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Main Characteristics of Intercultural Competence

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the main characteristics of intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is an integral part of foreign language communicative competence; the development of one contributes to the development of the other. Intercultural competence is a competence of a special nature, the ability to realize, through creating a common meaning for communicants, what is happening and ultimately achieve a positive result of communication for both parties. It has no analogy with the communicative competence of a native speaker and can only be inherent in a mediator of cultures - a linguistic personality studying a foreign language.

KEYWORDS: *communication, foreign language, communicants, culture, native speaker, ability, learner, competency, knowledge, tolerant, interpretation, connection, education, level, model.*

INTRODUCTION: A high level of communication competence in a foreign language does not necessarily ensure that communicants will communicate well on an international level or that they will comprehend one another in terms of how their native cultures interact. For quite some time, the ideal that students aspired to was a native speaker, and this affected the development of foreign language communicative ability [2]. This tendency “implicitly assumes that foreign language learners should model themselves after native speakers, ignoring the importance of the learner's social identity and cultural background” [5]. The learner, however, comes to the study of a foreign language with his or her own sociocultural baggage and cultural customs.

MAIN PART: The ability to embrace another culture without losing one's own cultural identity is a prerequisite for effective cross-cultural engagement. The importance of *sociocultural and intercultural competency* is made clear in this respect by the writings of scientists like N. D. Galskova, N. I. Gez, G. V. Elizarova, etc. If you lack the abilities to correlate models and particular acts of behavior and the capacity to convey to the interlocutor, acting on an unconscious basis, the meaning of the characteristics of an intercultural act of communication, you can have all the necessary knowledge and even build correctly own and correctly decipher the behavior of another person [3].

In the late 1990s, the idea of “intercultural competence” entered the field of pedagogical and methodological science as a measure of a person's maturity in their capacity to engage in intercultural dialogue and as a key element of the new educational paradigm. Being able to establish an effective, mutually beneficial discourse with representatives of all of this world's cultures and nations is necessary for coexisting in the modern geo-economic and geo-cultural contexts.

Language plays the most significant part in this since it serves as the only means of communication and interaction between members of various linguistic-ethnic groupings. However, language proficiency is essentially meaningless without a well-formed, tolerant, multicultural worldview. As a result, it is vital to refocus pedagogical, methodological, and, most importantly, linguistic sciences towards the issue of intercultural communication, or more specifically, towards the issue of increasing students' capacity to engage in it successfully.

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Intercultural communication, according to some writers, is defined as effective communication between people from various country cultures [7, 89].

LITERATURE REVIEW: I.I. Khaleeva provided the most comprehensive description of intercultural communication: “Intercultural communication is a set of specialized processes of contact between individuals from various cultures and linguistic groups. It takes place between interaction partners who not only come from different cultural backgrounds, but who also are conscious of the fact that one is “other” and recognizes the foreignness of the other” [6, 25].

This term makes it clear that intercultural communication is a highly difficult and labor-intensive skill to acquire. Intercultural communication calls for thorough preparation.

The development of one influences the development of the other since intercultural competence is a crucial component of communicative competence in a foreign language. The ability to recognize what is happening by giving communicants a shared understanding and eventually achieving a successful communication outcome for both sides is known as intercultural competence. It cannot be compared to a native speaker’s communicative proficiency and can only be a trait of a linguistic personality who is learning a foreign language.

Gaining linguistic personality traits that will enable one to transcend the confines of one's own culture and develop the skills necessary to mediate between cultures without losing one’s own cultural identity is the aim of developing intercultural competence.

The authors of research define intercultural competence as “the ability to achieve equally successful understanding of both representatives of other cultures and communication communities, and representatives of one’s own culture” under their opinions more contemporary and sophisticated model of intercultural competence. The following elements of this skill are identified by the researchers:

- 1) understanding of patterns and communication behaviors, as well as how they are interpreted in one's own and the studied culture and language;
- 2) a basic understanding of the connections between culture and communication, including how thinking and acting depend on culturally particular elements of thinking and how these features shape cultural differences;
- 3) a collection of tactics for calming down conflict and resolving issues that crop up during communication.

The fundamental benefit of this method is the discovery of two connected components of a person's intercultural competence: their capacity to comprehend both their own culture and that of others. The formation of a link between thought and behavior, which raises intercultural ability to a more aware and cultural level, is another advantageous element. In general, their model does not suggest communication as an interchange of cultural meanings, during which comprehension and knowledge of culture occur. Instead, it focuses mostly on the behavioral component while speaking with representatives of another culture.

According to N. D. Galskova, intercultural competence has emotive, cognitive, and strategic components.

- 1) Affective - the student’s emotional and judgmental experience of intercultural engagement and its topics. The development of this component entails teaching the learner respect for the culture of the nation whose language they are learning as well as pride in their own country and culture. Additionally, this entails developing tolerance for “theirs, not like ours”.
- 2) Cognitive - the synthesis of information on the local culture, the culture of the nation where the language is being studied, as well as general information on communication and culture. This

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element is in charge of the educational process's content, which should portray both the native and other cultures. A quality English language textbook for students teach patriotic and citizens of country who are receptive to cross-cultural interaction, respectful of other cultures, and capable of accurately representing their culture.

3) Strategic- verbal, educational, and research tactics used by the learner. This element is in charge of shaping the student's learning processes, including how he learns about other cultures and how he comprehends his own, as well as the activities and texts that are available to him in the educational complex [4, 108–110].

