

FUNDAMENTALS OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR A MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER IN THE SYSTEM OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: The purpose of the research lies in comprehending the role of a foreign language teacher in the process of learning a foreign language by foreign students by comparing the views of teachers and students on certain aspects of the educational process. The data obtained as a result of the survey conducted reveal the importance of learning English for foreign students, their motivation and the difficulties they face. Along with this, the data obtained point out to the great complexity of the English language curriculum and the ways of its adaptation to the foreign students' needs. At the same time, the results of the survey determine the important role of the professional culture of a second language teacher in the context of the integration of students into the Ukrainian academic environment.

Keywords: polyculturalism, multiculturalism, modern teacher, globalization.

1 Introduction

Our world is changing rapidly. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) identifies three major challenges that modern society will face in the next decade, namely: environmental, economic and social. Climate changes, economic crisis, population growth, migration processes and increasing social and cultural diversity are transforming countries and communities (The Future of Education and Skills, 2019). These current trends are already affecting our personal lives, as well as the life of the society as a whole (Jin, 2019). Education is not an exception. Scientists are talking about such processes as globalization and internationalization in this area. It becomes open, global and international (Roga, 2015). According to the data of the OECD, in 2016, the number of international students pursuing higher education worldwide was over five million, compared to two million in 1999. Both students and higher educational institutions have become academically mobile; they both aim to compete in the global marketplace (Education at a Glance, 2019). Universities open departments, faculties and programs for foreign students. Young people from all over the world would like to take part in them and study outside their home countries (Mikuláša, 2019). For them, this is an opportunity to acquire new skills that cannot be taught at home; it is a chance to gain international educational experience, become more competitive and, as a result, move closer to labour markets. In addition, students want to join the social and cultural life of the host country, expand their knowledge concerning other societies and improve their language skills. Meanwhile, universities also benefit from accepting foreign students economically, culturally and politically. For host countries, mobile students can be a significant source of income; they can contribute to the development of economic and innovation systems (Imai, 2019).

The Ukrainian higher education system has a long history of relationships with international students, commencing from the Soviet Union (USSR) to the present day. For instance, in 1990, the number of foreign students in the USSR reached 126,5 thousand people and allowed Soviet universities to officially take the third place in the world after the universities of the United States and France in the number of foreign students (Vershinina, 2015). Since May 2005, after Ukraine joined the Bologna Process, this trend has become more evident and has allowed Ukrainian universities to be part of the international educational community (Chaika, 2021).

A good example is the National University "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy". This is a leading university in Ukraine, where students from Europe, the USA, Asia and the Middle East study. They participate in a variety of training activities of the program, from bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs to short-term and summer / winter schools. At the same time, the university offers a variety of fields of training – from engineering and economics to the humanities. All these programs are available in Ukrainian and English. In addition, according to the type of program and its curriculum, foreign students study Ukrainian or English as a foreign language, especially in reference to the humanities. These departments have a great amount of foreign students. In this case, English teachers deal with multicultural audiences; they work with students from different countries and representatives of culture; this situation raises certain proving and acute issues.

As it has been stated above, internationalization is prevalently considered as a positive factor that is important in preparing to participate in a globalized and multicultural society; it increases the level of tolerance and understanding. However, this may be a desirable consideration. What do we really know about students' attitudes, feelings, and willingness to be open to new cultures (Abraham, 2018)? This is a major issue of concern.

