

# Language and Intercultural Communicative Competence in the Professional Training of Business Specialists

Albina Bilyalova

Department of Philology  
Kazan Federal University  
Naberezhnye Chelny, Russia  
abill71@mail.ru

Dinara Khairullina

Department of Philology  
Kazan Federal University  
Naberezhnye Chelny, Russia  
dinara0406@mail.ru

Aigul Nurullina

Department of Philology  
Kazan Federal University  
Naberezhnye Chelny, Russia  
aigulnur1988@mail.ru

Nadezhda Ziganshina

Department of Foreign Languages  
Almetyevsk State Oil Institute  
Almetyevsk, Russia  
zinale@rambler.ru

Elena Mochelevskaya

Department of Economics and Engineering  
Kazan National Research Technical University named after A.N. Tupolev – KAI  
Almetyevsk, Russia  
x.alena@mail.ru

**Abstract**—The modern development of the world economy in the context of globalization involves the expansion of company activity from the regional to the international level. Such expansion definitely contributes to a number of economic advantages. However, this inevitably causes a number of problems, the main of which are the language barrier and misunderstanding between cultures, which can lead not only to financial losses, but also to problems with reputation. This fact determines the need for specialists with intercultural communication skills and knowledge of foreign languages. Thus, the article discusses the importance of language and intercultural competence of future specialists in international business. The article considers the essence and content of the phenomenon of intercultural competence of a specialist in the field of economics and business, defines the role and importance of studying the characteristics of business cultures of different countries of the world for successful intercultural interaction. It is concluded that language and intercultural competence is becoming more and more popular today, since in the conditions of integration and globalization the success of a specialist’s activity depends on it.

**Keywords:** *intercultural communication, language competence, international business, language barrier*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization leads to worldwide integration in various areas of human life. A logical consequence of such a powerful process is the interpenetration of cultures, which forces a person to reconsider their attitude to the study of foreign languages: if previously the knowledge of the language and culture of another country was considered sufficient, then now we are talking about the formation of intercultural competence of a specialist. The growing number of international corporations as the dominant form of business organization stimulates an increased interest in intercultural communication as a soft skill which is necessary for a favorable atmosphere in business offices, for the success of negotiations and everyday business activities.

Globalization involves the extension of a global labor market, where such specialists are needed who can effectively communicate with representatives of other cultures in any situation of professional interaction. The complexity of this communication lies in numerous cultural barriers that can lead not only to misunderstanding, but also to disappointment in the opponent (negotiating partner), and even to the development of the conflict. This is because the interlocutor’s

speech behavior can be perceived and evaluated differently by representatives of different national cultures, which directly depends on their worldview and worldview.

The current situation on the world labor market, the possibility of entering the international arena in the future professional activity of a student, numerous contacts with speakers of other languages – all this implies the need for free communication with representatives of other cultures. A good example of intercultural interaction is the situation in business, when a company manager aims to enter the international market. This fact makes the study of not only the language of international communication (English), but also the culture of potential partners necessary, because without overcoming the cultural barrier, the success of any company looks poor. Under these conditions, it can be assumed that foreign language training must necessarily be based on the development of foreign language intercultural communicative competence.

It is obvious that the development of intercultural competence of future specialists in the field of economics and business is one of the most important tasks of their professional training. Thus, this article aims to determine the essence of intercultural competence, which is one of the professional requirements for business professionals, and also to offer a fragment of the methodology for the development of intercultural competence of future business professionals.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGICAL BASIS

The research methodological basis consists of scientific works devoted to:

- communicative competence problems [1,6,11,16,20,26];
- problems of language-culture link [2,3,5,7,8,15,22];
- intercultural communication problems [13,19,21,23,24,28,31];
- interaction of cultures in the field of international cooperation [4,10,18,20,30];
- problems of development of intercultural communicative competence [9,12,14,32,33].

