

SCTMG 2020**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the
Context of Modern Globalism»****INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES IN THE PROCESS OF
FORMATION OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE
COMPETENCE**

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Abstract

Developing an intercultural communicative competence in higher education is becoming crucial within globalization transformations, covering all areas of educational activity. The Saratov State Agrarian University is a reference university with students from close and distant countries. Thus, the issue of intercultural communication, combining traditional forms, methods and teaching aids with innovative ones is important. The main pedagogical technologies in this context are, first of all, information technologies in combination with methods of enhancing learning. The formation of intercultural communicative competency among students was carried out in control and experimental groups. The process of training and the formation of this competency in the control groups was carried out according to the traditional method, while the modern educational technologies were used in the experimental groups. The components that make up the structure of intercultural communicative competence: general cultural, communicative, and strategic, were introduced in stages, over the course of three semesters of studying the discipline Foreign Language. The first stage was aimed at the formation of basic intercultural knowledge; the second stage emphasizes a more expanded and in-depth acquisition of intercultural knowledge, the ability to build communication strategies, and the development of behavioral models. The third stage was to consolidate the acquired skills, making creative tasks, projects aimed at the formation of all components of intercultural communicative competence. In the process of mastering the cultural material by students, they gradually learned another culture, cultural values through the perception of the national picture of the world.

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Keywords: Information technology, intercultural communication competence, intercultural interaction.



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1. Introduction

The main stage in the formation of intercultural communicative competence of students in the study was the stage applying the information technology in the learning process of experimental groups. The study consists of three stages of the implementation of the technologies in the process of forming intercultural communicative competence of students of experimental groups. Since the teaching of a foreign language to all undergraduate according to the curriculum is carried out for three semesters, the introduction of information technology took place in three stages. To do this, all cultural material was divided into logically related thematic sections, so that in the process of its implementation, students gradually develop their knowledge, understanding and acceptance of foreign language and culture, cultural values through personal perception of their world image.

2. Problem Statement

Increasing the effectiveness of the intercultural communicative competence of students, through the information technologies integration in the process of teaching a foreign language. This will contribute to the more effective formation of intercultural communicative competence of students.

3. Research Questions

Practicing the gained knowledge on information technologies in the educational process, within the conditions for the formation of intercultural communicative competence.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to introduce the selected information technologies into the educational process to form students' intercultural communicative competence.

5. Research Methods

The study was conducted using the method of pedagogical experiment, which is a set of research methods implemented to test the objectivity and reliability of the hypothesis.

6. Findings

At the first stage, students considered such concepts as culture, cultural values, the issue of the emergence and overcoming of cultural stereotypes, got acquainted with country-specific information relating to the history and modernity of Great Britain and the USA, the peculiarities of their lifestyles, the specifics of British and American English. At the same time, students learned the national characteristics of Russian culture and Russian character.

At the end of the first stage, students of experimental groups have gained the following skills: search and adequately perceive cultural information; study the cultural component of the semantics of

words and phrases; understand authentic texts based on national cultural vocabulary and interpret them; use lexical units in everyday situations of intercultural communication.

In addition to the already quite traditional methods (conversation, problem-based learning, role-playing games), which were used quite successfully in class to form students' intercultural communicative competence, there are also active technologies (discussions, brainstorming, game technologies) and information technologies (Guslova, 2011) used at this stage (Gurova et al., 2017).

Students learned general concepts of culture, cultural values and tolerance during the process of working on sociocultural material. For example, when participating in the training module “We are all so different,” students were asked to independently define the culture, highlight the factors influencing the culture, by studying the sites proposed by the teacher (for example, www.projectbritain.com, which allows a detailed study of the culture of Britain). This was followed by a discussion on this topic, as a result of which the characteristic features inherent in different cultures were identified and their descriptions were given in the form of an electronic memory card (mind map). The formation of the sociocultural component of intercultural communicative competence was conducted with the help of video files illustrating the cultural phenomena of American and English society, and the task was to conduct a study, observing one or another event, people's behavior. Then it was necessary to observe the behavior of representatives of Russian culture in public transport, on the street, in a store; familiarize yourself with the commercials on the popular sites, find out how the symbols of England, the USA and Russia are reflected in the names of cities, streets, etc. Students also conducted a comparative analysis of the manifestations of everyday foreign-language and Russian cultures. The result of this analysis was an electronic presentation compiled by the student study group.

