

ENHANCING CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE OF STUDENTS UNDER CONDITIONS OF LIMITED SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: The article examines topical issues of modern higher education in the context of a competence-based approach in cross-cultural education. Author analyzes and proposes the possibilities of forming cross-cultural competence of students in the context of intercultural communication on the basis of pedagogical technologies of personality-oriented adult learning – the Kolb cycle. The maximum involvement of personal experience, in a theoretical framework and on the basis of a cyclical approach, which implies an increase in the efficiency of reflection at each new cycle, is aimed at mastering by students the verbal and non-verbal models of behavior adopted in a different linguocultural community, students' awareness of the national-specific features of the perception of the world by foreign representatives, the formation of the appropriate flexible skills of cross-cultural communication, which in general leads to the formation of intercultural competence.

Keywords: Action learning, Cross-cultural competence, Kolb cycle, Limited-social communication, Practice.

1 Introduction

As a result of the rapid development of intercultural communication and global transformations taking place in the world since the late 90s, there is a need to form a personality with a new set of qualities and competencies that are urgently needed for rational functioning in a multicultural world. Today, it is no longer enough to be just a specialist who knows what he is doing to successfully fulfill his professional duties. Knowledge and understanding of other cultures are also necessary for the successful solution of the tasks. This knowledge will help keep track of new achievements, developments in the world, participate in international symposia, conferences, establish friendly relations, work in transnational teams. One of the fundamental directions of professional training of students of a non-linguistic university is the formation of intercultural competence, the integral quality of the personality of a future specialist in the field of intercultural communication [5].

Intercultural competence is determined by the level of intercultural knowledge, the ability to act as a mediator between representatives of one's own and foreign-language cultures, to determine the reasons for the violation of intercultural communication and to effectively eliminate misunderstandings and conflict situations caused by intercultural differences on the basis of emotional and value relationships. It is equally important not only to know one or another language, to understand spoken and written speech, to express one's thoughts in a foreign language, but also to be able to establish contact with carriers of a different culture, to reach mutual understanding with foreign colleagues working in the same field, but representing another society. In this, mastering the skills of intercultural communication and the ability to successfully apply them in practice can help.

At the same time, there is a lack of theoretical developments in this area [2]. Pedagogical conditions, means, methods for the development of intercultural competence, taking into account

modern requirements when teaching students in extracurricular activities are insufficiently developed. At the socio-pedagogical level, there is an urgent need to increase the level of students' proficiency in a cross-cultural knowledge and the search for effective means of developing intercultural competence. This indicates the relevance of research on this topic.

2 Literature Review

Intercultural communicative competence can be represented as an idealized conceptual model. The basis for the construction of the conceptual model was the theory of the integral social and professional competence of a specialist, offered by Chiu et al. (2013), in which the competencies of cooperation and communication with representatives of native and other cultures are included in the social block of competencies. The proposed conceptual model of intercultural communicative competence is an integrative entity, consisting of a subset of competencies [14].

To develop a method for the formation of intercultural competence, it is important to determine its structure, which most often includes cognitive (knowledge about the culture of the country of the target language); affective (interested attitude to the culture of the country of the target language, openness and readiness to enter into intercultural interaction); strategic (the ability to correctly interpret the information received in the process of intercultural communication, see the general and the different, critically assess the interlocutor from the standpoint of his system of values, as well as the verbal, educational and research methods of the student's activity) components [8, 10].

It should be noted that, speaking about the affective component of intercultural competence, it should be noted that, in the process of intercultural interaction, there are various types of it, ranging from alienation and isolation in one's own cultural environment, to assimilation, i.e., rejection of own traditions and complete and unconditional assimilation of the values of a different cultural environment [1]. Avoiding extremes in resolving the issue of intercultural interaction, and following the logic of the development of the world trend towards internationalization in the interaction of cultures, one should be guided by the following philosophical principle: the development of universal human content in each national culture while maintaining the forms and ways of expressing this content traditional for each people [4]. The most productive way of intercultural interaction at the present stage is the "dialogue of cultures". "The attitude of culture to culture as to equal rights, equal for all its differences and interesting, necessary, desired precisely in its dissimilarity, in its uniqueness," researchers call the "dialogue of cultures" [48, p. 36].

In connection with the multicomponent nature of the concept of "intercultural competence", the question arises about the effective way of its formation among university students in conditions of limited social communication with representatives of other cultures [3, 6]. Accordingly, the construction of the educational process requires special attention in order to ensure the maximum coverage of all the necessary components of intercultural competence.

Speaking about intercultural communicative competence, it should be noted that competence is a personal characteristic that has its own psychological foundation, while communicative competence is a complex system of skills and abilities that ensure the productive application of knowledge necessary for intercultural communication.