An analysis of the works devoted to the development of intercultural communication both in Russia and abroad shows that this problem is in the center of attention of representatives of various sciences. However, it was revealed that there is no single methodological base, which indicates the need for a clear definition of the status of intercultural communication in the context of scientific and practical studies of human communication. And also in our work, the urgent need for the development of intercultural competence of future specialists in the field of economics and business is emphasized, because it is one of the most important tasks of their professional training.

The experimental basis of the study was Naberezhnye Chelny of Kazan Federal. In total, 35 students took part in the study.

In the paper the research methods were used:

- scientific methods of theoretical research: analysis of domestic and foreign methodological literature on the research problem;
- methods of empirical research: testing, questioning, studying the products of students' activities, pedagogical experiment, qualitative and quantitative analysis of its results.

## III. RESULTS

In our opinion, a foreign language is one of the disciplines that, in modern conditions, acquires a new meaning and becomes a very important link in the development of the necessary communicative and other social skills of future business professionals. In the course of the English study, we have developed a model of comparing business cultures for the development ICC, which includes three stages: informative, value-oriented, and productive-evaluative. This paper presents the informative stage of the process of development of the ICC.

The informative stage is focused on the development of students' ideas about the information space of intercultural communication, knowledge of the characteristics of various cultures, their traditions, customs, cultural values, the development of the ability to integrate Russian spirituality into another culture through a foreign language. It also provides an understanding of the differences in ethical requirements for communication, rules of conduct, lifestyle. The informative stage stimulates the development of students' abilities to critically interpret the information received and embed it in their own picture of the world. It contributes to an opportunity to get ideas not only about language and culture, but also about the process of intercultural communication itself. As part of the informative stage, we have developed an algorithm for comparing two business cultures using the example of comparing cultures of Russia and the UK according to certain criteria: general information, the role of a manager, approach to changes, approach to time, making decisions, teamwork, communication and negotiation styles.

Let's consider in detail the criteria for comparing two business cultures.

### A. General information

In the UK, you must treat all people for intercultural communication with respect and reverence and not wasting anyone's time. It must be remembered that the British are inclined to sarcasm. Managers often make decisions collectively, involving subordinates colleagues. That is, the style of communication within companies has the features of a democratic one. In Russia, a characteristic feature is that the main business style in companies is official. In other words, in business it is better to use a formal approach and keep in mind that in intercultural communication Russians pay attention to the hierarchy and status of a person in a company.

### B. The role of the manager

Intercultural communication with representatives of the UK will be more effective if you remember that managers

appreciate the special knowledge of employees. Employees, in turn, expect to participate in decision-making, especially those that affect their interests and the benefit of the organization as a whole. The role of the manager in Russian companies can still be described as authoritarian with a tendency towards democratic governance.

### *C. Approach to changes*

UK business culture has a moderate tolerance for change and risk. Innovations must be carefully substantiated in order to maximize the benefits for the company. The business culture of Russia is also characterized by an average tolerance for change and risk. Therefore, representatives of these two countries will not be difficult to find a common language regarding the possible risk associated with a transaction or contract.

### *D. Approach to time and priorities*

Punctuality is a very important feature for UK business culture. Since the British strictly adhere to the work plan and the deadlines for completing tasks, managers believe that company employees must work overtime to complete the work on time. Also it is peculiar for UK that workers do not find it acceptable that managers take part in their personal affairs. This is regarded as an invasion of personal life. Russia is a culture characterized by a moderate attitude to time and, as a rule, some flexibility may be permissible in relation to work schedules and deadlines for completing tasks.

### *E. Making decisions*

Some people, whose motto is "time is money," believe that negotiations with the British take too much time, but some believe that this is normal. The British believe that the best ideas and solutions often appear if there are many interested people are involved into discussion of the problem. Most firms in Russia maintain a hierarchical structure where employees must comply with any decision of the management. Russians have great respect for age and status, which is indicated by position or wealth.