The practical tasks of immersing in foreign cultural reality, in the classroom was followed by managing mini-projects to search for specific information on a social network. There is an example of such mini-projects is: ordering a book on Internet (Book Search), selecting the appropriate gift (Finding presents), searching for the necessary tour according to the given parameters (Travel around the world). There were multimedia textbooks used with a variety of authentic texts containing sociocultural and regional geographic information. An example of such texts was the development of the Same Language but Different text in an interactive application to the Global textbook, which focuses the reader on the fact that language is a reflection of the culture of his people (Iriskhanova, 2007).

There were exercises given to develop the skills to establish the cultural component of the word meaning, to know the compatibility of certain lexical units, to use them correctly in the process of intercultural communication:

- Find the definition of lexical units in an electronic dictionary or Internet, identify their cultural component;
- identify a thematic thesaurus (synonyms, antonyms, compatibility, cases of use) of words of a certain cultural subject, using an electronic dictionary or Internet resources;
- analyze texts on Internet, identify keywords and expressions, the main idea, resume;
- analyze information and create an electronic dictionary entry, revealing the essence of such concepts as “soul”, “heart”, “freedom” in different cultures;

- find a culture-oriented thematic site, create, analyze texts on a given topic, make a brief review and presentation of sites;
- answer the teacher by e-mail;
- discuss in a forum the problem causing a cultural conflict;
- find an interlocutor in social networks (for example, in Interpals), get to know him, establish contact by building a constructive dialogue (Valencia & Benavides, 2019).

The formative stage of the experiment was followed by lexical and grammar exercises on-line and in interactive applications, in specialized external resources of Headway Activities, oral and electronic discussion of the received and analyzed information, writing an essay reviews, essays, reports.

The process of experimental training of students, covering the strategic component of intercultural communicative competence, was carried out using tasks such as analysis of specific situations, role-playing games. Students were also asked to find information on how to greet people of different nationalities, the distance that is comfortable for them in the communication process, and practice it in the the classroom.

In addition, students of the experimental groups were offered registration and their participation in intercultural forums (for example, the Intercultural Forum, 3Faiths Forum), purposefully focused on developing students' skills to treat well all representatives of different cultures. The experimental Internet lessons, exercises were carried out from specialized sites on cross-cultural learning, aimed directly at learning how to properly build a conversation line to achieve maximum comfort for participants of intercultural communication.

There was a test developed covering all the components of students' intercultural communicative competence formation, which was based on the use of the criteria-diagnostic system presented in the previous paragraph. According to the results analysis, 18 (23 %) of the participants in the experimental groups basically coped with the proposed tasks, but they had difficulties with the tasks on the cultural component of lexical units and sociocultural knowledge, their level was considered elementary; 44 (56.4 %) students showed really good knowledge in the intercultural communication, their level was considered intermediate; 16 (20.6 %) people did good job and managed with all test difficulties, showing excellent results, which indicates an advanced level. Participants in the control groups performed the proposed tasks much worse with 69.5 % in an elementary level, 27.8 and 2.7 % of the participants in the control groups showed an intermediate and advanced levels (Table 01).

Table 01. The level of intercultural communicative competence of students after the first stage of information technology program

Groups	Number of participants	Well-formedness level (in % of the total number of students in groups)					
		Elementary		Intermediate		Advanced	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Experiment group	78	18	23	44	56,4	16	20,6
Control group	72	50	69,5	20	27,8	2	2,7

The second stage of the information technology program covered the second semester of teaching a foreign language. When completed, students had to learn: to analyze the cultural component of lexical units, to correctly use national-cultural vocabulary in situations of interpersonal communication; to use

the formulas of appeal, greetings, thanks, to carry out intercultural interaction; correctly interpret the behavior of the interlocutor according to his cultural system of values; treat your interlocutor in terms of tolerance and empathy.