Mukharlyamova et al. (2018) distinguish the following main features of intercultural competence [42]:

- Openness to knowledge of a foreign culture and perception of psychological, social, and other intercultural differences [15, 18, 22];

- Psychological disposition to cooperate with representatives of another culture;
- The ability to distinguish between the collective and the individual in the communicative behavior of representatives of other cultures;
- The ability to overcome social, ethnic, and cultural stereotypes [45, 46, 49];
- Possession of a set of communication tools and their correct choice depending on the communication situation;
- Compliance with etiquette rules in the communication process.

It should be borne in mind that intercultural communicative competence presupposes the obligatory presence of a wide range of socio-cultural knowledge that provides a positive attitude towards the language and culture of other peoples, awareness of the values of one's own and another culture, the similarities and differences between them, as well as the ability of participants to effectively engage in the dialogue of cultures. Participants in intercultural communication need to have communication skills, as well as language competence skills, the most important part of which is speech literacy.

In the scientific literature, it is noted that intercultural competence is based on knowledge and skills, the ability to carry out intercultural communication by creating a common meaning for the communicants of what is happening and to achieve a result of communication that is positive for both parties [47]. It is also defined as a set of knowledge, skills and abilities with the help of which an individual can successfully communicate with representatives of other cultures, both at the ordinary and at the professional level [48], a complex phenomenon formed by humanistic values, positive ethnic self-identification and tolerance of the individual, the system knowledge in the field of cultures and their interaction [39].

The formation of intercultural communicative competence is based on building a tolerant attitude and ethnocentrism, recognizing the presence and overcoming ethnocentrism and ethno-stereotypes. When building intercultural communication, it is necessary to remember that the most successful strategy for achieving intercultural competence is integration the preservation of one's own cultural identity along with mastering the culture of other peoples.

In the formation of intercultural competence, different authors speak in favor of using different models. For example, Zhao et al. (2012) offer a model of the formation of intercultural communicative competence for universities of a non-philological profile, consisting of two interrelated stages, which they conventionally call "inculturation" and "acculturation" [58].

According to Zhao et al., the concept of "inculturation" implies the development of an individual's understanding of the world and behavior inherent in any culture, as a result of which his cognitive, emotional, and behavioral similarity with representatives of this culture and difference from representatives of other cultures is formed; while the term "acculturation" is used to denote the process and result of the mutual influence of different cultures, in which all or part of the representatives of one culture adopt the norms, values, and traditions of another [11, 12]. The technological component of the model for the formation of intercultural communicative competence, according to Zhao et al., is based on the problematic approach and the problem-dialogical method as a means that develops the personality of the student [58].

The role of the Internet as an educational environment in the formation of intercultural communicative competence should be especially noted. A modern teacher cannot but introduce into the educational process the latest achievements of information and communication technologies, such as e-mail, Skype, blogs, social networks, etc. Communication with peers from other countries helps to expand horizons and form intercultural communicative competence. At the same time, it is very important to pay attention not only to the exchange of simple

information, but also to adequate discussion, analysis and reflection on various problems of our time in a foreign language.

In the process of forming intercultural communicative competence using the Internet, teachers teach students to respond to information and messages in writing and orally, expressing their thoughts correctly and competently; critically and respectfully evaluate the material, defend own point of view; use self-education and work independently [27, 36, 42].

The ultimate goal of cross-cultural learning is to navigate freely in a foreign language environment, and this is greatly facilitated by interactive teaching methods. The fundamentals of the methodology for organizing interactive learning include the following provisions [51]:

- Finding a problematic formulation of the topic of the lesson;
- Organization of an educational space conducive to dialogue;
- Motivational readiness of students and teachers for joint efforts in the learning process [53-55].;
- The creation of special situations that encourage students to integrate efforts to solve the problem;
- Development and adoption of rules for educational cooperation for students and teachers;
- The use of "supportive" communication techniques (benevolent intonation, the ability to ask constructive questions, etc.);
- Optimization of the system for evaluating the process and the result of joint activities [56, 57];
- Development of group and interpersonal skills of analysis and introspection [58].

It should be noted that along with intercultural communicative competence, such subcompetencies are formed as linguistic, debates, socio-cultural, social and self-educational. Each participant in international contacts quickly realizes that knowledge of a foreign language is not enough for full-fledged intercultural understanding knowledge of the whole complex of forms of behavior, psychology, culture, and history of their communication partners is required [47]. Finally, knowledge of the mechanism of the communication process itself is required in order to predict the possibility of misunderstanding of communication partners. Language is effective, but not the only tool for human communication. As a rule, feelings, moods, and experiences are transmitted by means of non-verbal communication, which also needs to be taught to future specialists. One must not forget about paraverbal means of communication, such as intonation, facial expressions, gestures, etc.

