

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE OF TEACHERS AS A CONDITION FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MODEL FOR TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POLYLOGUE OF CULTURES

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Abstract: This article describes the basic conditions for implementing the model for teaching a foreign language in the context of the polylogue of cultures. The authors put the figure of a teacher, considered as a master of pedagogical creativity both in the culturological, spiritual and moral aspects at the center of their research. Intercultural competence of the teacher includes multidimensional key elements: sociocultural literacy, extensive knowledge in linguistics, psychology, linguodidactics, interdisciplinary approaches in teaching a foreign language. Additionally, three important groups of professionally significant teacher's skills are identified and characterized. They are analytical, strategic planning and professional communication skills.

Keywords: polylogue of cultures, intercultural competence, teacher, intersubject connections, national and regional culture, professional activity.

1 Introduction

Modern multicultural language education places special demands on the teacher (Galskova et al., 2018). First of all, it is about his/her ability to learn the specifics of regional, national and universal cultures as well as acquiring both spiritual and moral foundations of life in the modern linguo-ethno-socio-cultural space of people's communicative coexistence (Prokhorov, 2017) and experience of cultural and universal understanding of the world (Kraevsky & Khutorskoy, 2007, p. 137).

Besides that, teacher's knowledge of personal and professional culture of interaction with all the subjects of educational process (students, colleagues, parents), as well as socio-cultural and intercultural communication skills, ensuring the success of social and professional, interpersonal and intercultural contacts, including foreign ones, are of particular importance.

Thus, the teacher should master all the structural elements of intercultural competence, which is a part of key social competencies, or rather, general cultural competencies, and is reflected in the content of general professional and professional competencies. Together, they determine the quality and level of professional communication of a foreign language (FL) teacher, his/her information and research culture, and the effectiveness of teaching. The latter requires to possess holistic and systemic knowledge in the field of linguistics, philology, linguoculture, development of native and foreign languages, domestic and other cultures, and sociocultural awareness.

It is possible to say that modern FL teacher is a person who is rooted in his/her own culture, understands it, speaks native language, and is aware of own universal essence, originality and national identity. However, it does not interfere with the understanding of the linguo-ethnocultural specifics of the other and other languages, perception and acceptance of the ideology promoting equivalence of languages and cultures as a norm of coexistence and mutual development in multicultural communities (Safonova, 2017) and, as a result, adequate interaction with communication partners belonging to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

From this point of view, a modern FL teacher can be called a specialist who must carry out his/her pedagogical activity at a fairly high level, while achieving consistently top results. Firstly, it is reflected in the development of students' communicative, creative and cognitive abilities, their personal characteristics, in communicating them to a FL and cultural facts characterizing the country of the language being studied, the culture of their own country and the region of their residence, creating positive

motivation for them to study both foreign and native languages and cultures. Secondly, it is revealed in educating and developing each student as a creative, independent, initiative, ethical and competent person, including the spheres of language and culture. Such requirements are updating the importance of addressing the theme of training FL teachers at a competence basis, taking into account the influence of modern intercultural and linguocultural factors on this process.

2 Literature Review

Currently, many researchers (Rosa & Matos, 2016) consider linguistic and cultural diversity as one of the most valuable elements of the world, European and Russian cultural heritage and as a philosophy of intercultural social, scientific and educational interaction in any multicultural and multilingual space (Popov & Chigisheva, 2015; Chigisheva, 2015a; Chigisheva, 2015b). In the political sphere, the fact that the diversity of language communities and cultures, being an invaluable unique heritage, should turn in the future from the factor that impedes dialogue between the representatives of different cultures, into a means of mutual understanding and enrichment is also becoming increasingly recognized (Galskova & Gez, 2005; Strielkowski & Chigisheva, 2019).

It indicates that multicultural and multilingual landscape of any country creates a fruitful basis for the development of multilingualism of the individual; strengthening of cross-country contacts and internationalization processes designates an urgent need to familiarize students with a foreign language and, accordingly, to improve those approaches and methods that are actively used today in linguacultural education (Han, 2019; Galskova et al., 2019; Soltovets et al., 2019).

Modern linguistic and cultural education is based on the ideas of competency-based approach, which has received a wide discussion in the pedagogical discourse both in Russia and abroad. The issues of construction and practical implementation of competency-based teacher education (Wu, 2018) and different tools used for these purposes (Horn et al., 2018), as well as the possibility for the formation of various kinds of competencies, for example, professional (Kravchenko et al., 2018), creative (Sydykova, 2018), intercultural communicative competence (Rojas, 2020) and many others are widely discussed.

