

University Students' Intercultural Competence Development in Foreign Language Teaching by Means of Axiological Approach

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Received: December 29, 2014

Accepted: January 22, 2015

Online Published: February 11, 2015

doi:10.5539/res.v7n4p178

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/res.v7n4p178>

Abstract

The development of intercultural competence of students by means of a foreign language today is caused by a number of factors that are essential to the modern society. This modernization of the national education system, which currently includes such priorities as: provision of social mobility in society through the support of the most talented and active young people; support given to new generations to enter the globalized world through the development of young people's communicative abilities for intercultural understanding, etc. The article reveals the content of value-semantic potential of educational programs that can act as a factor of intercultural competence development of University students, which is the leading characteristic of the cultural development level of the individual and society as a whole. The results of experimental work suggest the viability of axiological approach as a principle of the implementation of educational activities aimed at developing students' certain personality traits (sense of community with others, along with their own self-determination in a multicultural environment; the desire to know people of other cultures and to establish productive relationships with them, the desire for effective implementation of the acquired knowledge and skills with the aim of understanding the world, etc.).

Keywords: inter-cultural competence, axiological approach, educational activities, university students

1. Introduction

1.1 Actualizing the Problem

One of the priorities of educational policy is a radical improvement of the system of vocational education meant to train a highly qualified staff. In this regard, the main result of the activities of educational institutions should not be a system of knowledge and skills, but a set of core competencies in various fields, where the leading position is taken by inter-cultural competence. Realization of this problem does not occur spontaneously, it is carried out in the course of a systematic, targeted training. Humanities, in particular "the foreign language", focused primarily on the formation of inter-cultural competence of future specialists who will work in the context of globalization in a multicultural environment. The content of vocational training should be, therefore, aimed at the positive changes in the training of future professionals of the humanitarian sphere, contributing to their employment and career growth.

1.2 Explore Importance of the Problem

Pedagogical understanding of axiological approach as a guiding principle of students' inter-cultural competence development led to the search of value standards in the educational process, contributing to a person's axiological potential accumulation and growth that can take place only on the basis of cultural values.

Study and analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature have shown that for the modern training of the staff in the context of inter-ethnic integration a transition is needed from formal knowledge to competency paradigm of education, and then—to opportunities necessary for the full formation of inter-cultural competence of students. The study defined the phenomenology of inter-cultural competence. Given the main aspects of axiological approach, inter-cultural competence is an integrated systematic formation of humanistic outlook, including high culture of interpersonal communication and developed cultural level; knowledge, skills, and ways of working that allow the individual to carry out activities in a modern, multicultural space; ability to show tolerance, friendliness and other positive feelings and emotions, as well as to act on the basis of valuable

self-determination in accordance with the social demands and expectations.

In this context, during the process of forming the inter-cultural competence within the academic discipline “The Foreign Language” considering professional orientation of learning in higher education, it is important to give students a clear understanding of the cultural and historical places of the country the language is spoken in; form students’ skills to evaluate the achievements of the target language culture based on knowledge of the historical context of their appearance; develop young people’s ability to master ethnic cultures of other nations in history and literature; develop students’ understanding of the role of the target language and its culture to civilization as a whole; raise the level of general culture of students; contribute to the development of intercultural competence on the basis of the development of the foundations of political and economic terminology of the language studied.

1.3 Features of Axiological Approach Implementation

Implementation of axiological approach in higher education in the context of the formation of inter-cultural competence of students in the process of learning a foreign language involves the following tasks:

- Securing linguistic, speech, educational, social and inter-cultural activities of students;
- The integration and interaction of native and target language;
- The implementation of language self-identity by incorporating up-grading environment; enriching students’ vocabulary;
- Increasing the proportion of dialogue and polylogue during solving problematic tasks;
- Creating a situation of students’ searching for sense-life orientation in the course of learning a foreign language;
- The transition from the informative to communicative and up-grading level;
- Focus on collaboration and interpersonal interaction of the subjects of educational process;
- Flexibility in the selection of means to overcome the various barriers of interpersonal interaction in multi-language space.