### *F. Teamwork*

In the United Kingdom, team members are selected based on their qualifications and knowledge. They are encouraged to generate new ideas that can be implemented in the new project. Russian business culture is also characterized by teamwork. However, among the younger generation there are such managers who strive to take advantage of the presented opportunities for career growth, setting their goals higher than the goals of the team (team).

### Communication and Negotiation Styles

The British style of business communication is direct and restrained. As a result of negotiations the British may prefer to write a business letter to their partners. It is also believed that good-natured humor and a good joke will always help to establish human relations with a partner. And since business is based on mutual respect of trust and mutual understanding, humor is often considered as the shortest way to establishing friendly contacts and successful business. The Russians prefer

to deal with those whom they trust, so they spend a lot of time developing relations. It should also be remembered that joint problem solving is the main function of negotiations. The implementation of this function depends on the degree of interest of the participants in the search for a mutually acceptable solution.

The proposed model of comparing business cultures also includes foreign language communication analysis methodology, Web quest technique and the methodology of creating a portfolio, the methodology for assessment the components of intercultural competence included:

- Foreign language communication analysis methodology

More complex is the methodology for analyzing communication in a foreign language recorded on audio or video media. Similar examples of communication should demonstrate both the interaction of representatives of foreign culture among themselves, and the interaction of representatives of different cultures.

In general, this gives students an additional information base in several directions at once. Firstly, communication as an integral part of people's lives characterizes the whole culture, that is, such examples will become an important source of socio-cultural knowledge for students. Secondly, this method will help students to create in their minds unique patterns of behavior of a particular culture, which can later develop into behavioral reactions. Thirdly, thematically selected video and audio materials can help students expand their knowledge of the characteristics of doing business in different countries. Thus, by studying the content of examples of professional communication, students receive additional information that covers such areas of business communication as the range of topics discussed, standard constructions of behavior, options for different interpretations of certain expressions, and ways to avoid and eliminate conflicts. At the end of the work, students can demonstrate their knowledge in the form of a written report or in a collective discussion.

- Web quest technique

Another methodology for comparing business cultures in foreign language classes at the university is Web quest technique. It is a focused study of the material provided in the Internet. The structure of the webquest includes six stages:

- the introduction of the teacher to interest students, basic information about the topic;
- statement by the teacher of a task that should be feasible and interesting;
- familiarization of students with the sources of information that are necessary to perform a specific task;
- description by the teacher of the directions in which students should work in order to fulfill the task, as well as some recommendations of the teacher on the fulfillment of the information received;

- familiarization of students with a set of criteria for assessing the assignment;
- the students' making up the conclusion, which should systematize their knowledge.

Webquest is designed to enable students to play an active role in obtaining knowledge. This method involves not only the development of the ability to search for information, but also the ability of students to critically interpret and synthesize information, to solve the problems posed in the task with its help.

- The methodology of creating a portfolio

The methodology of creating a portfolio by students is one of the most effective in terms of the ability to assess the knowledge, skills and competence of students, on the one hand, and in terms of creating conditions for independent creative work of students, on the other. There are special programs for creating electronic student portfolios (for example, Mahara), which allow students not only to create separate documents, edit them, but also independently evaluate their compliance with modern standards and requirements [23]. That is, students can not only prepare assignments for university studies, but also independently assess the degree of their own willingness to work in any company, as well as the level of their own competitiveness in the labor market.

The proposed model of comparing business cultures was used in business English practical classes at the university. The effectiveness of the methodology for the development of intercultural communicative competence of students of the Economics Department was tested in the course of experimental work. In total, 35 students participated in the experiment. In general, the work carried out allowed the development of practical skills of intercultural communication. It is proved by the diagnostics of the development of components of intercultural competence of students of the Economics Department studying according to the developed methodology (35 people). The components of intercultural competence were presented in the form of low, medium, high levels.