Michael Byram, an English professor at the University of Durham, is also actively developing the idea of intercultural competence, its structure, and methods of evaluation. This approach is the foundation for a sizable number of researches on how to increase intercultural competency in Western scientific literature. The following five components make up intercultural competency, according to this model [1, 8]:

- 1) Relationships
- 2) Information
- 3) Interpretation and connection abilities
- 4) Interaction and discovery abilities
- 5) Political or cultural education that is crucial

High intercultural competence *relationships* between representatives of many cultures should be based on openness, curiosity, and a readiness to let go of prejudices about the other's and one's own culture.

The *information* includes awareness of social groups, their characteristics and practical activities in one's own country and the country of a communication partner, and about the general processes of social and personal interaction.

Interpretation and connection abilities consist of a person's ability to interpret a document or event of another culture, explain it and relate it to phenomena of their own culture.

Another aspect of intercultural competence is the *interaction and discovery abilities* to absorb new information about culture and cultural practices, as well as the ability to use knowledge, relationships, and skills in real-time communication and engagement.

The last component, *political or cultural education that is crucial awareness* of culture or political education, is the ability to examine the worldview, actions, and outcomes inherent in one's own and other cultures critically and on the basis of certain criteria.

Thus, a person with developed intercultural competence possesses the following characteristics:

- the ability to see the relationships between different cultures (both external and internal in relation to society);
- the ability to be a mediator, to interpret one culture in terms of another;
- critical and analytical understanding of one's own and other cultures;
- awareness of his own worldview and the fact that his thinking is culturally determined, rather than just the coherence of his thinking.

This concept of the construction of intercultural competence ignores two components: language knowledge and comprehension of the relationship between language and thinking. This is critical for understanding the qualities of another's and one's own culture, as well as the characteristics of the

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style of thinking of individuals who speak a specific language. Michael Biram's approach also lacks a cultural knowledge component, and it is impossible to conceive efficient communication and mutual understanding without awareness of cultural realities.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS: Intercultural communicative competence, according to Council of Europe documents on cultural cooperation, assumes the possession of ethnographic knowledge that reflects the most significant historical events, knowledge of the country's general cultural orientation, knowledge of well-known individuals, paralinguistic knowledge, which includes knowledge from non-verbal means of communication (gestures, facial expressions, pauses, intonation, and stress) and linguistic knowledge.

We can identify the following indicators of the formation of sociocultural competence: *knowledge, skills, personal qualities, and strategies* after analyzing the definitions of intercultural competence offered by various teachers and methodologists as well as their perspectives on the structure of sociocultural competence.

Knowledge is comprised of the following elements:

- language proficiency,
- cultural facts about one's own and the culture under study,
- social and personal interaction norms,
- paralinguistic communication skills,
- cultural values inherent to both one's own and the culture under study.

Skills include:

- interpreting cultural facts;
- correlating occurrences in the native and studied cultures;
- extracting and assimilation of new cultural information;
- using knowledge in real communication scenarios;
- critically assessing one's own and other cultures.

Personal characteristics include openness, curiosity, readiness to discard preconceptions, and acceptance of the target language's culture. The harmonious interaction of these components enables the development of intercultural competence.

We differentiate three stages of sociocultural competency development in learners:

1) A low level relates to a condition in which the absence of specific components compromises the integrity of the needed competence, deforms its functional structure, and degrades overall professional direction and effectiveness. This level's characteristics are as follows:

- incorrectly interpreting linguistic and cultural information;
- ethnocentrism;
- intolerance;
- negative attitude towards manifestations of another culture;
- inability to use the necessary models of behavior in intercultural communication,
- depending on the purpose and situation of communication;
- inability to expand, differentiate, and adapt.

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2) The average level is characterized by uneven development of its separate components and inadequately full construction of the integral structure of intercultural competence. A student with an average level of intercultural competence:

- does not always see the universal and specific in the represented cultures;
- can analyze, summarize, and interpret linguistic and cultural information with the assistance of a teacher;
- is occasionally unable to independently compare and contrast specific concepts in native and foreign cultures;
- displays a moderate level of tolerance for the language being studied, as well as for representations and expressions of a different culture;
- connects one's point of view unevenly with the belief system of others;
- varies based on the context and goal of communication, frequently lacks the - ability to utilize the essential behavioral models in intercultural communication;
- frequently struggles with the ability to perform a reflexive examination of intercultural interaction skills;
- does not always know how to grow, distinguish, and activate knowledge in the area of local and foreign cultures.

3) The free use of information and behavioral strategies for a suitable interpretation of the occurrences of a foreign language culture is defined as a high degree of development of intercultural competence. A person with a high level of intercultural competence:

4) A high level of development of intercultural competence is understood as the free use of knowledge and behavioral techniques for an adequate interpretation of the phenomena of a foreign language culture. A person with a high level of intercultural competence:

- knows how to compare specific concepts in native and foreign culture;
- understands the need and importance of intercultural communication;
- knows the methods of educational activities;
- knows how to give a critical assessment of the negative manifestations of carriers of another culture;
- is distinguished by a positive and active attitude, initiative and systematically purposeful participation in intercultural exchanges;
- knows how to use the necessary models of behavior in intercultural communication depending on the purpose and situation of communication;
- is able to expand, differentiate and activate knowledge in the field of native and foreign cultures;
- knows how to conduct a reflexive analysis of his activities.

CONCLUSION: In general, even when speaking the same language, communication in an international setting is rife with tensions between knowledge and ignorance. Since these conflicts can be avoided and resolved by teaching students to use and understand lexical and grammatical constructions that correspond to the norms of communicative activity of an individual from a different linguo-ethnocultural community and a different national-linguistic view of the world, this is one of the objectives of teaching intercultural communication.

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