On the one hand, teachers and students from different cultures generally form a multicultural environment, where both face some dissonance in behaviour, towards which they have different attitudes and perceptions. If their feelings and views on the situation do not coincide, misunderstandings and conflicts occur, and clashes in culture may arise when a person has expectations of a certain type of behaviour and gets something completely different (Zhao, 2016). Herewith, studying in Ukraine, students find themselves in a context where they have to use three languages, namely: native, Ukrainian and English. At the beginning of the first year of study, students who are not native English speakers and have English in the curriculum, according to their type of program, take a preliminary test in English in order to check their proficiency in basic English. The results of testing in 2017 and 2018 showed that only 20% of students succeeded, and 80% of first-year students obtained the level of a beginner. This situation leads to a complete inability to communicate for both sides of the educational process, especially at the beginning of training. On the other hand, new materials, teaching methods and different pedagogical strategies create another problem for international students. According to students' viewpoints, they suffer from misunderstandings, prejudices and, as a result, anxiety. Motivation is another issue that concerns foreign students. There is a group of students considering the host country not only for the purpose of studying, but also as an opportunity to start working abroad. All of these factors lead to problems, such as: absenteeism, failure to complete project work and doing homework.

Thus, internationalization is a controversial issue. It brings not only opportunities but also obstacles. Obviously, the internationalization of higher education creates learning challenges concerning language barriers, different teaching cultures and different learning styles (Theodoridis, 2015). This is a challenge for both students and teachers, forasmuch as the pedagogical systems of the host and native countries are different; universities have their own assessment criteria that are completely new, and teachers use different approaches, strategies and methods.

In this context, the importance of multicultural education and competence is obvious (Shannon-Baker, 2018). Multiculturalism has always been discussed along with diversity. Ignoring this issue can cause particular problems, such as lack of opportunity to live together, alienation and confusion about identity through cultural differences related to language, religion or race. A Social – multicultural perspective is crucial for social peace and tolerance in the society with different cultural groups, forasmuch

as it can broaden the horizons and offer new opportunities through its experience (Yildirim, 2016). From this point of view, the purpose of language education and, consequently, the role of a foreign language teacher are changing. Previously, the major objective was to provide students with certain knowledge and skills. Currently, significant goals of teaching foreign languages include the formation of a benevolent and tolerant attitude towards the values of other cultures, motivation to improve the level of a foreign language and the use of a second / third foreign language as a means of obtaining information that allows expanding one's knowledge in other subject areas (Gizatullina, 2018).

Thus, it is important to educate multicultural teachers (Gorski, 2016), who are competent to manage cultural diversity in the classroom and who are able to teach young people from different cultural backgrounds (Ludwikowska, 2018). However, one should not forget about the professional identity of a foreign language teacher (Pinho, 2015), forasmuch as it also requires particular attention. As individuals, teachers come face to face with people who are different from them and only such qualities as openness, benevolence and wide opportunities can help absorb everything new and be respectful and considerate in a situation of linguistic and cultural diversity.

Consequently, a variety of types of competencies required for global communication and collaboration is increasing (Almazova, 2019; Akhmetshin, 2019). There are three main components, namely: professional, multicultural and personal competencies, shaping the professional culture of a modern foreign language teacher; and they can prepare them for successful cooperation and avoid intercultural conflicts (Sydorenko, et al., 2021). Such teachers help students in the process of their integration with the educational system and the university environment. It should be noted that the issue of integration has also been widely studied in recent scientific articles. It is examined as one of the forms of acculturation (Ahtarieva, 2018), as an intercultural attraction of domestic and foreign students (Rose-Redwood, 2018), and as a process of expanding the institution's activities outside its educational system (Sakhieva, 2015).

In the present academic paper, integration is discussed in a narrow context, and not in its global and general sense. The process of adaptation to the new educational environment of the university is considered under this term, in particular, adaptation to the process of teaching and learning English in a new framework, to new criteria and pronunciations. It is a process of joining a new system without losing national identity, a process that helps international students achieve academic success and make it interesting and effective.

In general, the integration and issues of foreign students from the point of view of internationalization of education are of topical interest (Waters, 2018, Yao, 2017).

