

Интернет-журнал «Мир науки» / World of Science. Pedagogy and psychology <https://mir-nauki.com>

2018, №2, Том 6 / 2018, No 2, Vol 6 <https://mir-nauki.com/issue-2-2018.html>

URL статьи: <https://mir-nauki.com/PDF/16PDAMN218.pdf>

DOI: 10.15862/16PDAMN218 (<https://doi.org/10.15862/16PDAMN218>)

Статья поступила в редакцию 18.03.2018; опубликована 10.05.2018

Ссылка для цитирования этой статьи:

Фролова О.А., Лопатинская В.В. Развитие межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции студентов экономического профиля // Интернет-журнал «Мир науки», 2018 №2, <https://mir-nauki.com/PDF/16PDAMN218.pdf> (доступ свободный). Загл. с экрана. Яз. рус., англ. DOI: 10.15862/16PDAMN218

For citation:

Frolova O.A., Lopatinskaya V.V. (2018). The development of intercultural foreign language competence of University students of economics. *World of Science. Pedagogy and psychology*, [online] 2(6). Available at: <https://mir-nauki.com/PDF/16PDAMN218.pdf> (in Russian) DOI: 10.15862/16PDAMN218

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The development of intercultural foreign language competence of University students of economics

Abstract. The article deals with the problem of formation of intercultural competence in the process of learning a professionally oriented foreign language. It is noted that the formation of intercultural competence can be structured, organized and strengthened in special training which has several stages. The stages of formation of intercultural competence are analyzed from the socio-cultural standpoint. The article describes the organization of the educational process oriented to the dialogue of cultures, an introduction to the culture of the country of the target language. On the basis of theoretical analysis of existing approaches the criteria of intercultural competence formation are formulated. They include: ethnographic knowledge of the culture of the country of the target language, knowledge of the norms of conduct of native speakers, ability to compare native and foreign language cultures, communicative abilities (abilities to interpret and build verbal and non-verbal behavior in accordance with the norms of the culture of the target language), readiness for dialogue of cultures, empathic abilities. The authors also determine the pedagogical conditions of effective formation of intercultural competence, the main of which are: taking into account the individual characteristics of students, the level of their linguistic and general cultural training; communicative training of professionally oriented foreign language considering the specifics of the university; unity of classroom and extracurricular activities; use of authentic teaching and methodological material; interdisciplinary integration; reliance on the comparative principle of languages and cultures studies and the dialogue of cultures; creative and activity approach; use of problem-based learning methods; using role-playing and business games within the framework of the contextual approach. The article considers the proposed model of the development of intercultural competence that can serve as a basis for the development of educational trajectory of students and is recommended to be introduced into practice of professionally-oriented foreign language teaching.

Keywords: communication; intercultural competence; formation; efficiency; pedagogical conditions

Introduction

Presently training highly qualified personnel who know the basics of intercultural communication is one of the most important objectives of higher education.

It is impossible either to develop skills of intercultural communication, or to have an adequate attitude to intercultural interaction without linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Therefore, the main task is to develop intercultural professional competence, which is understood as the readiness and ability for intercultural professional communication, based on the ideas of universal human values, orientation on them in the field of intercultural communication on the basis of empathy, allowing people to understand the national and cultural characteristics of the cultural object, to see similarity and difference between contacting cultures and to achieve mutual understanding [5].

Taking into account the peculiarities of studying at an economic university and especially the lack of educational disciplines or special courses in intercultural communication, it is necessary to pay special attention to mastering intercultural competence at foreign language classes.

Discussion

The process of intercultural competence development can be divided into several stages. In scientific literature there are different points of view on the indication of the stages of mastering intercultural competence.

For example, R.G. Hanvey identifies four levels of intercultural understanding. At the first level people are aware of superficial or very visible cultural traits and interpret them as exotic or bizarre; at the second level acquaintance with some features of foreign culture which contrast with the culture can irritate the individual; at the third level there are those who are able to understand at intellectual level the existing differences between two cultures; at the fourth level people are aware of how another culture feels from the standpoint of the insider [6, P. 16].

M.J. Bennett distinguishes three stages of ethnocentrism and three stages of ethnorelativism in intercultural communication. Their main features are as follows: the denial stage is characterized by ignoring intercultural differences; for the defense stage negative evaluation of cultural differences is typical; at the minimization stage intercultural differences are no longer considered as a threat, but the values of one's own culture are perceived as universal; at the acceptance stage people enjoy recognizing and exploring cultural differences; the adaptation stage is characterized by the ability to adapt behaviour to any cultural context; at the integration stage people achieve an identity which allows them to see themselves as "interculturalists" or "multiculturalists" in addition to their national and ethnic backgrounds [1, P. 15-17].

