

Development of Intercultural Communicative Competence in the Process of Teaching English to Future Interpreters

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Abstract

The successful functioning of both the state and individual in the conditions of updated intercultural communication is impossible without adequate mastery of the universal language of international communication, which is currently the English language. The development of intercultural abilities of future interpreters in the field of business communication is aimed at continuous improvement of existing educational programs of institutions of higher education. The relevance of our research is due to the growing demand in modern business society for highly qualified interpreters with intercultural communication competencies. The purpose of the study is to develop and practically implement a model of intercultural communicative competence in the process of teaching business English. The mentioned educational program is for applicants for higher education in the field of translation who are studying in a bachelor's degree program at Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design. Changes in the development of intercultural communicative competencies of students were recorded experimentally using diagnostic techniques. The research results are reflected in the educational program "The English language: translation in business communications" and designed on the principles of developing the intercultural communicative competence of future interpreters. It is created to train highly qualified specialists who can analyze, organize and conduct interlingual and intercultural business communication, plan and carry out successful complex translation projects, and act as intermediaries in the process of interlingual and intercultural communication of business partners.

Keywords: Business communications, communicative competence, educational program, intercultural communication, interpreter training, quality of education, the English language, Ukrainian context

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Introduction

Life is impossible in the modern world without making business contacts. English has become the universal language of international communication: “English has ‘traveled’ to many parts of the world <...> This phenomenon has created positive interactions as well as tensions between global and local forces and has had serious linguistic, ideological, sociocultural, political and pedagogical implications” (Sharifian, 2009, p. 1).

Therefore, teaching business English as a means of intercultural communication is especially important for the effective implementation of communication with representatives of different cultures. In the current context, teaching foreign languages should be based on the principles of intercultural communication.

The development of intercultural abilities of future interpreters in business communications is aimed at continuous improvement of the existing educational programs of institutions of higher education. The relevance of this research is due to the growing demand of modern business society for highly qualified interpreters with intercultural communication competencies. In addition, for philological universities, both all over the world and in Ukraine, there remains a clear need for training competitive specialists who carry out practical professional and communicative activities in business translation.

Literature Review

In the era of globalization, the problems of intercultural communication have acquired special significance since the interaction of representatives of different linguistic cultures in business, public and socio-political spheres has become an integral part of modern reality. Consequently, the issues of the effectiveness of the intercultural communication process are central in some contemporary researchers’ works.

The emergence date of intercultural communication as an academic discipline is considered to be 1953 when Hall & Trager’s book “The Analysis of Culture” was published. The authors first suggested for general use the term “intercultural communication,” reflecting, in their opinion, a unique area of human relations.

Nowadays, intercultural competence is traditionally viewed as “a complex of analytical and strategic abilities that expand the interpretative spectrum of an individual in the process of interpersonal interaction with representatives of other cultures” (Knapp, & Knapp-Potthoff, 1990, p. 66).

It is generally accepted that intercultural competence prepares people to interact effectively with other interlocutors from different cultures (Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2012). In the development model of the intercultural component of background knowledge, Bennett (2009) describes the internal process of transition from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism that happens to students.

The components that make up the model of intercultural communicative competence vary depending on the preferences of a particular researcher. Byram (1997) develops a

multidimensional model of intercultural communicative competence that considers knowledge, values and skills to be essential elements of successful intercultural interaction. Thus, he identifies five main components of this model:

- 1) attitudes (for instance, curiosity, open-mindedness);
- 2) knowledge (for instance, knowledge about social groups in the business partner's country);
- 3) skills of interpreting and relating (for instance, the ability to interpret documents of representatives of other cultures);
- 4) skills of discovering and interacting (for instance, the ability to acquire new knowledge about the culture of another country);
- 5) critical cultural awareness / political education (for instance, the ability to critically assess the attitudes, models and results of own and foreign culture).

The cluster model of intercultural communicative competence developed within The Global People project (Spencer-Oatey, & Stadler, 2009) has become the most widely represented. It has four main clusters: knowledge and ideas; communication; relationships; personal qualities and dispositions, which contain 22 competencies, which, in turn, are divided into 68 components.

