. [1: 65]. Care should be taken for educational environment to contribute to foreign students' preserving their cultural identification [4: 32]. The students should be protected from experiencing a sense of isolation upon arrival in the country of study. What can be a big help in this situation is close cooperation between the students-newcomers and their new teachers. At the early stage of staying in a new cultural environment it is essential for the international students to feel positive atmosphere. The latter is known to have a really magic potential for overcoming any difficulties. Students' communicative competence formation is largely encouraged by a sense of achievement which is manifested by the pleasure students receive from the process of learning.

When speaking about successful development of the students' communicative competence, we should keep paying due attention to the specificity of students' mentality. Thus, in developing the training materials and conducting classes, the instructors must know the fact that according to the Chinese mentality students do their best to control their emotions, hide the private side of life. This fact should be taken into account to avoid an unethical attitude to the culture and traditions of the Chinese people. Knowledge and consideration of linguistic traditions of a particular ethnic group can result in the improvement of the process of learning itself, making it much more appropriate and effective.

For example, the Chinese are characterized by a developed aesthetic sense, loyalty to traditions and discipline. Trying not to offend the interlocutor, they avoid expressing explicitly their disapproval or rejection. The Chinese can answer "yes", even though they do not agree with the

speaker. Avoiding the response “no,” they tend to divert their eyes during the conversation not because they are poorly educated, but because looking into the interlocutor’s eyes is considered to be a sign of an ill-mannered person in the Chinese culture. Chinese students normally do not argue with teachers. Instead, they incline to listen to them without any objection. Thus, an absolute authority of the teacher is one of those leading principles which form the basis for the pedagogical communication. Principles of cooperative pedagogy is not entirely clear for the Chinese. Typically, they do not take the initiative, nor show creativity. They are passive in the absence of clear instructions and feel the need for clear-cut instructions [2: 20–21].

Therefore, with regard to learning in our conditions, the instructor is to involve foreign students in evaluation of the material studied. This aspect might be quite obvious in the work on identification of key words, determining the content of the text fragments based on initial sentences. In general terms, what we are talking about is applying to analysis, synthesis, generalization, proof, refutation, as well as about the development of forecasting.

Particular attention should be paid to that students should use mostly the language being studied in communication, when they are in a new socio-cultural environment. Experience with foreigners convincingly proves that a big advantage consists in the fact that a group, as a rule, is made up of students from different countries. Studying in international groups promotes more active use of the target language, which is associated with the expansion of interpersonal contacts.

To sum up, it can be concluded that for effective development of foreign students’ communicative competence as an obligatory component for the students’ adaptation, the following conditions are required: 1) taking into account ethnic cultural background of the country the student came from: peculiarities of mentality, social behavior, national pedagogic traditions; 2) creating a positive atmosphere in order to overcome the students’ isolation in the new environment and to increase their interest in the subject being learned.

Further work on this issue provides an in-depth study of foreign students’ communicative competence with a focus on the mechanisms of students’ adaptation to a new culture.

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