1.4 Status of a Problem

The problem of value orientations of the individual is analyzed in the works of Kolobeva (1997), Shikhardina (2003). In linguistics, the problem of inter-cultural communication and competence is studied in the context of identifying units that reflect the cultural identity of the language, the problems of verbal and nonverbal communication in the dialogue of cultures, language interference in the works of Elizarova (2001). In psychology, the problem is viewed from the point of view of a peculiar character of psychological development of individuals belonging to different cultures in the works of Khaleeva (1992), Arnoldov (1992). In teaching, the investigated problem is touched upon in the works of Mureeva (2001), Bulankina (2002) from the perspective of students’ foreign language competence. Various aspects of the communicative competence of the individual are discussed in the researches of Passov (2000), Sheils (1995) and others. Ideas of multicultural education have got quite a wide coverage in various educational researches. The main aims and ideas of multicultural education and upbringing are validated in the works of Dmitriev (2001), Valeeva and Panteleeva (2014). A wide range of problems of creation and functioning of culturally-congruent education was investigated by Krylova (1995). Of particular interest are studies on the principles and methods of formation of tolerant personality in national and regional conditions of Berdichevsky and Solovyov (1993), Gabdulhakov (1999) and others. The concept of the dialogue of cultures is represented in the works of Bibler (1993). The ideas of competence-based approach are studied in the works of Baydenko (2002), Zimnaya (1991), Raven (2002). Philosophical and language concepts about the social nature of language and the diversity of its functions are presented in the works of Vereshchagin (1983), Kostomarov (1994). The theory of speech activity, language competence and intercultural communication and competence are discussed in the works of Shubin (1972).

1.5 Hypothesis

Analysis of theoretical studies and practical activities in the aspect of the problem developed showed that the implementation of axiological approach to the development of inter-cultural competence of high school students by foreign language means can be successfully realized if the learning process provides the following pedagogical conditions: formation of students’ value attitude to learning a foreign language as a means of inter-cultural communication; mastery of realities of culture in the process of learning a foreign language; ethical and moral values of native speakers; filling the content of foreign language teaching with information reflecting

the cultural diversity of the world; correlation of the elements of the culture of another country with elements of one's national culture in the learning process; usage of dialogical forms of teaching in the system of multicultural education; rational combination of classroom and extracurricular students' activities in the process of learning a foreign language.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 The Tasks of the Research

In the study, the following tasks were set: 1) to clarify the structure and content characteristics of the concept "intercultural competence" in the context of the axiological approach; 2) to identify the educational and value potential of a foreign language in the development of intercultural competence of students of high school and determine the active methods of implementation of this potential in the learning process; 3) to develop and test the effectiveness of pedagogical conditions of realization of axiological approach in the development of intercultural competence of students of high school by means of foreign language in the course of experimental work.

2.2 Theoretical and Empirical Methods

To test the hypothesis there has been used a complex variety of methods, complementing each other:

- Theoretical-analysis of the literature, regulatory, legislative, instructional and teaching, working papers and materials on management and procedural studies on the issue; study and generalization of innovative teaching experience, analysis, synthesis;
- Empirical-participant observation, ascertaining and forming pedagogical experiment, survey, testing, interviews, discussions, study results of academic and extracurricular activities of students.

2.3 The Trial Infrastructure) and Stages of the Research

The trial infrastructure for the study was provided by the Institute of Language and the Institute of Management, Economics and Finance of Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University. The study was conducted in three stages.

At the first stage there was created the trial infrastructure at the Institute of Language and the Institute of Management, Economics and Finance; there were developed and implemented in the educational process the professional motivation-led curriculum and academic programs.

At the second stage there was made an analysis of professional motivation-led programs for students learning the discipline "The Foreign Language"; there was carried out a theoretical validation of the idea of using axiological approach as a guiding principle of intercultural competence of students; there was conducted experimental work on the development of intercultural competence of students in the study of a foreign language in the conditions of a common educational space of the university.

At the third stage there were developed and tested the programs; there were summarized the results of pedagogical experiment to test the effectiveness of pedagogical conditions for the development of students' intercultural competence; there were specified theoretical and experimental findings; there were carried out systematization and recording of the research materials.

2.4 Evaluation Criteria

To evaluate the effectiveness of vocational and motivational training of the students on developing their intercultural competence, there were used the following criteria:

Cognitive: the depth and stability of cultural interest level and breadth of general cultural erudition of students and their cultural awareness, holistic view of cultural worldview and culture of the people of the target language, level of cognitive activity, the need for new knowledge, ability to reason, to draw an analogy, compare and analyze.