- The methodology for assessment the components of intercultural competence includes:

a) test on vocabulary;

b) essay "Characteristics of the economy of an English-speaking country (USA, Great Britain, Australia);

c) the questionnaire "What do I know about the USA, Great Britain, Australia?"

d) an oral survey (dialogue in situations of intercultural communication);

e) interview "Your attitude to the culture, traditions of the USA, Great Britain, Australia".

Table I summarizes the results of this study (data are given in absolute numbers).

TABLE I. RESULTS OF THE EXPERIMENT

Components intercultural competence	Low level		Average level		High level	
	before	after	before	after	before	after
Cognitive (awareness)	20	11	10	14	5	10
Pragmatic (skills of intercultural communication)	22	12	8	12	5	11
Motivational (respect, interest in the culture of the English-speaking country)	8	0	15	17	12	18
Information and practical (mastering of skills of work in English-language search engines)	15	8	2	9	18	18

These data indicate that during the experimental training the indicators of cognitive, pragmatic, information and practical components of intercultural competence have improved most markedly. It is important to pay attention that the motivational component was initially developed, which is explained by the socially significant personal qualities of students (openness, tolerance).

The proposed methods of comparing business cultures of different countries of the world according to a certain algorithm and analysis of communication in a foreign language can be used in practical classes in a foreign language and business foreign language at the University.

IV. DISCUSSIONS

Intercultural competence is an integral part of communicative competence. For this reason, it is advisable to refer to the concept of communicative competence. Communicative competence (CC) is one of the basic categories of modern theory and practice of teaching foreign languages and, in particular, English as a foreign language. In the scientific literature there are many definitions of the concept of (CC). There are different approaches to the structural analysis of this phenomena. The first linguist who distinguished difference between language as a system "langue " and "speech parole" was Ferdinand de Saussure. According to F. Saussure, under the system only the language that can be learned was meant, while speech activity is already the product of a specific speaker. Later, the definition of the term was expanded, it was called "communicative competence". The term "communicative competence" appeared on the basis of the idea of the American linguist N. Chomsky about linguistic (linguistic competence). N. Chomsky and Berwick R. defined linguistic (in the broad sense of the word) competence as "a system of intellectual abilities, a system of knowledge and belief that develops in

early childhood and in interaction with many other factors determines ... types of behavior” [7].

In the 1970s D. Hymes introduced the concept of communicative competence (CC) when he argued that to understand first language acquisition, it was necessary to take into account not only how grammatical competence but also the ability to use language appropriately were acquired, thus placing emphasis on sociolinguistic competence among native speakers. According to D. Hymes, the meaning of CC was an internal understanding of the situational relevance of the language. The structure of CC included: grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic and discursive competence [19]. The theory of D. Hymes was a very important contribution to the field of teaching a second language (foreign). This was the first revolutionary step in the field of language teaching.

The idea of Hymes was taken up by M. Canale and M. Swain in North America [11] and Van Ek in Europe, who applied it to foreign language acquisition and turned it into a fundamental concept in the development of communicative language teaching [15]. M. Canale and M. Swain identified 4 main types of competencies which in interaction with the system of knowledge and skills develop communication (Table II).

TABLE II. COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Communicative competence			
grammatical competence: vocabulary, phonetics, spelling, semantics and syntax	Sociolinguistic competence: correspondence of statements in form and meaning in a particular situation, contextual background	Discourse competence: the ability to build holistic, coherent and logical statements in oral and written speech	Strategic competence: compensation by special means inadequate knowledge of the language, speech and social experience of communication in a foreign language environment

In domestic linguistics, the term "communicative competence" was introduced into scientific use by M.N. Vyatutnev [29]. He proposed to understand communicative competence "as a choice and implementation of speech behavior programs depending on a person's ability to navigate in a particular communication environment; the ability to classify situations depending on the topic, tasks, communicative aims before the students' conversation, as well as during the conversation in the process of mutual adaptation".