Many researchers (e.g., Mai, 2017, 2018; Kramersch & Sullivan, 1996; Tran & Duong, 2015) reiterate the urgent need to develop more effective lingo-didactic methods for teaching English as an international language. Intercultural communicative competence is expected to be integrated into the English language teaching process to prepare students "to be both global and local speakers of English and to feel at home in both international and national cultures" (Kramersch & Sullivan, 1996, p. 211).

According to the study by Bakum, Savchak, Kostyuk, Zhumbei & Poznansky (2021), the development of cultural competence "forms positive motivation; improves intellectual and professional qualities; enriches students' experience in the practice of resolving professional problems under their own and social-cultural needs; develops skills of intercultural interaction for the effective implementation of tolerant communication in professional activities" (p. 83).

While intercultural competency provides a solid foundation for intercultural communication, and some scholars use this term interchangeably for intercultural communicative competence, it is often argued that these two notions should not be considered equivalent (Byram, 1997; Moeller & Nugent, 2014; Wilberschied, 2015). Comparing intercultural communication and intercultural communicative competence, Byram (1997) emphasizes the skill set required to acquire competence "in attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to IC while using a foreign language" (p. 71). According to Wilberschied (2015), people with intercultural communication competence have the ability "to manage interactions of a greater variety and complexity as a result of self-study, foreign language proficiency, and analysis of one's own culture and that of those who speak the target language" (p. 3).

Despite some disagreements in the definition of intercultural communicative competence, many scholars have agreed that intercultural communicative competence is a process that continues to be evolved and improved throughout life (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Moller, &

Nugent, 2014; Wilberschied, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to pay attention to developing intercultural communicative competence and how a person acquires the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities. This made it necessary not only to form and develop a high level of students' language proficiency at the phonetic, lexical and grammatical levels, but also to provide them with the necessary knowledge about intercultural communication and to create a solid foundation for developing ability and willingness to productively participate in such communication.

Since the universal language of business intercultural communication so far is English, the works devoted to analyzing of differences in the speech behavior of native English speakers are of the most significant interest. Informative observations on this issue are presented in the studies of Bryson (2015), Wisson (2015) and others. They compare the communicative behavior of the British, Americans, Russians and representatives of other linguistic cultures.

Thus, it is generally recognized that intercultural interaction in the context of modern integration and globalization processes plays an important role in implementing effective business communication in the international environment.

Methods

The research has been carried out in several stages. The first stage was devoted to the study and analysis of scientific and methodological literature on lingo-didactics, methods of teaching a foreign language, and monitoring the development of intercultural abilities of future interpreters in business communications in the educational process. In the second stage, a model was formed for the effective development of intercultural communicative competencies of future interpreters in business communications, verified using questionnaires and testing and diagnostic methods. According to our previous study, Dvorianchykova, Bondarchuk, Syniavska & Vyshnevska (2021), the effectiveness of the development of these competencies, as well as the effectiveness of teaching English in general, is a multifunctional multidimensional system that characterizes a qualitative level of learning outcomes achievement. We evaluate the effectiveness by analyzing objective and subjective indicators, for example, the level of formation of the necessary competencies among students, the quality of scientific and methodological support of the taught discipline and the degree of satisfaction with the activities of stakeholders in the educational process (p. 240). The final stage was devoted to summarizing the research results, their implementation in the educational process by improving the educational program "The English language: translation in business communications" of Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design (KNUTD), considering the need to form and develop students' intercultural communicative competence.

Participants

The research participants were 45 first-year philology students of KNUTD enrolled in the bachelor's degree program "The English language: translation in business communications". They were divided into three groups of equal numbers.

Instruments and Procedures

In the research course, a model was designed to develop intercultural communicative competencies of future interpreters at English classes. It is a complex structure of mutually