Emotional and value: the ability of empathy, which is expressed in the understanding and empathy feelings, thoughts, expectations and aspirations of the other person, the ability to put oneself in other person's place, tolerance, awareness of the common cultural specificity of human behavior. Equally respectful tolerance of the system of values, characteristic of native and foreign language cultures, manifestations of cultural identity of representatives of other linguocultural community, freedom from prejudice and negative stereotypes of other nations.

Communicative behavior: the ability to listen and hear the other party, to master one's own techniques of active listening, showing interest and respect, constructive criticism, possession of an effective exit strategy from conflict situations, the ability to control one's emotions, manage, adjust the range of verbal and non-verbal communication, knowledge of practical skills and skills required to solve communication problems in situations

of intercultural communication in accordance with the accepted behavioral etiquette in the country the target language is spoken, the correct use of language and speech tools, possession of communicative speech quality (accuracy, richness, diversity, expressiveness).

2.5 Experimental Procedure and Its Description

Diagnosis of intercultural competence was carried out in the process of ascertaining stage of the experiment. It helped to determine its *three levels of development* of students: sufficient, medium and low.

The first level—is value oriented. The student is aware of cultural differences, is able to control his behavior adequately, considering the cultural specifics of the situation, and correctly responds to the behavior of the communication partner. Familiar with substantial depth features of other cultures, contrasting with the native culture. Understands and accepts the difference between behavior and worldview of different cultures with the absence of a pronounced positive or negative evaluation.

The second level—is acceptable. The student recognizes the existence of certain differences in behavior and perception of other cultures, however do not see the difference in their value systems. Cultural studies knowledge is not systemic in nature, it is superficial and disjointed.

The third level—is critical. The student considers the only correct values and norms, adopted in native culture and actively rejects the values and behaviors of other cultures, is not aware of the differences between cultures. His stereotypical perception of national-cultural characteristics of other people is a result of the fact that he is familiar only with the surface, eye-catching features of other cultures.

Based on the analysis of the above criteria and levels of intercultural competence diagnosis was made using the following methods: cultural studies to assess the level of knowledge according to our questionnaire; diagnosis of personal growth dynamics by D. V. Grigoryev, I. V. Kuleshova and P. V. Stepanov; ranking places of tolerance in the hierarchy of life values, the questionnaire diagnosing the capacity for empathy by A. Mehrabien and N. Epshteyn, method of diagnosis communicative settings by V. V. Boyko.

Experimental work was carried out in accordance with the curriculum in the study of the following disciplines:

- General studies: “Practical course of English”, “Country Studies”, “Linguistics”, “Translation Theory and Practice”;
- General professional disciplines: “English for professional communication”, “Professionally oriented English”, “Professional communication”;
- Specialist disciplines: “Country Studies”, “Lexicology”, “Theoretical Grammar”, “Phraseology”, “Business Letter”, “Business Correspondence”, “Business English”.

3. Results

3.1 Educational and Value Potential of a Foreign Language in the Development of Intercultural Competence of High School Students

In the process of studying general professional and specialist disciplines, the system of questionnaire has been developed and implemented, which helped to identify issues of intercultural competence of students. This questionnaire allowed to formulate the following preliminary conclusions: the majority of university students, where foreign language is a non-core subject believe that they have not developed intercultural competence, it is difficult to behave properly in situations of intercultural communication. Most students expressed a strong desire to learn foreign language, arguing that today the ability of foreign language communication is an important component of professionalism. The students showed great interest in learning to understand the other person, the ability to compromise, to develop their empathy skills; students would like to gain more knowledge about the culture of the target language peoples.

The basic components of cultural studies questionnaire were questions about the cultural heritage and social experience of the English and American peoples: classical culture, consumer culture (everyday situations), national traditions, customs and rites, peculiarities of image and lifestyle, features of the national character of native speakers, historical, geographical, political and educational space of English-speaking countries.

The first stage of experimental work has become a *value-setting*, where students set their attitudes and values, in particular the value of another person, a different culture, a different system of values. P. V. Stepanov’s questionnaire was used as diagnostic technique, where tolerance is seen as a valuable attitude of man to the people, which is expressed in the recognition, acceptance and understanding other cultures.