This stage of the study helped to expand and deepen intercultural knowledge, communication skills, and to increase the national-cultural vocabulary of students.

Authentic material selected for this stage contained facts of modern reality, reflecting the objective world-image of representatives from different cultures. There are issues of communication strategies of conversation, politeness and tact in questions, answers, requests, appeals, thanks, telephone conversation discussed (Chakur, 2018).

Methods and forms of classroom studies at this stage acquired a more problematic, search and creative character. Available intercultural knowledge helped to make the content of classes more creative and debatable.

Information technologies were used for the formation of the general cultural component of the intercultural communicative competence of students, including tasks from specialized sites. An example is the site [http // www.mislinks.org / topics / icc.htm](http://www.mislinks.org/topics/icc.htm), which enabled students of experimental groups to familiarize themselves with cultural realities: articles on sociocultural and regional studies topics, magazines, bibliographies, a database, and games , regional geographic quizzes, educational section “Exercises for the acquisition of multicultural experience” (Multicultural Experiential Exercises). The tasks of the Albatross section suggested various situations of intercultural contact (the first meeting of a group of foreign students, virtual acquaintance with representatives of another culture). This virtual person can represent a generalized type of culture with distribution of benefits, equality and recognition of leaders. There is also an example of a person is responsible for himself, his family and well-being. Another site offered a task (“European Neighbors”), which aroused the interest of students and teachers – to determine the cultural characteristics of people living in 6 European countries and create a virtual geographical map of national and cultural features. Also, to enrich socio-cultural knowledge, students were asked to complete web quests (“Immigrants”, “Lifestyle”, “National Stereotypes”). The purpose of the task was to analyse a problematic question trough presentation, web page or encyclopedic article.

The tasks for the communicative component formation of students' intercultural communicative competence at this stage, exercises and tasks in multimedia applications, was carried out in the direction of defining and expanding the semantics of such complex concepts as personal privacy, identity theft, personality using electronic dictionaries. Students have learned the words and phrases that are used to correctly appeal to other people.

To train intercultural communication skills, cases were used that included problem situations that arise in the process of intercultural communication. These cases were presented to students in the form of a video file on various topics – “The way you can better understand each other”, based on the plot of a conflict between two employees of a multinational company; “American party” – the plot is based on a situation when a foreigner was invited to a party in an American family and was late, and then was too late; “First Day at Work” – an unsuccessful attempt by a foreigner to establish his rules in an office with multinational staff. Further students had discussions finding an optimal solution for the proposed situation. The task was followed by role-playing activities.

The process of forming a strategic component at this stage consisted of game technologies – trainings, simulation games that reproduce communication situations, and video training. There students were asked to repeat the style of transmitting information, gestures, facial expressions and correctly conduct a conversation after reading the relevant instructions on the screen (Gartsov, 2007).

The final diagnosis at the end of the second stage was conducted in the form of electronic testing of the formation of the main components (general cultural, communicative, strategic) of intercultural communicative competence of students and in the form of communicative problem tasks.

Table 02. The level of formation of intercultural communicative competence of students after the second stage of information technology program

Groups	Number of participants	Well-formedness level (in % of the total number of students in groups)					
		Elementary		Intermediate		Advanced	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Experiment group	78	18	23	44	56,4	16	20,6
Control group	72	50	69,5	20	27,8	2	2,7

There are the following results obtained (Table 02): 11 students (14.1 %) of the experimental group and 39 students (53 %) of the control group made mistakes when writing assignments and incorrectly used communicative strategies in the framework of the proposed situation; their level of formation of intercultural communicative competence corresponds to elementary; 46 students (58.9 %) of the experimental group and 29 students (40 %) of the control group completed all the tasks quite well, with some mistakes in the communication process, their level was considered intermediate; 21 students (27 %) in the experimental group and 5 students (7 %) showed an advanced level of intercultural communication competence, showing good sociocultural, linguacultural knowledge and speech skills.