It should be noted that different scientific schools determine the components of communicative competence in different ways. The definition of communicative competence proposed by V.V. Safonova as a combination of language, speech, and sociocultural components is firmly entrenched in the domestic methodology and existing in Federal Programs of Foreign Languages. This definition successfully combines existing domestic and European attempts to determine the full meaning of this competence [27].

The analysis of the scientific literature concludes that the opinion of most researchers agrees on the multicomponent nature of this type of competency. The main components of a foreign language professionally-oriented communicative competence include linguistic, sociolinguistic, intercultural, compensatory, strategic and social competencies.

Linguistic competence includes automated expressive and receptive lexical and grammatical skills, speech and language skills in all types of speech activity, knowledge of the rules for using the language.

Sociolinguistic competence means the ability to select and transform linguistic forms depending on the nature of communication.

Intercultural competence provides for the willingness and ability to conduct a dialogue of cultures, knowledge of the social and cultural context in which the language operates.

Compensatory competence means the development of skills to get out of a difficult situation (with a lack of vocabulary) through the use of other means, for example, synonyms, antonyms, paraphrase, etc.

Strategic competence involves mastering a system of knowledge about how a language can be learned and used.

Social competence provides for the presence of personally significant experience and the ability to make communication with other people, the ability to navigate in a communication situation, the skill of productive partnership in a communication environment.

Despite the different approaches to the definition and understanding of communicative competence, it has a very clear structure, the main components of which are competencies that characterize it from different points of view and give an overall, quite complete description of the concept of "foreign language communicative competence".

We have mentioned above that intercultural competence is one of the main components of communicative competence. The relevance of the study of the interaction of cultures in the field of international cooperation, the characteristics of national business cultures, the nature of the cultural barriers that arise as well as communication in the field of professional activity is confirmed by a large number of studies and publications on this topic by both foreign and domestic.

Intercultural competence is developed in the learning process. Taking into consideration that the interpenetration of cultures is manifested primarily in communication, it is logical that intercultural competence becomes primarily one of the main components of foreign-language communicative competence, that is, an integral part of the process of mastering a foreign language. I. Pluzhnik believes that intercultural communication presupposes "adequate mutual understanding of two participants belonging to different national cultures in a communicative act" [25].

There are several concepts related to the intercultural competence of an individual, namely: "intercultural understanding", "intercultural (background) knowledge", "intercultural awareness", "intercultural flair". Since they are

all similar in content but not identical, it becomes necessary to consider each of them separately.

Intercultural understanding is based on a person's ability to understand, correctly interpret and correctly respond to people's behavior or situations, which are based on prerequisites for misunderstandings because of cultural differences. Studying the characteristic features of national cultures in foreign language classes at a university should provide students with relevant knowledge and skills with which to achieve understanding in intercultural communication.

Intercultural (background) knowledge plays a crucial role in intercultural understanding. Moreover, without intercultural understanding existence of intercultural knowledge is impossible at all. Intercultural knowledge provides students with general cultural characteristics, values, beliefs and behavior of representatives of a particular national culture.

Intercultural awareness is developed on the basis of intercultural knowledge as the student begins to realize and evaluate foreign culture on a personal level. This process is accompanied by changes in the social behavior of the student, manifested more in his openness, adaptability to communication.

Intercultural flair is the ability to interpret situations, the behavior of representatives of other cultures, as well as the ability to respond to them correctly. An adequate reaction is possible if a person ceases to interpret events only on the basis of his own culturally determined perception, that is, for example, to define a phenomenon as good or bad, right or wrong, based on the norms and rules of his own national culture.

In our opinion intercultural competence means the ability of an individual to cooperate productively with representatives of other cultures; this concept is broader than the concept of "intercultural understanding", "intercultural knowledge", "intercultural awareness", "intercultural flair".