The course of the experiment led to the following conclusions: a) interest in the culture of people of target

language is observed in almost all the students, but it is quite shallow and requires practical reinforcement, b) students show low level of tolerance and above-average level of negative communicative setting. Correlation between the level of foreign language speech activity of students and the level of intercultural tolerance development showed, that the only criterion showing coincidence of indexes is cultural studies criterion. The experimental results showed that the development of intercultural competence requires special conditions leading to the effective development of a foreign language. Considering all these conditions, it was decided to develop methodological support in formation of intercultural competence process of students.

To assess the effectiveness of our experiment, we focused particularly on the generalized indicators of dynamics of change of the students' intercultural competence in all its components. Assessing each student at the beginning, intermediate and final phase of experimental work (EW), we have the relevant data of the dynamics of intercultural competence levels formation at the final stage of the experiment.

3.2 Solution of Primary Tasks of Didactics

The problem of intercultural competence formation, considering the educational potential of "foreign language" academic discipline supposed to take into account the specifics and scope of cultural information, subject to learn; interdisciplinary nature of foreign language in the general system of the humanities; professional orientation of foreign language teaching in high school; peculiarities of intercultural communication in a multilanguage educational space; specifics of the English language as a means of international communication. In this regard, the tasks of experiment were the following: 1) developing the skills of profound reading in order to extract useful information of cultural nature, as well as further improvement of language competence in any studied foreign language; 2) providing complete mastery of the lexical and cultural material, which included both household terminological vocabulary and set phrases and clichés of a professional nature; 3) developing of students' listening skills, so that they can understand sentences and texts aurally, understand their meaning, being able to carry out productive communication with native speakers; 4) continual organizing students' self-study process, including the creative nature (for example, the description of the national tradition and intercommunication among students on its features, and exploiting it in different situations); organizing of language workshop together with native speakers.

This organizational and pedagogical approach changed the goals of foreign language teaching, for the reason of concerning not only common language and culture of the student, but also the culture of his thinking, communication and speech.

3.3 The Procedure and Results of the Experiment

To carry out the experimental work we have formed 2 groups of students: 1 experimental group of 40 students and 1 control group, also consisting of 38 students of the Kazan Federal University.

Analysis and generalization of the results of observations and measurements of intermediate levels of intercultural competence carried out continuously during the experiment. It was done to clarify the formative stage of the pedagogical experiment program. This allowed us to make adjustments in the course of experimental work to determine the prospects for improving the development of students' intercultural competence. In the course of experimental work validation of the hypothesis of the study was carried out.

Study and generalization of experience in the development of intercultural competence of university students in the practice of foreign language teaching was based on the observation of the educational process, documentation on the analysis of the educational process, questioning, testing, psychological student surveys, personal experiences as a foreign language teacher. Thus, during the experimental work the method of observation was aimed at studying the level of the communicative-behavioral component of intercultural competence of students, during which the following skills and abilities were observed: the ability to be tolerant in uttering and asserting personal position as a point of view (I-statements and etc.); willingness to be tolerant to the statements of others (the perception of opinions and evaluations of others as an expression of their point of view, having the right to exist - regardless of the degree of divergence from their own views); the ability for "interaction of dissidence" and the ability to negotiate (coordinate positions and to achieve compromise and consensus); tolerant behavior in stressful and difficult situations (when there are differences in point of views, the collision of opinions or estimates).

The final diagnosis of all the methods discussed above showed significant positive trend (Tables 1, 2, 3).

Table 1. Dynamics of cultural studies of students' knowledge before and after experiment (in %)

Levels	High		Average		Low	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Control group	0	13	15.6	20.8	84.4	66.2
Experimental group	0	25	15	52.5	85	22.5

Table 2. Dynamics of tolerance development before and after experiment (in %)

	Control group		Experimental group	
	Before	After	Before	After
High level of tolerance	7.9	10.4	7.5	25
Low level of tolerance	13.2	39	12.5	45
Low level of intolerance	65.8	46.8	65	25
High level of intolerance	13.1	3.8	15	5

Table 3. Dynamics of the students' capacity for empathy before and after experiment (in %)

The level of empathic tendencies	Control group		Experimental group	
	before	after	before	after
High level of empathic tendencies	13.2	15.8	12.5	22.5
Medium level of empathic tendencies	26.3	31.5	25.0	50
Low level of empathic tendencies	55.2	50.1	57.5	27.5
Very low level of empathic tendencies	5.3	2.6	5	0

After experimental work measuring the dynamics of the communicative settings by V.V. Boyko showed that the average indicator using this method in the control group was 30, in the experimental group - 7.5, that means conversion from expressed negative communicative setting into a positive way in the experimental group.

