

# Experience in Developing Socio-cultural Language Competence in Professionally Oriented Foreign Language Teaching

Marina L. Ivleva<sup>1,\*</sup> Nonna L. Bagramyants<sup>2,a</sup> Vitaly Yu. Ivlev<sup>2,b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moscow, Russia

<sup>2</sup>National Research University, Bauman Moscow State Technical University (BMSTU), Moscow, Russia

<sup>a</sup>E-mail: nonnalev@yandex.ru

<sup>b</sup>E-mail: vitalijivlev@yandex.ru

\* Corresponding author. E-mail: marinanonna@yandex.ru

## ABSTRACT

**The article considers the role of socio-cultural competence as an important component of the modern job description of a specialist in adapting to new multicultural world. The aim is to show that in the new model of language education, socio-cultural competence helps to solve the problems of forming skills for effective intercultural interaction in a multicultural world and to prepare students for real contacts with foreign colleagues in the professional, social and personal areas of modern life. There are 3 main approaches to the study of intercultural communication: functional, explanatory and critical. The article analyzes the causes of failures (discommunication) in cross-cultural interaction that occur at 3 levels of communication: linguistic, socio-cultural, and psychosocial. It is concluded that the formation of socio-cultural language competence should act as an integral system in the overall structure of training specialists and should proceed in two interrelated areas: information-thematic and practical.**

*Keywords: sociocultural competence, context of cross-cultural interaction, discommunication, cognition, affective and behavioral levels of interaction*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Today's world seeks to combine the richest cultural and linguistic heritage and create a common human space in which a multi-ethnic and multilingual community can effectively communicate and coexist. "Communication should take place in an official, accurate and context-free format. People engaged in performing complex tasks using high technologies are obliged to decipher the same idiom"[1]. Consequently, the language of interethnic communication will create an opportunity for the citizens of the new world to adapt to the changing conditions of social and cultural systems. In the public consciousness of Russians, English claims to be the language of the macro-mediator. This status is supported by the function of a kind of metaphenomenon performed by the English language. The process of globalization, associated with it economic integration and technological

modernization, innovation, improving the quality of life, the introduction of world standards, the modern political context and other factors of a non-linguistic nature have assigned English the role of a global language of interethnic communication.

A generation of young people who are ready to become members of a globalized world and enter the global level of communication should have certain linguistic freedom in order to join world values and world scientific and practical experience [2]. There is no doubt that the optimal level of social mobility and competitiveness in the labor market for a modern specialist can provide, among other things, such a quality of foreign language proficiency, in which he can freely change the language code of communication from his native language to a foreign language [3].

Russian methodology offers a number of initiatives in the field of foreign language training. One of the most relevant is the formation of socio-cultural competence, which is considered as "the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform an action", and more broadly – interaction for foreign language communication [4]. The goal of

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\*Fund: The study was carried out with the financial support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research in the framework of the research project № 20-013-00477 «An innovative environment for the development of gifted students of a technical university in the context of digitalization».

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## **II. MAIN METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

When analyzing such an important phenomenon as intercultural communication, the formation of socio-cultural competence implies overcoming the barriers of communicative understanding and language behavior. Representatives of different cultures often do not understand each other due to the fact that they mutually neglect the cultural context of interaction, which is closely related to the meaning and essence of verbal and non-verbal behavior of those communicating. There are certain stable cultural-specific "word games" and behavioral strategies in which a foreign language learner must navigate in order to understand the meaning and essence of a communicative act or any other forms of interaction and respond to them accordingly. Sociocultural competence is not just about knowing how to behave correctly in a particular culture. It also involves a certain experience, which is based on the practical and hermeneutical capabilities of the student. This experience and the practical knowledge and skills intertwined with it are shown only with participation in "word games" and behavioral acts.

Sociocultural linguistic competence is an important condition for the implementation of intercultural linguistic communication. It is known that there are three main methodological approaches to the study of intercultural communication: functional, explanatory and critical. These approaches are based on different ideas about human nature, human behavior and the nature of human knowledge. Each of them contributes to our understanding of the process of intercultural communication.