Intercultural communicative competence has an important goal-oriented value in teaching a foreign language (Chiocca, 2020), undergoes constant reconceptualization in the face of various multinational changes (Fantini, 2020) and affects the success of employment in the future. Despite the fact that a lot of research is devoted to the consideration of certain aspects of strategies for assessing intercultural communicative competence (Fantini, 2012) and the study of intercultural sensitivity (Nameni & Dowlatabadi, 2019), this theme has not been exhausted and takes completely new shades when considered in relation to FL teacher implementing a model of teaching a foreign language in the context of a polylogue of cultures. It is obvious that success of his/her work directly depends on the knowledge, general and professionally significant skills, competencies, which allow to model the educational process on the basis of competency-based approach and holistic systemic approach to education in the field of foreign languages and the culture of their native speakers.

3 Research Methodological Framework

The purpose of this study is a theoretical justification of the idea that teacher's possession of intercultural competence is a priority condition for effective implementation of the modern model of teaching a foreign language in the context of polylogue of cultures.

The following range of tasks was identified to achieve the chosen purpose:

- to reveal the basis underlying the professionalism of a foreign language teacher;
- to show the role of a foreign language teacher in shaping modern interculturally educated person;
- to characterize the phenomenon of “intercultural communicative competence” and demonstrate its impact on the professional activities of a foreign language teacher in the multilingual and multicultural world.

To solve the posed tasks, we used mostly theoretical research methods such as analysis, abstraction, comparison, synthesis, systematization of theoretical findings.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Professionalism of a Foreign Language Teacher

It is known that professionalism of a foreign language teacher is a synthesis of a variety of personal qualities, social, special, psychological, pedagogical, linguodidactic and methodological competencies, which allow to effectively use the entire system of tools and resources in such activity areas as information and communication, social and labor, personal self-improvement, communicative, managerial, teaching, psychological and pedagogical.

So, in the information and communication field, it is important for the teacher to be able to independently search, analyze, select and methodically interpret the information necessary for the lesson and extracurricular activities from the textbook, using various sources for this purpose, including information and communication technologies. At the same time, he/she should be able to stimulate students in the preparation of projects, messages and other tasks to search for the necessary information in a foreign language by means of traditional and digital resources for this purpose, to provide them with assistance, if necessary.

In the social and labor field, the ability of a teacher to master the norms, methods and means of social interaction in the teaching staff and students, positively perceive pedagogical reality and criticism is recognized as significant. FL teacher is required to be able to work and interact with the teaching staff, to show empathy and tolerance towards colleagues, especially in conflict situations, to be initiative, active and independent in solving professional problems, while demonstrating interest and responsibility in teaching.

The sphere of personal self-improvement makes special demands on the teacher's ability to be aware of “I-image” of the teacher, his/her social and personal position in the perception of pedagogical reality and social role of the student's mentor, moderator, assistant, and technologist. It is important for him/her to be able to critically evaluate own development, actions, professional capabilities and improve them, exercise reflection and self-reflection of all types over his/her pedagogical activity.

In the field of communicative activity, the teacher needs to carry out adequate verbal communication, including the one in a foreign language, to hear and listen to communication partners, effectively communicate bearing in mind specific goals, including educational ones. It is also important to organize educational and authentic communication in the language being studied in the class, group or after school. In the field of management, the FL teacher should know how to plan and organize pedagogical activities, educational work in a foreign language, taking into account real educational environment and educational stage, interests, needs, abilities and opportunities of students, rationally combining the most effective forms and methods of their work with the educational content and organizing their creative, research and project activities within FL learning process.

In the field of teaching a foreign language (actually a methodological field), a teacher is required to design, conduct,

analyze and evaluate various types of modern lessons and extracurricular activities in a foreign language, examine and probably use all the components of teaching materials, including computer ones, prepare/select additional learning tools and interactive forms of students' work at the lesson, taking into account specific educational conditions and real capabilities of each of them, their language level.

And finally, psychological and pedagogical sphere. Here the teacher should be able to assess adequately the student's personality from the psychological and pedagogical position, to identify the features of educational and communicative-cognitive motivation, cognitive and linguistic abilities. Based on the knowledge in the field of psychology and pedagogy, FL teacher is required to practically organize the process of learning a foreign language by the student at school taking into account his/her individual characteristics, interests and needs.