The main consideration when assessing the effectiveness of our experiment, we paid to generalized indexes of the dynamics change of students' intercultural competence and in all its components. Assessing each student at the beginning, intermediate and final stage of the experiment, we obtained the following data on their distribution into three groups according to the level of development of intercultural competence in the final stage of the experiment (Figure 1):

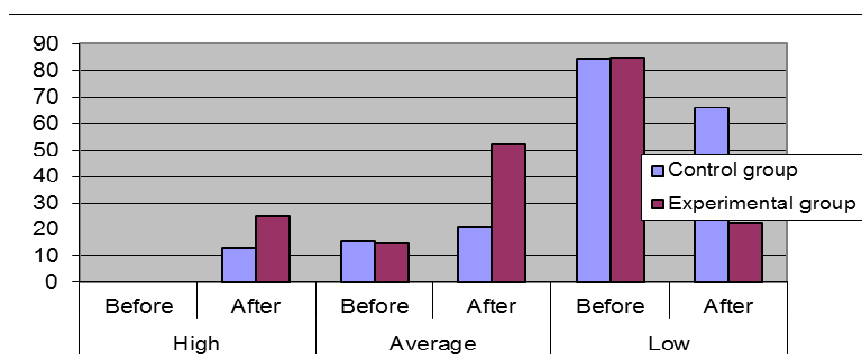


Figure 1. Changes in the level of formation of intercultural competence of students before and after experiment

Thus, according to results of the diagnosis, we observe that the dynamics of intercultural competence of students who participated in the experiment, is much higher than those of the control group. This, in our opinion, quite convincingly demonstrates the effectiveness of our implemented transformations during the experimental work of the learning process.

4. Discussions

The basic premise, which contributed to the formation of high school students' intercultural competence, is the increasing role of foreign language and its influence on the spiritual and intellectual development of young people; the formation of their professionally-oriented interests, knowing that they can link their future professional activity with profession of the group, for example, "person-person". Thus, intercultural competence as a complex of social and moral skills and abilities can help every young person not only to communicate successfully with other cultures in everyday life and in professional contexts, but also successfully personalize itself as a cultural identity.

In the experiment the comparison of the levels of formation of students' intercultural competence was carried out in both groups. The study showed a significant increase of monitored parameters of the students in the experimental group compared with the students of control group. The majority of the students in the experimental group reported a high level of development of intercultural competence. Analysis of the formation of intercultural competence of students in the experimental group allowed in time adjustment and improvement of the methods used, tools and techniques. Comparison of the development of the competence of the students of the experimental and control groups showed that the proposed model of professionally motivating students' training in the study of a foreign language is effective.

5. Conclusion

The proposed article disclosure purposes, the content and organization of learning foreign language in the formation of intercultural competence at the forefront of its outputs communicative component, which is reflected in a logical algorithm: *learning foreign language* → *learning foreign speech* → *learning foreign language speech activity* → *communication training* → *communication formation of intercultural competence*. The content of the educational component of the formation of intercultural competence of students in the discipline "Foreign Language" meets the following principles: the principle of a holistic approach (organization of educational process, when foreign-language material effect on the various senses of students) and the principle of cognitive activity (conversion of the student into an active participant and co-author of the educational process with the aim of the independent development of his speech and communication skills); corresponds to the content of training in the field of multicultural education in all its elements and at all levels of design general and disciplinary development goals of intercultural competence; the unity of its content and process of the parties; structural integrity of the content of educational-value potential of the "foreign language" discipline in the development of intercultural competence at all levels of its formation; orientation of its content for the implementation of the requirements of the qualification characteristics; compliance of the contents of formation of intercultural competence content of the main types of professional activity.

Acknowledgments

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University

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