Thus, an important task of modern higher institutions is to create favorable conditions for the formation of intercultural competence of future specialists and the use of modern computer information technologies in full, in frames of paradigm of the learning process in a globalized environment.

3 Materials and Methods

From the standpoint of a culturological approach, the main goal of modern education is proclaimed the upbringing of a "person of culture" [20], and the content of education is focused, firstly, on universal human values that form the basis of any culture, secondly, on national cultural values, and thirdly, dialogue as the most important way of existence and interaction of cultures.

For the purposes of this study, it seems expedient to develop a model of the process of forming the intercultural competence of students (especially, in non-linguistic specialties) in conditions of limited social communication, including three stages: content, value-target, and productive-evaluative.

The content (substantive) stage is focused on the formation of students' ideas about the information space of intercultural communication, knowledge of the characteristics of different cultures, their traditions, customs, cultural values, the

development of the ability to integrate national spirituality into another culture through a foreign language; provides an understanding of differences in ethical requirements for communication, rules of conduct, lifestyle; stimulates the development of students' abilities to critically comprehend the information received and build it into their own picture of the world; makes it possible to get ideas not only about language and culture, but also about the very process of intercultural communication.

The result of the content stage is the understanding of the possibilities of intercultural communication by future specialists, their comprehension of the need to exchange between communicants of various kinds of knowledge, information, messages, opinions, ideas, solutions to achieve professional practical goals, as well as for the process of professional communication; the ability to respectfully and tolerantly perceive cultural differences, take care of cultural values, build an equivalent conflict-free intercultural interaction.

The means of the content stage are pedagogical situations based on media texts, intercultural and communicative tasks, dialogical means (discussions, dialogues, projective interviews, testing, questionnaires, interviews) that contribute to the development of students' ideas about the ways of building interpersonal relationships, entering the information space of intercultural communication in native and foreign languages.

The value-target stage is focused on fostering in students a special attitude towards the interlocutor and the process of professional communication; it forms an understanding of the importance of emotional accompaniment of communication, dialogue of cultures; contributes to the development of a tolerant attitude towards cultural differences, a value attitude towards the community of native mentality and national traditions. It implies the development of empathy for a foreign cultural personality, the ability of emotional stability; overcoming and avoiding conflicts, professional cooperation in the intercultural educational space.

The result of the value-oriented stage is the mastery by students of the methods of constructing intercultural interaction on the basis of cooperation, tolerance and value attitudes towards national traditions; the ability to see the similarities and differences between participants in intercultural communication, to establish constructive relationships with representatives of different cultures.

The means of the value-oriented stage are pedagogical situations based on media texts, intercultural communication tasks, imitation tools (business games imitation, role-playing) aimed at playing the roles of future communicants [13, 17, 19].

The productive-evaluative stage is aimed at developing students' skills of constructive conflict-free communication with people of different cultures (countries or continents), acquiring own cultural identity, the qualities of an intercultural personality, self-regulation abilities, and the ability to correctly respond to changes in the behavior of partners in communicative situations.

The result of the productive-evaluative stage is the mastery of design techniques, the construction of intercultural constructive interaction (in particular, in a foreign language) with representatives of different cultures, the application of professional knowledge and skills for the implementation of intercultural communication; the ability to use various techniques, tactics, and strategies of verbal and non-verbal communication to achieve mutual understanding, depending on the specific communicative situation and in accordance with socio-cultural norms; the ability to comprehend and reflect on the motives of activities and actions of communication participants, assessment and reassessment of their abilities, the quality of language readiness, regulation of own behavior based on awareness of own cultural identity.

The means of the productive and evaluative stage are pedagogical situations based on media texts and intercultural

communication tasks, analytical tools (problem situations, project activities, interactive forms, trainings), the content of which is related to dialogue, building intercultural constructive relationships in a foreign language with representatives of different cultures, which vary in mutual understanding [21, 23, 24].

Thus, the educational space of the university will serve as an innovative platform for building a new model of the process of forming the intercultural competence of students, allowing a specialist to establish constructive intercultural relationships with partners in intercultural dialogue and representatives of a foreign cultural society, which is a new perspective for improving the quality of the educational process in the context of professional training at the university.

4 Results and Discussion

Theoretical analysis and conceptual synthesis suggested that the process of forming intercultural competence of university students has at least three stages of development:

- Stage I - intercultural value orientation;
- Stage II - intercultural value self-determination;
- Stage III - intercultural value interaction.

This classification corresponds to the methodology presented above for distinguishing the content, value-target, and productive-evaluative stages of the process of forming students' intercultural competence. Such a staged process can be implemented on the basis of the Kolb cycle method – a well-proven and widely used method of adult education in corporate training [25, 26]. This is a learning model based on the gradual formation of mental actions. According to Kolb's model, the training of an adult must necessarily include four stages [7]:

1. Getting specific experience.
2. Analysis of this experience.
3. Theoretical substantiation of the knowledge gained.
4. Testing of new concepts in practice.