Thus, we can see that the formation of intercultural competence is a complex and long-term process, which can be structured, organized and strengthened in special training and has several stages.

Methods

In our research of the approaches to the solution of the above problem we used such methods as the theoretical analysis of scientific literature on the study of the formation of intercultural competence, as well as methods of observation, study and generalization of pedagogical experience.

We share the opinion of the researcher I.L. Pluzhnik, who identifies three main stages of mastering intercultural competence of future specialists: empirical-reproductive, which is the formation of "cognitive orientation in the information field of intercultural communication based on personal experience"; empirical-productive, at which the development and realization of intercultural competence is based on mastering the mechanisms of speech activity; creative, which is characterized by the improvement and implementation of intercultural competence in different situations. The three stages of formation of intercultural competence correlate with the three levels of its qualitative development: 1) elementary; 2) sufficient; 3) advanced [8, P. 29-30].

E. Usó-Juan and A. Martínez-Flor [11, P. 162] propose a cultural project for building learners' communicative competence in the target language. The project is organized around three main stages: explanation, collection and implementation.

Using the data of the above mentioned and other studies and our own experience of teaching English we identify the following didactic stages in the development of intercultural competence of students of economic higher education: introduction; search for information; practice and training; generalization.

At the introductory stage, students get an idea of the relationship between language and culture, the cultural aspects of verbal and non-verbal behavior, national stereotypes, cultural barriers in communication, etc. The use of interdisciplinary approach and personal experience of students are of great importance at this stage.

At the second stage, students accumulate knowledge about intercultural communication, the socio-cultural aspects of the norms of communication in the target language countries, the features of everyday and business communication, various language means of expressing communicative strategies and tactics, the similarity and difference of the language picture of the world in native and foreign cultures. The independent work of students is of particular importance at this stage.

At the third stage, it is important to train the practical application of acquired knowledge and skills to analyze various situations of business intercultural communication, as well as the development of skills and abilities to build and recognize cultural-specific statements, verbal and non-verbal behavior in cultural-specific situations related to professional activities in a foreign language environment. Pair work and group work followed by a group discussion are effective at this stage. Simulations and role-plays based on critical or conflict-ridden incidents reveal the students' knowledge and skills most often when they interact in pairs or in groups of three or four.

At the generalization stage, it is necessary to form an integral view of the cultural conditioning of communication, tolerant attitude and openness to other cultures, cultural flexibility. This stage correlates with quasi-professional activity of students (A.A. Verbitsky). At this stage, complex business games are used, which allow modeling two types of contexts in the process of learning: the socio-cultural context of communication with native speakers of the target language, and the context of future professional activities [4, P. 17].

The sequential passage of all stages of the development of intercultural competence is aimed to promote students' awareness of their own cultural identity and its impact on the perception of the worldview and communication with other cultures, to overcome the monoculturalism of their outlook. The formation of tolerant attitude to foreign cultural phenomena, the development of empathic abilities in the course of intercultural interaction has an impact on further assimilation of intercultural knowledge, and the formation of appropriate skills.

In the process of formation of professional intercultural competence all its components – ethnographic, sociolinguistic; socio-cultural; subject-professional – are developed. All these components are interconnected, each interacts with the others, which leads to the growth of intercultural competence at large.

To assess the effectiveness of forming intercultural competence in the process of teaching a foreign language, it is necessary to identify criteria that indicate the level of development of intercultural competence.

Currently, there is no common approach to distinguishing criteria and indicators of the level of intercultural competence formation, I.L. Pluzhnik identifies motivational, cognitive and functional criteria reflecting the formation of motivation for professional intercultural communication, knowledge about the similarities and differences of foreign cultures, a set of skills and speech behavioral qualities manifested in intercultural activity [8, P. 33].

O.I. Burkova defines the following parameters for assessing the readiness for multicultural communication: the criterion of the level of theoretical knowledge; the criterion of the level of background knowledge of a foreign culture; the criterion of the level of knowledge of the standards of conduct in the target culture; the capacity for reflection and identification; the capacity for comparing cultures; absence of language barriers; tolerance and empathic abilities [2].