At the same time, the ability to create a favorable psychological climate within the educational process, both in the classroom and outside it, facilitates foreign language communication of students and, at the same time, manifestation of individual capabilities by each of them. The teacher is urged to unite students using knowledge about the psychology of the collective, offering them personal, socially significant, interesting research, project and communicative activities in the language being studied.

4.2 The Role of a Foreign Language Teacher in the Formation of Interculturally Educated Person

As it was mentioned before, up-to-date linguo-ethno-socio-cultural space of communicative coexistence of people poses a new challenge for the teacher, connected not only with the communicative development of students, but also with the enhancement of personal qualities and properties of the interculturally educated person able to:

- a) communicate, maintaining the national identity, including the studied non-native language(s) (at a certain level) as part of a dialogue/polylogue of cultures with the representatives of other linguistic cultures;
- b) to successfully fulfill the need for understanding other cultures of the multicultural educational environment when comprehending their mutual influence, searching for information, necessary for these purposes, and its interpretation.

Therefore, the main goal of the professional activity of the FL teacher in a modern multicultural school should be creating conditions for upbringing and development of each student as an ethical and interculturally competent person. It is possible to do only if a teacher is capable of:

- carrying out targeted multicultural development and upbringing of schoolchildren, introducing them to different linguistic cultures: the language and culture of the country of the studied language and own country, and, if necessary, other ethnic and regional cultures, etc.;
- creating favorable conditions for the spiritual and moral education and development of each schoolchild as an interculturally competent person by means of the taught discipline.

The basis of this ability is constructed by his/her personal qualities and properties such as: self-awareness and understanding (acceptance) of schoolchildren as multicultural subjects in their native environment with a multi-group affiliation (ethnic, social, religious, etc.), readiness for active action against linguistic and cultural aggression, cultural vandalism and cultural discrimination, as well as a positive, empathic attitude towards the student, the ability to empathize and be intellectually and emotionally involved.

Up-to-date FL teacher should be able to put himself/herself in the place of others, express empathy for the representatives of

other linguistic cultures. In general, it is important for him/her to be able to see the multicultural "landscape" of the surrounding social space and perceive the diversity of languages and cultures as the norm of human life in the modern multicultural world and multicultural educational space. FL teacher should be characterized by sociocultural observation (Sysoev, 2014) and openness, as well as the understanding that every culture and every language has a right to exist and can only be evaluated from the standpoint of own values and norms.

Herewith, the teacher should take the initiative in establishing and supporting intercultural contact in the context of the linguocultural polylogue. But most importantly, he/she must possess a professional level of foreign language acquisition in the situations of interpersonal and intercultural communication and the ability to create a favorable foreign language communication space in the educational process, stimulating students to master the language as a means of communication and its practical use, as well as to the cognition of the people's culture - its bearers and comprehension of the original culture.

4.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence as a Basis for the Professional Activity of a Foreign Language Teacher

Since the central place in the structure of the professional activity of a FL teacher is given to teaching, the following three groups of professionally significant skills are included into his/her intercultural competence: analytical, strategic planning and professional communication skills

The group of analytical skills is associated with the ability to carry out (self) observation, (self) analysis, (self) assessment of both educational environment and linguo-ethno-sociocultural communicative space of students' coexistence in a group/class/school, the type of their interaction with each other, the nature of their interaction with students, the ability to provide favorable conditions in the classroom for them to master the language and culture, increase their motivation, as well as socio-ethnocultural content of textbooks and other educational means, i.e. electronic, linguistic and speech materials in terms of their sociocultural load, similarities and differences of different cultures from the standpoint of their own knowledge and ideas about the mentality of their native linguo-ethnosocium.

The skills of (self) analysis are designed to allow the teacher to choose effective teaching and evaluative techniques and technologies, navigate in the virtual space for interaction with foreign and domestic colleagues and select the necessary information about the specifics of their linguosocium and characteristics of foreign cultures, predict the possibilities of their use in a specific educational, linguistic and cultural context, evaluate them from the point of the main provisions of multicultural language education, select a regional and national component in the content for teaching FL which is adequate to the aims and objectives of the lesson or event. In turn, the ability of FL teacher to evaluate various intercultural aspects in the activities of both colleagues and own ones, starting from preparing and constructing a lesson and ending with its conduct and the results obtained, is an important condition for the effectiveness of teaching.