2 Literature review

The review of the literature covers some important issues. In particular, these issues are as follows: foreign students are considered as an object for understanding the global landscape of higher education (Börjesson, 2010), the process of integration with university life (Güvendir, 2018), problems of cross-national communication and relations between foreign and domestic students (Lee, 2018, Amos, 2018, Ranson, 2018) the issue of creating a friendly university atmosphere with recognition of the foreign students' diversity (Marangell, 2018), processes of adaptation of foreign students (Wang, 2018, Jamaludin, 2018), the role of mentors in these processes and in the process of promoting the results of leadership development for foreign students (Shalkaa, 2019, Thomson, 2016), issues of academic and social support (Martirosyan, 2019), psychological well-being of foreign students and their psychological, academic adaptation to the university [Aldawsari, 2018, Starr-Glass, 2017, Chavoshi, 2017], motivation of foreign students (Cowley, 2018, Chue, 2016) and the impact of education abroad and its

significance for the foreign students' future career (Nilsson, 2016).

However, previous investigations have been mainly focused on studying the viewpoints of teachers or international students on this issue. For instance, researchers have discussed the successful integration process of international students and its facilitation (Cowley, 2018), the views of teachers on international students and their challenges, and vice versa, on the academic, social and cultural needs of international students (Wu, 2015); and only a few have studied it from both points of view. A good example is Claudia P. Nieto's study, where the author has explored the relationship between cultural competence and the learning of foreign students (Nieto, 2019).

Summing up, the review of the literature has shown that there are no prepared answers to the questions such as: What is the role of integration in forming the professional culture of a foreign language teacher? What does the professional culture of a foreign language teacher currently mean in the context of international and global education? What is the role of foreign students in its formation?

Therefore, the purpose of the present academic paper lies in understanding the place and role of a foreign language teacher in the process of integrating foreign students with a foreign language of instruction in order to find out the difficulties of teachers when working in a multicultural classroom, as well as to reveal what difficulties foreign students face in the process of integration with the educational environment of the Ukrainian university and points of convergence and divergence in the perception of teachers and students of learning a foreign language.

3 Materials and research methods

In the present academic paper, a research inductive approach was applied. It was aimed at identifying the challenges faced by teachers when teaching English as a foreign language in a multicultural classroom, the difficulties faced by foreign students in learning a foreign language, the points of convergence and divergence in the perception of teachers and students of learning a foreign language at university and essential elements of professional culture of a foreign language teacher in the context of integration of foreign students into the Ukrainian academic environment. The questionnaire is considered the most appropriate tool for the research, forasmuch as it may provide with an understanding of the issues faced, make maximum use of respondents' time, and facilitate data analysis.

Quantitative analysis of the data was carried out by applying a descriptive statistical method and calculating reiterations of participants' answers to closed-ended questions, critical analysis and interpretation. Secondly, the qualitative analysis of the participants' answers to the open-ended question and their comments was carried out by means of their classification, definition of general models and topics in the answers, grouping and their coding. The descriptive statistical method was used to quantify frequencies and critically analyze them. The analyses helped answer research questions 1 and 2. Next, Stage 2 also involved the analysis piece, which connects to the results identified in stage 1, using the correlation method and the comparative method in order to answer research questions 3 and 4.

The research was conducted online among students and teachers of the "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" National University. Two groups of people were involved to collect the data for the present research. The survey involved 31 foreign language teachers teaching English at the university and 63 foreign students studying under undergraduate programs. All respondents voluntarily participated in the survey; they were informed of the purpose of the research and guaranteed anonymity.

Teachers have been teaching at the university for several years, and their teaching experience has ranged from 2 to 25 years.

Among the participants, 2 (6,5%) teachers were men and the other 29 (93,5%) were women. They all had experience teaching in a multicultural classroom. Some respondents taught academic groups, which consisted mainly of domestic students and a few foreign students per semester, and some taught multinational academic groups, which included only foreign students.