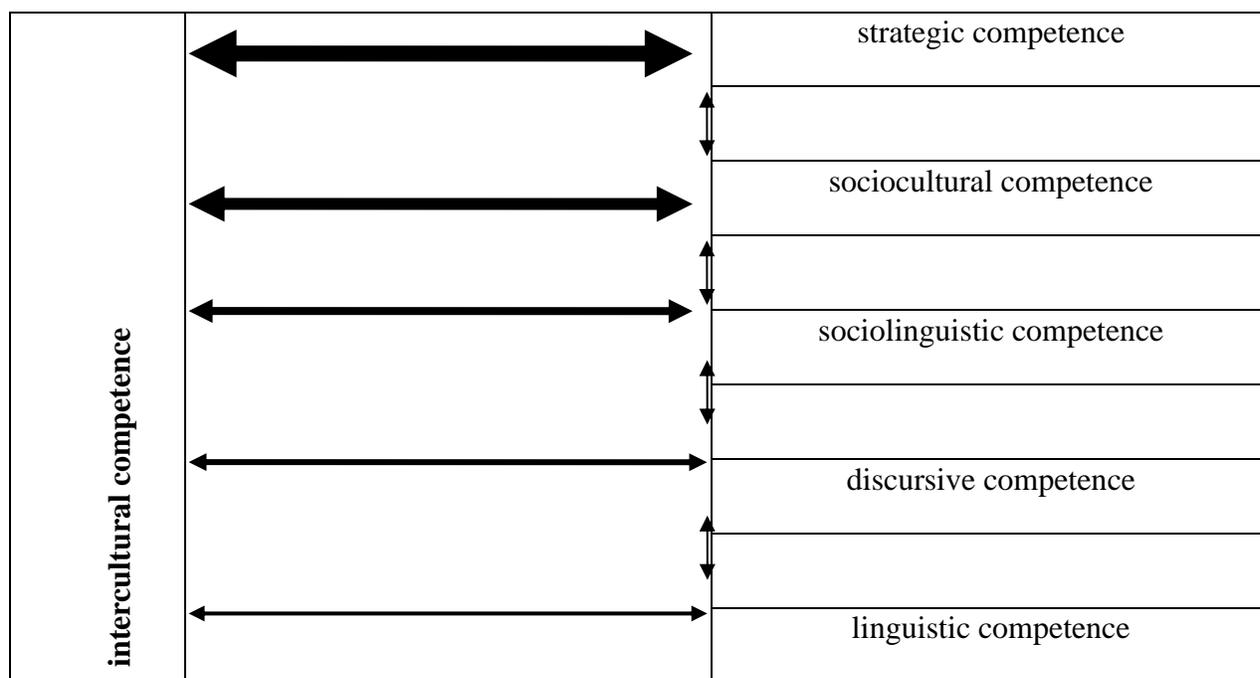
defining competences: linguistic (phonetic, lexical and grammatical), discursive, sociolinguistic, sociocultural and strategic (Table 1).

The linguistic component contributes to the correct formation of thoughts with the help of lexical and grammatical correctness of foreign language usage, and adequate understanding of information by the interlocutors. It acts as the foundation for the formation of other competences.

The discursive component provides the ability to form utterances directly in the process of verbal communication. This competence underlies all additional competences.

The sociolinguistic component helps to perceive the surrounding reality in all the variety of linguistic features due to the knowledge of various sociolinguistic concepts (for example, dialect, accent, linguistic gaps, etc.).

Table1. *Component constitution of intercultural communicative competence*



The sociocultural component provides knowledge, understanding and tolerant attitude towards representatives of different cultures, their national and cultural values, traditions, customs, etc.

The strategic component provides a person with the ability to use various techniques, tactics and strategies of verbal and non-verbal communication adapted to a specific situation to achieve the desired communicative result.

Changes in the development of intercultural communicative competencies of students in three groups were reflected under the levels of participation in intercultural communication in a

foreign language. Thus, the set of criteria allows us to distinguish three main levels of a student's readiness to enter into intercultural communication.

The first level is characterized by elementary, basic foreign language knowledge. It corresponds to the so-called level of "survival" in the process of intercultural communication.

The second level can be characterized as an adaptive one. The student gets used to the intercultural communication environment and participates in it with uncertainty.

The third level indicates the formation of the student's intercultural communicative competence and readiness to participate in intercultural communication effectively.

At the initial stage of the study, the first assessment for the development level of students' intercultural competence was carried out using diagnostic methods. It demonstrated the following results (Table 2). All groups are approximately at the same level of development of intercultural communicative competencies and do not have significant differences. Most of the students have an intermediate level. The percentage of students who scored the required number of points for a high level of intercultural communicative competence is relatively small.