The second group consists of strategic-planning skills, which include the ability to plan a system of lessons, develop a scenario for the individual lesson or event, and also design educational multi-purpose tasks and materials. From the point of multicultural linguistic education, the following skills occupy a special place in the system of strategic-planning skills:

- 1) to go beyond the narrow geographic information about countries, peoples and their cultures and provide the conditions for students to perceive and understand the multicultural picture of the world around them (class/school, family, region, society) and their multicultural development;
- 2) to reflect the multicultural aspect in the component composition of FL training content and the content of each specific lesson or extracurricular activity.

So, the skills of the second group presuppose not only a professional, but also largely creative aspect in the teacher's activity, since when planning his/her training activities it is important to take into account national, regional, linguistic and cultural specifics of the teaching material, correlate it with the nature and characteristics of the study group etc.

The third group of skills - professional communication skills - provides the implementation of various components of the lesson/event. These skills include information and explanatory skills, verbal communication skills and organization of interaction, including intercultural skills, in the system "teacher-student" and "student-group" systems, and assessment and correctional skills. Altogether, they provide verbal communication and interaction of the teacher with students and the study group within the educational process, i.e. the so-called verbal pedagogical communication.

It is based on the interconnected listening skills (to listen and hear the student), as well as speaking and writing (to carry out educational foreign language speech activity) skills. So, for example, in the field of listening - this is the ability to identify subtle intercultural differences in a sounding speech, to determine the linguocultural degree of audio texts' difficulty. And in the field of reading and listening - the ability to identify culturally significant information in a text, to understand contextually determined foreign cultural information.

With regard to speaking, the ability to perform oral speech activities in accordance with the cultural norms of a particular linguosocium, explain culturally significant similarities (if any) and differences in the use of words and linguistic models in the native and studied languages to students, create educational and speech situation that motivate communication in a multicultural group have a great significance.

And, finally, written language, the possession of which requires the teacher to be able to give examples illustrating subtle intercultural differences between the words and concepts of the mother tongue and the language being studied, correct inaccuracies of stylistic and cultural nature. In turn, assessment and correctional skills are associated with the identification of language and speech errors, violation of cultural norms, assessment and correction of the semantic side of students' speech.

The above-mentioned skills, along with others, constitute the backbone of the FL teacher's intercultural communicative competence, allowing him/her to successfully perceive the facts of culture, select them, interpret, evaluate and compare with the facts of his/her native culture, reveal the meanings of the concepts and speech and non-speech actions in the situation of intercultural communication, dynamically act in the intercultural situation using FL, realizing mediating skills of a mediator between one's own culture and the culture of a communication partner.

5 Conclusion

Modern FL teacher must embody the "image of the intercultural person" capable of cultural self-determination and decision-making in the problematic situations of intercultural interaction, free choice of own life scenarios, sincere and open behavior in relation to oneself and others. But, besides that, the targeted and substantive aspects of multicultural language education and the features of modern multicultural educational environment, that were discussed above, introduce new aspects into the FL teacher's professional activity: he/she becomes a creator of the conditions for the development of the interculturally educated personality of a student in a multicultural school.

To this end, FL teacher must stimulate active cognitive activity of the student, influence not only the communicative, but also the cognitive and emotional-value spheres of his/her personality, and create the conditions for practical application of acquired knowledge, skills and abilities, realizing in what way and how

they can be used, including the situations of interpersonal and intercultural interaction.

In these conditions, schoolchildren should have a chance to work together, in cooperation, solving various personally significant problems within the framework of the dialogue/polylogue of linguistic cultures and having free access to the necessary cultural information in order to use it in their own statements and projects. In turn, the task of the FL teacher is to help schoolchildren in mastering their ways of learning the facts of another culture, comparing them with the facts of their native culture, interpreting them, and independently searching for regional and other information.

Thus, a FL school teacher ensures the development of interculturally educated student (within certain limits), using the entire arsenal of his/her professional skills and competencies. He/she initiates a situation of foreign language communication and interaction among students in a group, provides support to students in learning activities and in their development of the ways to study FL and facts from a different cultural background, creates the conditions for the cultural self-determination of each student in multicultural and multilingual real and virtual spaces.

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Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AI, AM