The third stage of the intercultural communicative competence program developed the following skills:

- analyze intercultural situations, interpret phenomena and facts based on existing knowledge;
- change stereotypical thinking;
- strive to understand the representative of another culture as much as possible;
- create communication situations consciously by choosing appropriate communication strategies to achieve the maximum effectiveness;
- conduct intercultural dialogue competently using appropriate language means (verbal and non-verbal).

The goals put forward at this stage consisted the study of cultural and linguistic features and methods of their expression, problem words and expressions, leading to misunderstanding and conflict situations characteristic of Russians studying a foreign language.

All aspects of intercultural communicative competence, as well as general cultural and linguacultural knowledge were expanded. According to the intercultural knowledge of students, the forms and methods of classes were focused on problematic, creative, cognitive research and design tasks. This activity developed analytical thinking, the ability to analyze and present language material (Danilova & Surodeeva, 2010).

The final stage of the intercultural communicative competence program consisted of such complicated tasks based on the use of information technologies, these tasks are: compiling an electronic thematic national-cultural mini-dictionary and cultural commentary on it; design and presentation of an electronic thematic encyclopaedia; implementation of individual projects that require the knowledge of the lexical material. For example, the “Finding a good job” project made students to find virtual resumes on the Internet, study them, then writing their resume and sending them by e-mail to a virtual employer (teacher). Other group projects and web quests (for example, the “Lifestyle” project) involved a background knowledge of lifestyle types: British and American lifestyle, written communication registers (formal and informal) and Internet etiquette. Students were also offered to listen to various audio files trying to identify the nationality of the speaker according to the speech manners. Having studied the corresponding site, sound the watched video file; greet the interlocutor using as many non-verbal means of communication as possible (Kalinichenko et al., 2017). Students were quite interested in working with articles on the online newspaper The New York Times. This material was presented on the website of the newspaper with tutorials, provided an opportunity for interactive communication with readers who can express their opinions and even ask a question to the author using the feedback function (send us your feedback). According to the fact that all the students had pen-friends from other countries on social networks, they were offered various topics for discussion. There was a part of the class activity of videoconferencing with the participation of foreign experts. Students had discussions on subculture, family relationships, value orientations, etc.

Table 03. Levels of formation of intercultural communicative competence of students (final test)

Groups	Number of participants	Well-formedness level (in % of the total number of students in groups)					
		Elementary		Intermediate		Advanced	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Experiment group	78	8	10,5	47	60,2	23	29,3
Control group	72	35	48,4	31	43,6	6	8

The results (as shown in Table 03) revealed 8 (10.2 %) students of the experimental groups made many mistakes in the final testing, their level corresponds to the elementary. 47 (60.2 %) students did not make significant mistakes during testing, which would affect the effectiveness of intercultural communication, their level was considered intermediate. 23 (29.3 %) students completed the test with excellent results, their level was considered as advanced. The results of the final testing in the control groups were as follows: 35 students (48.4 %) of elementary level, 31 people (43.6 %) – intermediate and 6 (8 %) – advanced.

7. Conclusion

There was a final test conducted at the end of the final stage of the experiment. For this, a comprehensive test was developed that determines the level of formation of intercultural communicative competence of students by the capabilities of information technologies. This technology included testing general cultural, communicative and strategic competency (Razdobarova et al., 2019). The test included 5

tasks: the first task was aimed at controlling the formation of the general cultural component of intercultural communicative competence, the second two tasks were aimed at checking the communicative component and were carried out using online exercises on specialized sites: the fourth task identified the strategic component; the fifth task monitored all the intercultural knowledge, and accordingly, the degree of formation of intercultural communicative competence of students as a whole. In addition to testing, students were asked to fill out a questionnaire, preceding the stage of testing information technologies for the formation of intercultural communicative competence. It was also about the possibility of using information technology in the process of teaching a foreign language, only from the standpoint of their effectiveness, influence on the formation of intercultural communicative competence. The results indicate that the information technology program effects positively on the formation of intercultural communicative competence, and thus the quality of their professional training was improved up to intermediate and advanced levels.

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