Table 2. *Students' level of intercultural communicative competence at the initial stage of the study*

Level Group	I (low)	II (intermediate)	III (high)
Group 1	22%	72%	6%
Group 2	27,3%	69,7%	3%
Group 3	28,4%	71,6%	-

The results of the initial stage of the experiment demonstrate the need to improve the existing educational programs by including the disciplines that form the students' intercultural communicative competence.

In order to confirm our hypothesis, the next stage of the experimental study, which took place in the natural learning environment, was carried out. Individual lingo-didactic learning environment was purposefully varied in different groups. The work in the first group was carried out with additional motivation for students to conduct future professional activities, activation of creative tasks, and attitude to the relationship between cultures. There was students' involvement in the process of acquiring knowledge about the national and cultural characteristics of the native country and the country of the target language, and the rules of speech etiquette. Exercises for developing skills of intercultural communication were actively used.

In the second group, this work was carried out with less intensity. The emphasis was placed only on the formation of linguistic and discursive competencies, and partly on the sociolinguistic component of intercultural communication.

In the third group, none of the additional activities were purposefully implemented, and the training was conducted according to the traditional method.

After four months of the experiment, the knowledge cross-section was conducted in three groups, which allowed to record the dynamics in the development of students' competencies in intercultural competence.

The comparative analysis showed that in the first group, where all additional methods of teaching intercultural competence were fully implemented in English classes, students had significantly improved their previous results (Table 3).

Table 3. Comparative results of dynamics in the development of students' intercultural communicative competence

group	I (low)		II (intermediate)		III (high)	
	initial stage	control stage	initial stage	control stage	initial stage	control stage
Group 1	22%	5,5%	72%	81,5	6%	13%
Group 2	27,3%	10,5%	69,7%	82,5%	3%	7%
Group 3	28,4%	18,4%	71,6%	79,6%	–	2%

This is especially evident against the results from the other two students' groups. Thus, experimental and methodological work on developing intercultural communicative competence of future interpreters generated the following results: the number of low-level students four times decreased in the first group, in the second group – 2.6 times, in the third group – only 10%. The number of intermediate and high-level students in all groups has increased.

Results

The improvement of students' intercultural communicative competence took place in several stages. Each stage was characterized by the implementation of an increasing number of competencies and more active participation in the process of intercultural communication (Table 4).

Table 4. Compliance with the specialist's participation degree in intercultural communication (IC) and the competencies that makeup intercultural communicative competence (ICC)

The specialist's participation degree in IC	Competencies that make up ICC	Level of ICC development
“Survival” degree in IC	linguistic, discursive, intercultural	Level I: providing the possibility of elementary IC
Adaptation and limited participation degree in IC	linguistic, discursive, sociolinguistic; sociocultural; intercultural	Levels I – II: allows you to solve professional problems in complex IC
Participation degree in IC with a high degree of uncertainty	linguistic, discursive, sociolinguistic; sociocultural; strategic; intercultural	Levels I – II
Participation degree in IC with little uncertainty	linguistic, discursive, sociolinguistic; sociocultural; strategic; intercultural	Levels II – III
Confident participation degree in IC	linguistic, discursive, sociolinguistic; sociocultural; strategic; intercultural	Level III
Free and productive	linguistic, discursive, sociolinguistic;	Level III: corresponds to the bearer

participation degree in IC	sociocultural; strategic; intercultural	of a specific culture
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All components of the intercultural communicative competence model are interrelated. Thus, in the context of professional translation activities, basic communicative competencies (linguistic and discursive) allow the student to adequately, logically, understandably and grammatically correct form utterances, understand the speech of other culture representatives. A low level of these basic competencies' formation leads to low quality of professional activities and negatively affects efficient communication.

Insufficient mastery of sociolinguistic, sociocultural and strategic competencies leads to communicative failures in professional and business communication due to specific barriers in the background knowledge about culture, traditions, and rules of behavior of other cultures representatives.

Forming a high level of the student's intercultural communicative competence takes place in several stages.

The first stage is motivational and adaptive. Its goal is considered to be the formation of a student's value attitude to future professional activities, motivation to develop intercultural communication skills and participation in intercultural communication. The preference is given to the student's linguistic preparation since language proficiency is the primary task for an interpreter. At this stage, it is relevant to conduct topical seminars, business conversations, discussions with action-gaming elements.