The functional approach was developed in the 1980s and is based on the methods of sociology and psychology. According to this approach, the culture of any nation can be described using various methods. Any change in culture can also be measured and described. Culture determines human behavior and communication, and therefore they can also be described and predicted. The main goal is to show the specifics of the influence of culture on communication. Comparing the cultural differences of the interacting parties helps to predict the success or failure of their communication. The result of the functional approach is the theory of communication adaptation, which claims that in situations of intercultural communication, people

often change their models of communicative behavior, adapting to the models of communication partners. At the same time, the change in the style of communication occurs faster during relaxed, calm communication. Even from our own experience of communicating with representatives of other cultures, we can conclude that we prefer to adjust to the interlocutor if we evaluate him positively. For example, when communicating with a foreigner, we can speak slower, clearer and more distinctly, making the communication process easier for the interlocutor.

The functional approach allows to study communication styles in different cultures. Dan Bernland, a well-known American researcher of intercultural communication, used this approach to compare communication styles in Japan and the United States [5]. He found a lot of differences, including differences in the way Japanese and American cultures compliment and apologize. It turned out that in both cultures, people prefer simple apologies, but Americans tend to apologize and praise their partner much more often. When the same problems and troubles occur, the Japanese prefer quick action to fix them, while the Americans tend to give explanations and apologize.

The explanatory (or interpretive) approach also became widespread in the late 1980s. Proponents of this approach believe that the world around a person is not alien to him, since it is created by a person. In the course of conscious activity, a person receives subjective experience, including in communication with representatives of other cultures. The goal of the explanatory approach is to understand and to describe, but not to predict, human behavior. Followers of the explanatory approach view culture as a human environment created and changed through communication. This approach uses the methods of anthropology and linguistics: role-playing games, participatory observation, etc. The focus is usually on understanding communication patterns within a particular cultural group. In the course of research on intercultural communication based on an explanatory approach, it was concluded that the communication rules of a particular community of people are based on the cultural values and ideas of this particular group.

The critical approach includes many provisions of the explanatory approach, but the emphasis in the research of intercultural communication conducted on its basis is made on the study of the conditions of communication: situations, environment, etc. Supporters of this trend are primarily interested in the historical context of communication. In their research, they proceed from the assumption that "fighting" relationships are always present in communication. From this point of view, culture is seen by them as a battlefield, a place where numerous explanations and interpretations of cultural phenomena come together

and where there is always a dominant force that determines cultural differences and the nature of communication. The purpose of studying intercultural communication is to explain human behavior, and through it, the changes in people's lives. The supporters of the critical approach are convinced that the study and description of the dominant force in cultural situations will teach people to resist it and more effectively organize their communication with other people and cultures.

The main method of critical approach is text analysis. Therefore, scientists usually analyze the media (television programs, videos, publications in the press), which, in their opinion, make the main contribution to the formation of modern culture. However, they do not enter into direct contacts with communicants, do not explore personal intercultural interactions. The most effective method for both studying and teaching intercultural communication is training, which, in comparison with the classical academic forms of organizing the educational process, to a greater extent meets the specific requirements and difficulties of intercultural learning due to its proximity to practice and the intensity of training. While traditional forms of education have focused primarily on general personality development, training is more focused on practical requirements and the study of specific situations. This kind of orientation stimulated the emergence and development of a whole group of applied methods, the use of which in the educational process allowed to make the study of intercultural communication effective and purposeful.

Applied methods include: biographical reflection, interactive modeling, role-playing games, self-assessment, and simulations [6].

The practice of using these methods in our experience allows us to come to the conclusion that they can be used to compare two or more cultures, you can focus on the general difficulties of the communication process, and on specific cases of cross-cultural communication. The use of these methods in the process of training cross-cultural communication makes it possible to prepare the representatives of different cultures for effective contacts with foreign cultures, teach them to understand their communication partners and achieve their goals and results [7], [8].