According to N. M. Gubina, intercultural competence is the ability to perceive, understand, interpret the phenomena of foreign culture and the ability to compare, find differences and common features with the native mentality and national traditions, critically comprehend them and build into their own picture of the world. At the same time, not only a general readiness for communication and interaction is necessary, but also a special cultural consciousness, realistic self-esteem, empathy of a foreign individual, tolerance, emotional stability, self-confidence, the ability to overcome contradictions are required [17].

As noted by I. L. Pluzhnik, a different perspective on the understanding and interpretation of intercultural competence is due to the need to consider it from the standpoint of professional activities of specialists. According to this view of the meaning of the phenomenon, the concept of intercultural competence "is a functional ability to understand the views and opinions of representatives of another culture, to adjust one's own behavior, to overcome conflicts in the communication process, to recognize the right to existence of various values, norms of behavior. Such understanding is

becoming most in demand for a modern specialist. It creates the basis for professional mobility, preparation for rapidly changing living conditions, introduces a specialist to the standards of world achievements, increases the possibilities of professional self-realization based on communication and tolerance" [25].

It is worth noting that intercultural professional interaction presupposes a high level of proficiency in both a complex of professional knowledge and a foreign language. It also implies the ability to adequately interpret and accept the sociocultural characteristics of communication partners in solving practical professional problems. To achieve this result, integrated teaching of the language and the characteristics of the cultural environment of its native speakers is required.

Different cultures and cultural traditions are very diverse, so barriers, obstacles and difficulties arise in communication. Mutual cultural differences manifest themselves in different areas, such as behavior, etiquette, norms, values, enduring expressions and non-verbal communication.

In the business sphere, mutual cultural differences arise in areas such as management style, corporate culture, marketing, intercultural negotiations. Views and values are very different from culture to culture, and in order to succeed, you need to know the rules of negotiating internationally. That is, any kind of international business relations implies intercultural communication and an understanding of the culture of the country with which a deal is made or negotiations are just being conducted. Compliance with the rules of such negotiations leads to the desired final result and greatly affects the success of the business.

In connection with all of the above, the making out of a methodology for comparing business cultures of different countries in the process of training specialists in the business sphere is of particular importance.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The development of foreign language intercultural competence in teaching future business specialists of non-linguistic universities is a necessary condition for the preparation of modern bachelors / specialists. Culture teaching and language teaching are inseparable in this context and culture is always embedded, integrated into language learning process.

Intercultural communicative competence is a competence of a special nature. It is not identical to communicative competence of a native speaker and can only be found in intercultural communicant — linguistic identity, to know through the study of languages of different cultures and especially their (cultures) interact. Intercultural competence is an ability that allows a linguistic personality to transcend its own culture and acquire the qualities of a mediator of cultures without losing its own cultural identity. Intercultural competence has a complex structure and correlates with foreign language communicative competence in a very complex way.

The proposed methodology for the development of the ICC gives an idea of the diversity of the world, fosters openness, tolerance and readiness for dialogue, contributes to a deeper understanding of their own culture and its role in the humane thinking in the sphere of the world economy. The main idea of the study is that the process of teaching foreign languages should not only give students knowledge and develop their speech skills, but also have such an impact on the personality, as a result of which the student turns into a self-developing emotionally mature intellectually cognitive personality. The student mastering intercultural communicative competence is able to cope with unforeseen cultural situations of communication by identifying or creating unique tools for searching, processing and practical application of information.

The development of intercultural competence within the framework of the proposed methodology is not only in the intellectual and cognitive field, but also affects mental and emotional processes. This determines the integrated nature of tasks aimed at the development of competence of the studied type. The effectiveness of tasks, in turn, is provided by the application of specific principles of their creation and selection, taking into account both the features of the phenomenon of culture and the features of the phenomenon of intercultural communication.

Further research efforts in this area will be aimed at developing a theory of assessment the levels of development of intercultural competence and practical mechanisms for translating them into the professional training of business specialists.

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