The second stage is situational and practical. It is aimed at further deepening the student's knowledge on the intercultural issues, its actualization in various situations of professional communication. At this stage, students are individually involved in the process of familiarizing themselves with the national and cultural characteristics of the native country and the country of the target language. The priority is given to sociocultural competence during the development of specific projects by students, and participation in conferences.

The third stage is devoted to testing and consolidating the student's intercultural communicative competence by deepening his knowledge of the issue, and updating it in various cases of professional and business communication. The ability to use a foreign language at this stage is characterized by independence, awareness and creative rethinking in professional situations. The emphasis is put on exercises for the development of intercultural communication skills and various training.

Discussion

The professional activity of an interpreter is closely related to proficiency in the target language and thorough knowledge of the peculiarities of the other culture. Consequently, the intercultural communicative competencies of future interpreters are formed and developed in the process of purposeful intercultural communicative activity, which makes it possible to successfully carry out interlingual business translation at a high professional level.

Intercultural communicative competence ensures successful mutual understanding with representatives of other cultures, even with an average level of proficiency in a foreign language due to knowledge, experience and adherence to the rules and norms of business communication and behavior adopted in the other culture. This competence is a part of the future interpreter's integral social and professional competence, which allows him to carry out professional activities effectively.

The model of intercultural communicative competence developed as a result of a multi-stage experimental study formed the basis of the educational program “The English language: translation in business communications”, created at the Department of Philology and Translation of Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design. This program aims to train highly qualified competitive specialists who have deep knowledge of the target language, general and special competencies in the field of translation in business communications from English into Ukrainian and vice versa in written and oral forms. They also should be able to analyze, organize and conduct interlingual and intercultural business communication, plan and execute successful complex translation projects, act as intermediaries in the process of interlingual and intercultural communication of business partners and provide support for international information services.

In the process of learning according to the created program, students must develop skills and abilities to perform oral and written translations in the field of business, as well as accurately and adequately convey the meaning of statements of different styles, types and genres, considering the situation of interlingual and intercultural communication. Teaching English as the language of intercultural business communication fulfills the students' need for interpersonal, intercultural, interethnic communication with native speakers of the target language and people who speak English as a means of communication.

These tasks are implemented in a complex of disciplines included in the educational program “The English language: translation in business communications”. They contain information about the peculiarities of intercultural communication in Ukrainian and English business areas: *Business Ukrainian language in the translation aspect, Theory of linguistic communication, Country studies through language, Business English, Theory and practice of text translation in business communications, Theory and practice of text interpretation in business communications, Theory and practice of translation and interpretation of business negotiations and conferences*. The principles of intercultural communication are the key ones for disciplines aimed at forming, developing and improving the skills and abilities of translation professionals in business communications.

Based on the study of English as a foreign language, the main task of disciplines of the educational program “The English language: translation in business communications” is to reveal its phonetic, lexical and grammatical features, reflecting the cultural identity of native English speakers. The undoubted advantage of this program can be considered the fact that all the linguistic and speech characteristics of the English language are studied in comparison with the peculiarities of the native language and culture of students within the framework of comparative disciplines: *Comparative grammar of English and Ukrainian languages, Comparative lexicology of English and Ukrainian languages, Comparative stylistics of English and Ukrainian languages*. Students' awareness of their cultural background and their native language is a prerequisite for the interaction

of cultures. This enables them to predict to a certain extent those situations and areas of implementation of intercultural communication in the process of translation activity, which can cause difficulties due to a large number of discrepancies in the linguistic cases of the same type through English and Ukrainian languages, as well as to think over strategies and tactics to prevent possible communication failures.

Conclusion

Intercultural communicative competence is becoming increasingly in demand in teaching a foreign language since it creates the preconditions for the formation and development of professional mobility for a future specialist, introduces him to the standards of world achievements, and increases the possibilities of personal fulfillment. The students' intercultural competence is effectively formed with the help of special programs for preparing students for intercultural interaction, training on the formation of intercultural communication skills and competence, lectures and practical courses on cross-cultural psychology. Mastery of complex business communication skills in English in combination with intercultural communicative competence has become one of the mandatory requirements for highly qualified competitive modern specialists.

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