A group of foreign students, participating in the survey, involved 63 students studying for a bachelor's degree at the Department of International Relations of the Institute of Humanities. Of these respondents, 39 (62%) were first-year students, and 24 students (38%) were in their second year of study. Participants were from different countries, among which Asian countries predominated. Among first-year students aged 18-24, there were respondents from China (59%), Turkmenistan (28%), Uzbekistan (10%) and Kyrgyzstan (3%). Second-year students aged 19-27 represented China (88%), Jordan (4%), Equatorial Guinea (4%) and Tajikistan (4%).

In order to address the research questions outlined, a survey was conducted, in which two questionnaires were developed, namely: one for teachers and the other for foreign students.

The questionnaires consisted mainly of multiple-choice questions and 1 open-ended question; by the way, most of the multiple choice questions included a multiple answer option and contained a "Comments" or "Other" field; consequently, the respondents could share their viewpoint or opinion on the issue and indicate their option. The questionnaires included similar questions for teachers and international students in order to explore interesting questions from both perspectives. This helped identify points of convergence and divergence in the perception of teachers and students of foreign language learning at the university, the problems they face in the process of teaching / learning a foreign language and their causes, as well as possible ways to solve these problems, which would facilitate the process of learning a foreign language at university and make it more effective. The questionnaire for the faculty was compiled in Ukrainian and English; it contained 9 questions and included 6 thematic sections, in particular: the respondent's experience in teaching in a multicultural classroom, a synopsis in English, effective ways of teaching English in a class, problems in teaching foreign students, the importance of the cultural aspect in teaching foreign students, possible ways to improve the proficiency of foreign students at English lessons. The questionnaire for foreign students was compiled in three languages, they are Ukrainian, Russian, and English, in order to avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretation and to maximize the reliability of the data obtained.

The need to use questionnaires in several languages was determined by the results of a screening test conducted at the beginning of the school year, which showed that the majority of foreign students did not pass it and had an insufficient level of English proficiency. Therefore, it determined the need to use questionnaires in several languages. Students from the countries of the former USSR, that is, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, received a questionnaire in Russian, forasmuch as their proficiency in Russian was at the appropriate level. Students from Jordan and Equatorial Guinea mastered English at a sufficient level; consequently, they were offered a questionnaire in English. The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions and included 6 thematic sections as follows: motivation to learn English, a synopsis in English, effective ways of teaching English in a class, problems and challenges in the process of learning English and their causes, the importance of the cultural aspect in training foreign students, possible ways to improve the proficiency of foreign students at English lessons.

An online survey was applied to collect data using Google Forms, which is an efficient and convenient tool for data collection and processing. E-mail was distributed to 32 teachers, thirty-one completed set of answers was collected; that is, the response rate is 97%. The data obtained are displayed in a Google Spreadsheets. The level of filling in the questionnaire was 95%.

The data analysis was focused on the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in closed and open questions, addressing two issues, in particular: issues faced by teachers in teaching English as a foreign language to international students; problems and challenges faced by foreign students while learning a foreign language.

These results helped identify the problematic areas faced by teachers and foreign students in the process of teaching / learning English as a foreign language at the university, and to answer the research questions.

4 Results

The present survey was conducted in groups of students studying English in higher educational institutions of Ukraine.

The results of the survey revealed the importance of learning English for foreign students: about 90% of respondents indicated this viewpoint. However, the reasons that motivated the students were different: the majority of students, about 73%, studied English for their future careers; about 50% justified their motivation by meeting the requirements of the university curriculum. It is worth noting the interest of students in learning English: about 35% chose the option "I'm interested in English / learning English".

It is important to emphasize that interest did not diminish over time: first- and second-year students showed approximately the same results. However, there were students with low motivation: about 8% of respondents noted that if they had the opportunity, they would not study this subject, and 6% claimed that they studied English mainly through the will of their parents (Table 1).