M. Byram identifies the following components of intercultural communication within foreign language education: knowledge (knowledge of Self and Other, knowledge of interaction); skills (skills of interpreting and relating; skills of discovery and interaction); education (political education and critical cultural awareness); attitudes (relativisation of one's own and valuing others' culture) [3, P. 34].

On the basis of the theoretical analysis of intercultural approach we developed the following main criteria for assessing the level of development of intercultural competence:

- ethnographic knowledge of the culture of the country of the target language;
- knowledge of the norms of conduct of native speakers;
- ability to compare native and foreign language cultures;
- communicative abilities (abilities to interpret and build verbal and non-verbal behavior in accordance with the norms of the culture of the target language);
- readiness for dialogue of cultures;
- empathic abilities.

As we have mentioned above, developing intercultural competence is a step-by-step process. Gradual changes of quality of intercultural competence indicate the levels of its development. Relying on the theoretical analysis of the problem, as well as the our own teaching experience, we identify the primary (elementary), functional and professional levels of the development of intercultural competence of students.

Results

The effectiveness of the proposed model of the development of intercultural competence can be ensured when the following pedagogical conditions are created:

- taking into account the individual characteristics of students, the level of their linguistic and general cultural training;
- communicative training of professionally oriented foreign language considering the specifics of the university;
- unity of classroom and extracurricular activities;
- use of authentic teaching and methodological material;

- interdisciplinary integration;
- reliance on the comparative principle of languages and cultures studies and the dialogue of cultures;
- creative and activity approach;
- use of problem-based learning methods;
- using role-playing and business games within the framework of the contextual approach.

The effectiveness of the theoretically developed set of pedagogical conditions for the formation of intercultural competence was tested in the course of experimental work.

At the initial stage of training the criterion analysis together with the use of empirical methods revealed a fairly low level of formation of intercultural competence of the majority of students. While the results of the analysis of post-experimental section showed an increase in the level of theoretical knowledge about the culture of the target language country and background knowledge of the foreign language culture. Communication barriers were reduced and the students developed confidence in the situation of intercultural communication. There was a growth in the level of skills to compare and understand similarities and differences in socially-conditioned behavior of native speakers and to use creatively cultural knowledge to solve communicative problems in professional intercourse. The students demonstrated emotional-value attitude to culture, tolerance and respect for foreign culture, readiness to take an active part in intercultural interaction.

It can be stated that there was an evident increase in the level of intercultural competence: the number of students at a low level decreased by 63 per cent, the number of students classified as having a high level of intercultural competence increased by 37 per cent.

Thus, it can be considered that the proposed model of the development of intercultural competence is rather efficient and can serve as a basis for the development of educational trajectory of students and is recommended to be introduced into practice of professionally-oriented foreign language teaching.

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УДК 378

ГРНТИ 14.35.09

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Развитие межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции студентов экономического профиля

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается проблема формирования межкультурной компетенции в процессе обучения профессионально ориентированному иностранному языку. Отмечается, что формирование межкультурной компетенции может быть структурировано, организовано и усилено в процессе специальной подготовки в несколько этапов. Проанализированы этапы формирования межкультурной компетенции с социально-культурной точки зрения. В статье описывается организация учебного процесса, ориентированного на диалог культур, ознакомление с культурой страны изучаемого языка. На основе теоретического анализа существующих подходов сформулированы основные критерии сформированности межкультурной компетенции, включающие этнографические знания о культуре страны изучаемого языка, знания норм поведения носителей языка и культуры, способность сопоставления родной и иноязычной культуры, коммуникативные способности (умение интерпретировать и строить вербальное и невербальное поведение в соответствии с нормами культуры изучаемого языка), готовность к диалогу культур, эмпатические способности.

Авторами также определены педагогические условия эффективного формирования межкультурной компетенции, куда входят учет индивидуальных особенностей студентов, уровня их языковой и общекультурной подготовки; коммуникативное обучение профессионально – ориентированному иностранному языку с учетом специфики вуза; единство аудиторной и внеаудиторной работы; использование аутентичного учебно-методического материала; межпредметная интеграция; опора на сопоставительный принцип языков и культур и диалог культур; креативно-деятельностный подход; использование методов проблемного обучения; использование ролевых и деловых игр в рамках контекстного подхода. Предлагаемая в статье модель развития межкультурной компетенции, может служить основой для развития образовательной траектории студентов и рекомендуется для внедрения в практику профессионально-ориентированного обучения иностранному языку.

Ключевые слова: коммуникация; межкультурная компетенция; формирование; эффективность; педагогические условия

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