The last stage forms a new experience, and the cycle develops again, forming a kind of spiral. Kolb argued that learning does not have an initial stage, but more often than not, adults begin learning with a specific experience. Many experts use the Kolb cycle as the basis for Action Learning [52]. The stages of the Kolb cycle are shown in the table below.

Table1: Kolb cycle stages

Stage name	Essence	Result
Experience	The student tries to do in practice something that should be learned, and does as he can now, regardless of whether his skills are sufficient.	Understanding of the need for further training (did not work out or did not work out well).
Analysis	Analysis of the pros and cons of the experience gained, conclusions about what was done successfully, and what could have been done better or differently	Preparedness for the need for change and training, in some cases full or partial knowledge of how to act correctly.
Theory	Gaining theoretical knowledge on how to act correctly, in conjunction with the acquired experience and its analysis.	The correct algorithms for actions for the future have been obtained.
Fixing	Development of theory, translation of knowledge into skills and abilities, correction by the teacher	The necessary skills are fully or partially worked out and consolidated.

The structure of training using the Kolb cycle includes the following stages [9]:

1. Motivation of students: 10% of the time of the lesson.
2. Consolidation and repetition of the passed material: 20% of the lesson time [29-34].
3. Learning new material: 50% of the lesson time.

4. Analysis and feedback: 10% of the lesson time.
5. Summing up: 10% of the lesson time.

In this case, the teacher himself can adjust the duration of each of the stages. The key point is precisely the presence of each of the stages. Violation of the cycle (in fact, the logic of the lesson) impedes the consolidation of skills. Often, mistakes are related to the fact that the "Experience" stage presupposes one content, and the "Theory" stage presupposes something else [28, 35]. This discrepancy confuses students. In other words, students do not understand why they solved a given example or problem, why it is useful and how the work done has to do with the topic of the lesson. As a result, there are negative emotions, rejection of the lesson material, and even the teacher's personality [16].

When implementing the Kolb cycle, it is important to adhere to several rules:

- Stop at the stage "Reflection";
- Analyze passed material [44];
- When analyzing the material, provide the first word to students [37, 38, 40];
- Enable students to formulate conclusions;
- Remember that reflection is a bridge to the theoretical block [41, 43, 50].

Learning based on Kolb's principle really allows transferring skills and knowledge effectively to students, helps to build a logical structure of learning, and motivates students to learn new material.

Research conducted in the United States in the 1980s (National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine) summarized data on the effectiveness of various methods of teaching adults. The following data were obtained on the percentage effectiveness of the following methods [51]: Lecture – 5%, Reading – 10%, Use of video and audio materials – 20%, Demonstration – 30%, Discussion groups – 50%, Practical actions – 70%, Teaching others, immediate application of knowledge – 90 %.

One should pay attention to the bottom three points that relate to interactive teaching methods. It is the active practical application of the knowledge gained that works best in teaching adults, and it is this that forms the basis of the Kolb method. At the last stage of the cycle, the obtained theoretical model or concept is tested in practice, the student checks its effectiveness and practicality. This stage of practice is widely represented by the application of the knowledge gained by the participants in the course of solving cases and performing exercises on the topic, which is indispensable in conditions of limited social communication.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the Kolb cycle is one of the most optimal methods of university education within the framework of the competence-based approach, which means a gradual reorientation of the dominant educational paradigm with the predominant translation of knowledge, the formation of skills to create conditions for mastering a set of competencies, meaning the potential, the ability of a graduate to and sustainable life in the conditions of modern socio-political, market-economic, information and communication saturated space.

5 Conclusion

Currently, due to the expansion of intercultural relationships and the internationalization of many sectors of economic and social activity, as well as the development of modern information computer technologies, the need for intercultural dialogue is especially growing. In the process of globalization, there is a growing need for tolerant specialists who can quickly adapt and integrate in the modern world, effectively interacting with representatives of different cultures.

In these conditions, the question arises about the priority professional competencies of a modern specialist. One of the obligatory ones can be called intercultural communicative competence, which creates the basis for professional mobility,

adaptation to rapidly changing living conditions, participation in world achievements, and the development of professional self-realization. In this sense, the solution to the problem of the formation of intercultural communicative competence of future specialists in modern universities seems to be relevant and in demand.

Taking into account that the model of intercultural communicative competence is an integrative formation, consisting of a subset of competencies, in conditions of limited social communication with representatives of other cultures, it seems appropriate to use the Kolb cycle method, with a maximum focus on the practical part of the course, for maximum consolidation of the studied material and gradual formation and improvement of the cross-cultural competence of students with a cyclical repetition of the stages (modules) of the course.

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Primary Paper Section: A

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