Table 1 – The level of students' motivation to learning English

| Question | Answers | Quantity (percentage) |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| Is it important for you to learn English? | Important | 56 (89%) |
| | Not important | 1 (2%) |
| | If I had the chance, I would study the language | 5 (8%) |
| Why do you study English? | I must meet the requirements of the curriculum | 28 (44%) |
| | This is important for my future career | 46 (73%) |
| | I'm interested in English / learning English | 22 (35%) |
| | My parents force me to do this | 6 (9.5%) |

Source: Developed by the authors

The above data showed the importance of learning English for foreign students. Most students were motivated by a future career, which can be characterized as both instrumental and integrative motivation: getting the best opportunities for work, communication and integration in any environment.

A significant number of students chose a purely instrumental and external motivation: compliance with the requirements of the curriculum and the will of parents. A significant percentage of students were intrinsically motivated, claiming that they were interested in learning English. It should be noted that while answering the above question, students could choose several answers: in some cases, students chose two or three factors that had motivated them. In general, the research revealed that the foreign students under study were more instrumentally motivated, which, on the one hand, is good due to the high level of motivation and their focus on getting better career prospects. On the other hand, the predominance of this type of motivation could have possible negative consequences for the educational

process: due to the fact that students with motivation of tools realized the importance of language, they did not make as much effort, nor they spent that much time on learning the language as compared to the internally motivated students.

According to the survey, one of the most pressing basic challenges is that the proficiency level of English with foreign students did not correspond to the English language curriculum of the university. In order to find solutions to this and some other problems, both teachers and students were offered several options on how to improve the situation (Table 2).

Table 2 – Possible ways to improve the process of learning English for foreign students from the perspective of students and teachers

| Question | Answers | Students | Teachers |
|--|--|----------|----------|
| What would you be willing to do in order to improve your English learning process? | Individual communication with the teacher | 17 (27%) | 11 (22%) |
| | Participation in a conversation club | 38 (60%) | 15 (29%) |
| | Participation in various events dedicated to British culture | 39 (62%) | 15 (29%) |
| | Doing more homework | 7 (11%) | 1 (2%) |
| | Conducting an additional distance learning course in English | 7 (11%) | 9 (18%) |

Source: Developed by the authors

Students and teachers emphasized the importance of developing speech and communication skills through organizing a conversation club and organizing events dedicated to British culture. Such agreements for students can be useful forasmuch as representatives of different cultures will be attracted; this will force them to communicate and work together, preventing them from communicating with each other. Consequently, this will help them communicate more with domestic students and foreign students from other countries (Gardner,1972). It is of interest to note that students, who previously had noted speaking as a problem area, expressed a desire to improve this situation. However, they also found the necessity to interact with the teacher in a one-on-one format by participating in an individual interview.

5 Discussion

The data obtained, as a result of the survey conducted, gave an idea of the role played by the professional culture of a foreign (English) language teacher in the context of the integration of foreign students into the academic environment.

First of all, the research has clearly shown that teachers and students' perceptions of several issues, such as the level of complexity of the English curriculum and aspects of its adaptation, the most interesting and effective forms of work, the importance of cultural features, etc., differ significantly. This discrepancy has proven that an important element of the teachers' professional culture is the ability to critically and unbiasedly assess the needs and features of each academic group. Although being an expert in this field and possessing extensive experience, the teacher must have a certain amount of self-criticism in order to be able to understand the foreign students' needs, compare them with his / her own experience and develop a productive form of work based on a modern context. Another important aspect of the foreign language teacher's professional culture was the development of skills to determine the motivation of students in order to understand its nature and be able to use it correctly, organizing the effective academic integration of students. The ability to distinguish between different types of motivation, awareness of the relationship between its types and to distinguish the dominant in the student

is of vital importance. Based on the survey data, teachers should influence students using a combination of approaches when aiming to achieve the desired outcomes (Mahadi, 2012). In order to stimulate instrumental motivation, the teacher should emphasize the possible positive results of learning a foreign language, as well as inform students about the requirements of the curriculum (they will not acquire knowledge in these disciplines unless they learn and speak decent English); in order to encourage intrinsic and integrative motivation, the teacher should provide information focused on the future profession of students, provide additional and more complex tasks for those students who seek to master English, etc.