### **III. DISCOMMUNICATION IN INTERCULTURAL INTERACTION**

In order to implement successful intercultural communication, it is necessary to organize targeted training of future specialists, in which they will be able to adapt to the reflection of the realities and cultural relations of this language in their speech and feel comfortable with it and in it [9]. Researchers in recent

years have increasingly mentioned the term "discommunications" when describing students' ability to communicate in a foreign language. Discommunications in cross-cultural interaction take place at 3 levels of communication: linguistic, socio-cultural, and psychosocial.

In the first, linguo-cultural type of failures, their cause may be the transfer from the native language to the foreign language of extralinguistic phenomena and their differential features, which are not characteristic of the language being studied. This is expressed in the incorrect use of vocabulary and situational clichés due to the insufficient amount of non-equivalent vocabulary learned and the lack of knowledge about the socio-cultural features of speech behavior in a different society.

The main manifestations of sociocultural discommunication are the reliance of students in the study of a foreign language on their social reality and the automatic transfer of extralinguistic concepts from the native culture to the culture of the country of the language being studied.

Psychosocial discommunication is based on the inadequacy of the perception of the culture of a foreign country. This culture is treated either as devoid of any specificity and the same for all foreign countries, or foreign cultural phenomena evoke feelings of superiority or admiration in students.

The practice of working with students confirms the fact that the process of developing sociocultural competence as an integral part of language training is the product of spontaneous rather than purposeful influences of teachers. This implies the need and expediency of developing scientifically grounded and verified ways of transforming spontaneous ones into regulated and optimally improved methods of work. This task can be adequately solved within the framework of an integrated, interdisciplinary approach, taking into account the data of pedagogical and social psychology, cultural studies, history, political science, economics, methods of teaching language and other sciences, which provide students with conditions for the accumulation and transfer of intercultural interaction experience, for streamlining and comprehending the surrounding world.

### **IV. CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

Our own teaching experience shows that intercultural interaction is a system of interdependent and interrelated contexts: cognitive, affective and behavioral, it is the result, among other things, of the formed socio-cultural competence. Achieving success in communication in general and in language communication in particular is impossible without

taking into account the above levels of interaction. The formation of sociocultural competence should be considered as the development of professionally important qualities of trainees, their mental states and the operational composition of future activities [10].

The purpose of the cognitive area is, in addition to language training, the acquisition of knowledge about the culture of the country of the target language and the features of intercultural interaction [11], [12]. For the affective sphere, it is important to work on overcoming internal psychological barriers, uncertainty and fears when using a foreign language and, more broadly, when interacting with a foreign culture, mastering methods of constructive solutions to difficult communication situations. The behavioral component is implemented in the development of behavioral strategies in various situations of language interaction, as well as in the development of abilities that affect the success of communication and remove the likelihood of discommunication. These abilities include flexibility, tolerance and empathy.

The formation of sociocultural linguistic competence takes place in two interrelated areas: informational (thematic) and practical.

The first area, sometimes called "orientation", contributes to obtaining primary linguistic and sociocultural information about the country of the target language (language system, history, political and social structure, laws, place in the world community, cultural features, etc.). At this stage, the student is given an idea of the categories used: what is language, culture, cultural identity, cultural communication, communicative act, communicative task, etc. This direction of work allows the learning linguistic personality to carry out actions that are not related to the use of the language. The second - the practical area of work - is precisely the process of developing competence and allows to apply the acquired knowledge in the practice of communication. It is associated with the use of linguistic means adequate to the situation, taking into account the extra-linguistic reality [54].

The formation of socio-cultural competence should act as an integral system in the general structure of training specialists, which will help them to develop a system of ideas and concepts about the cultural characteristics of representatives of another community.

Sociocultural competence develops the motivational and axiological readiness of future specialists to interact with colleagues of different nationalities in various areas of activity. It contributes to the application and the creative transformation of the acquired knowledge, abilities and skills in real-life situations.

## V. CONCLUSION

The consistent implementation of the socio-cultural approach in teaching a foreign language will create opportunities for the successful implementation of the professional needs of future specialists, expand the boundaries of their social functioning, help them to become competent participants in intercultural communication and effectively solve the problems of adequate linguistic behavior in a different linguistic reality.

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