

THE ESSENCE OF INTERCULTURAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS OF GYMNASIUM

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Intensification of globalization and integration processes in the spheres of economy, culture, science and education in our country leads to *increasing a number of intercultural contacts* between people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, determining the importance of foreign language knowledge, the need for intercultural preparation of communicants starting at primary school level.

One of the most significant changes in foreign language teaching over the past few decades has been the recognition of the cultural dimension as a key component, which has significantly changed the nature of language teaching and learning. The purpose of language learning is no longer defined in terms of acquiring communicative competence in a foreign language, which refers to a person's ability to act in a foreign language in linguistically, sociolinguistically and pragmatically appropriate ways. Intercultural competence should become a component of the objective in foreign language teaching and must form an integral part of a foreign language curriculum.

The study of literature on this subject indicates a large number of terms, used as synonyms for 'intercultural communication competence', in particular, 'multicultural competence', 'cultural competence', 'international competence', 'trans-cultural competence', 'global competence', 'cross-cultural effectiveness', 'intercultural sensitivity', 'cross-cultural adaptation', 'cross-cultural adjustment', etc.

Let's consider some definitions of 'intercultural communication competence', which in our opinion more accurately reveal the essence of this concept.

The Common European Framework of Reference gives a detailed description of what competences language learners are advised to acquire in foreign languages during their school years. The development of an 'intercultural personality' involving both *attitudes* and *awareness* is presented as an important educational goal in its own right. Socio-cultural knowledge is described as *knowledge* of the society and culture of the communities in which a language is spoken. Intercultural awareness is defined as "knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the 'world of origin' and the 'world of the target community produce an intercultural awareness.' In addition to objective knowledge, intercultural awareness covers an awareness of how each community appears from the perspective of the other, often in the form of national stereotypes" [3, p. 103].

British language scholar M. Byram defines intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as "an interaction between people of a complex cultural and social identity". In his model ICC is composed of two closely related areas including *communicative competence*, and *intercultural competence* [1, p. 4]. The three components of ICC are linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence. Intercultural competence also consists of three components (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and is supplemented by five values: (1) intercultural attitudes, (2) knowledge, (3) skills of interpreting and relating, (4) skills of discovery and interaction, (5) critical cultural awareness [2, p. 11–13]. These five major intercultural competences are strongly interrelated. M. Byram argues that the basis of intercultural competence is in the attitudes of the person interacting with people of another culture. Without this basic competence the other four cannot truly develop. The role of the language teacher is to develop skills, attitudes and awareness of values just as much as to develop a knowledge of a particular culture or country.

M. Byram's model is the most influential model of intercultural communicative competence at least in language teaching, and most definitions of ICC nowadays are based on this model. This can be confirmed by the view of other British scientists

who understand ICC as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes at the interface between several cultural areas including the students' own country and a target language country. The development of ICC is a process that includes the students' experiences and competences from their own cultural background and is a process that allows them to reflect on their own cultural assumptions as an integral part of the further development of their skills and knowledge about the world [4].

Thus, the term 'intercultural communication', which combines the terms 'intercultural competence' and 'communicative competence' in a single unit, means 'communication between people from different cultures'.

Today, scholars have agreed that ICC should be seen as a combination of three interrelated and equally important aspects: *cognitive*, manifested in the speaker's ability to intercultural awareness, *emotional* (affective), which is revealed in the ability communicator of intercultural sensitivity and *behavioural* demonstrated in intercultural effectiveness / adroitness.

Intercultural skills and know-how (*savoir-faire*) include: a) the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other; b) cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures; c) the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations; d) the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships [3, p. 104–105].

The formation of gymnasium students' ICC should be realized in the process of teaching a foreign language in the context of the dialogue of cultures, that is, in a specially organized learning environment, in which there is a constant encounter with a new language and culture and comparison with their own language and culture. It enables intercultural communication of language learners with speakers of a foreign culture and language, stimulates the development of empathy, tolerance, intercultural sensitivity and sociocultural observation.

In the process of forming ICC, it is important not to memorize cultural facts by students, but to create conditions for comparison similar phenomena in the target and

native culture. Therefore, tasks for students should be close to the conditions of real communication and model those situations that may potentially arise in the life of the child, as well as be performed in various types of speech activity. The types of educational activities aimed at the formation of ICC include the project method, intercultural mediation, correspondence by e-mail or messenger, game-communicative technologies, and the like.

Thus, the formation of intercultural communicative competence places great responsibility on teachers to get *acquainted* gymnasium students with the cultural characteristics of other countries and at the same time increase awareness of their own culture; to prepare them for interaction with people of other cultures; to enable students to understand and accept people from other cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviours; and to help them to see that such interaction is an enriching experience.

References

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