Information about the language, providing a critical assessment of the knowledge level by foreign students and the correspondence of the curriculum and the requirements for their abilities, is another important point of a foreign language professional culture of a language teacher. Ignoring by teachers the problem of mismatching the students' knowledge level and requirements can lead to insufficient participation in the lesson, lack of motivation and interest, a high level of absenteeism, failure to complete home and class assignments and, as a result, lack of productivity, which, in general, leads to the student's inability to integrate into the academic environment in the field of learning English. The results of the survey have showed that, despite the fact that the level of the current English curriculum was appropriate for foreign students, teachers were aware of the importance of its adaptation. Most did not recognize the importance of adapting tests and tasks, consistent with the results (Unruh, 2015); they would rather adapt classroom activities. The results of the research have revealed that, in general, teachers tend to underestimate the problems faced by foreign students, especially in comparison with domestic ones; their academic needs can often be disregarded; consequently, teaching seems to be organized with a focus on domestic students or uncultured, as formulated in the scientific work of some scholars (Almazova, 2016).

Measures such as conducting diagnostic work in order to understand students' weaknesses, spending more time explaining the format of homework, tests, project work, more time spent on training with exam materials, etc., may at least reduce stress and anxiety among students and promote more productive work (Rubtsova, 2018).

In the context of the above conclusion, tolerance and patience in case of poor academic performance would lead to discrimination of the students on the basis of poor proficiency in the field of a foreign language. In this context, the most useful measure is the individualization of the language learning process, emphasizing the intellectual abilities of each student and the uniqueness of the thought and way of thinking of each student, which according to (Benediktsson, 2019), leads to the successful development of students' communicative competence, despite the primary level of students' language proficiency.

6 Conclusions

The ability to identify the most problematic aspects in the process of learning English objectively plays a decisive role in the integration of foreign students into the academic and social environment.

As the research has shown, the teacher, when working with international students, should pay special attention to the development of such perceptive skills as listening, problems with which may not be as vivid, but can negatively affect all learning and integration processes due to the inability of students to understand both the learning material and the teacher's instructions.

According to the research conducted, the ability to critically assess the forms of work used by the teacher and choose those that may be difficult to implement, but effective for the academic

and social success of students, can play a crucial role in the process of students' international integration. An example of this is group work, which, according to the survey, was desirable for students – respondents and much less appreciated by teachers – respondents. Their desire to participate in group work proves their willingness to communicate not only with representatives of their culture, but also with others. After all, due to the low level of language proficiency, foreign students tend to communicate with their compatriots, forming an isolated group. Although the group work may seem challenging, it helps achieve several goals at the same time: (i) giving international students more time to think, (ii) giving them a wider range of ideas and opinions, and (iii) reducing stress and anxiety, forasmuch as the student has support and is less afraid of making mistakes and completing the task, achieves self-organization, (iv) providing mutual assistance, (v) helping representatives of different cultures to work together, providing them with the opportunity to communicate in real life in a foreign language – the language other than the mother tongue, or in other words, preventing them from communicating with each other in their local languages. The formats of role-plays and discussions, as well as project work, are much more effective and desirable for international students than teachers tend to think.

Another important quality that a foreign language teacher should develop when working with foreign students is the ability to involve foreign students in the discussion and in the lesson, in general.

Both students and teachers consider lack of language proficiency as the biggest obstacle to attracting international students to the discussion.

An integral aspect of the foreign language teacher's professional culture is cultural awareness and the ability to apply this awareness in practice. This idea does not imply the need for detailed knowledge of all cultural features, but rather an awareness of differences in educational practice existing in other countries, differences in behavior and taboos based on religious views, etc.

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