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Dialogue of Cultures - Culture of Dialogue: from Conflicting to Understanding

IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTIMEDIA PROJECTS WHEN TRAINING LINGUISTS IN THE FIELD OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The content of this article reflects the experience of training specialists in the field of intercultural communication for a degree in Linguistics, the educational program specialization “Theory and Practice of Intercultural Communication” –the French language in the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL) of Moscow City Pedagogical University (MCU). The Federal State Educational Standards require the purpose and objectives of the educational program to correspond to a set of procedures for assessing graduate’s intercultural professional competence. To achieve this goal, we have conducted a scientific study of the organization of the training process for future specialists in the field of intercultural communication, we analyzed the list and content of professional competencies, the principles of selecting topics for mastering a foreign language in an intercultural aspect, and the development of educational technologies. In 2017 Department of Romance Philology of IFL adopted a provision that the student’s defense of the final work in the form of a multimedia project may become a form of state examination. The multimedia project should be intended for a potential consumer or employer. The content of the thesis project was determined in accordance with the program of the studied disciplines and has been designated as “French National Identity: Linguistic and Cultural Aspects”. The results of the experiment confirmed the ability and willingness of graduates to act as mediators of two cultures and create multimedia projects that have the potential for practical use in the media, in the work of tour operators, tour guides, and leaders of cultural centers.

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1. Introduction

The pedagogical community all over the world is constantly searching for effective ways to involve students in the learning process, as well as improving the quality of training of future specialists. To achieve the set learning goals, various techniques and technologies are used in accordance with the declared specialty (Crichton & Kopp, 2006; Krippel et al., 2010; Schrand, 2008). Many humanitarian universities in Russia are preparing students in the field of 45.03.02 “Linguistics”. According to the federal standards of higher education, this field of study is represented by a number of training programs, the choice of which is carried out by the university not only due to its educational capabilities, but mainly meeting the needs of the region. The higher the presence of foreign campaigns and business in the region, the greater the need for specialists who can provide intercultural communication in various professional fields, that is, to act as an intermediary in the field of intercultural communication (Cherkashina, 2011). This is the social significance (mission) of the educational program “Theory and Practice of Intercultural Communication”. Universities implementing this training program make up educational programs, focusing on existing scientific research results related to the organization of training for future specialists in the field of intercultural communication (Berdichevsky, 2016; Tareva, 2018; Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment, 2017). We will consider a detailed description of the goals and objectives of training, determination of principles for selecting topics for mastering a foreign language in the intercultural aspect, and the development of educational technologies to be rather elaborate questions. The most difficult issues include: the issue of assessing intercultural competence, namely, the allocation of verifiable elements of competence, and the problem of choosing suitable assessment procedures.

To align the goals and objectives of the educational program “Linguistics”, the profile of “Theory and Practice of Intercultural Communication” as well as the set of procedures for assessing the intercultural professional competence of a graduate, a research project was implemented at IFL of Moscow City Pedagogical University. The research part of the scientific project was designed to solve several successive problems. Firstly, it was necessary to analyze the competency model of a specialist in intercultural communication. The educational programs of universities are known to record the general goal of training a specialist and detail it as a list of competencies as a result of the educational process. The problem is that such lists are extensive and poorly systematized. Our task was to come up with a more structured description of the desired learning outcome to find clear guidelines for selecting the content of assessment. Secondly, we had to find out what types of activities make the formation of the planned results possible. Thirdly, it was necessary to determine which of the control procedures can be considered relevant at the stages of the current and final assessment (Shchepilova & Cherkashina, 2018).

2. Problem Statement

Our analysis of the content and organization of the final assessment of the training of specialists in intercultural communication showed that in a large number of cases the state examination includes two questions, one of which is traditionally aimed at criteria-based oral assessment of achieving the desired level of language proficiency. As the second part of the exam, there are attempts to introduce into the

assessment procedure moments of settlement of what are called conflicts, moments of comparing different cultural systems or socially determined behaviors within a foreign cultural system, for example, comparative exercises of an “ethnosociocultural” plan. The most common are interpretive practices related to the analysis of texts and discourses or productive exercises such as writing an essay on the cultural phenomenon of the country of the language being studied in comparison with the student’s culture. These practices do not fully solve the problem of assessing the ability of graduates to mediate functions in the field of intercultural communication. As a hypothesis, it was accepted that the form of conducting state assessment of future specialists in the field of intercultural communication could be the student’s defense of the final design work in the form of a multimedia project.

3. Research Questions

As a part of the first stage of the study, the educational program of IFLMCU in the field of study 45.03.02 Linguistics, the educational program specialization “Theory and Practice of Intercultural Communication” served as the basis to identify the competencies that are directly related to the future professional foreign-language communication activities of students.

At the second stage of the study, we tried to analyze what leading types of activities can form intercultural professional competencies. An important element is the ability to use linguistic and cultural methods of analyzing text data that contribute to a better understanding of the communication partner. To achieve this goal, work is needed to form students' strategies for discovering meanings in textual material, for example, a literary work, finding common ground between cultures. The type of activity in this case is analytical research based on the information retrieval activity of the student, including mastering the conceptual apparatus for comparing cultures as well as finding their common ground. This problem can be solved in project activities, for example, through the compilation of glossary as an element of the project. The student’s project activities are classified as innovative. According to Smorzhok (2016), one of the fundamental characteristics of a “cultural man,” is their ability to projective activity, i.e. productive imagination, creative and free transformation of the environment.

At the third stage of the study, it was important to draw conclusions about which objects of assessment and which corresponding control procedures are reasonable for the tasks of continuing and formative assessment, and which of them can be submitted to the stage of final assessment. Based on the opinion of Gural and Tereshkova (2016), who noted that multimedia project activities help to develop a number of competencies that make up the professional competence of a specialist, the team of Department of Romance Philology of IFLMCU came to the conclusion that the completion of the program stipulated by the profile of student training should be a multimedia presentation of a graduation project. Multimedia training projects are “those that combine media objects such as text, graphics, video, animation and sound to represent and transmit information” (Frey & Sutton, 2010, p. 491). Multimedia educational projects integrated into disciplinary programs have good potential for genuine student-teacher collaboration in the context of the real world of modern technologies (Bezukladnikov, 2013; Kołodziejcki & Przybysz-Zaremba, 2017; Kilpatrick, 2018). Multimedia training as a whole provides a high level of interactivity, which allows to improve both traditional lecture classes and integrate various areas / sections of the curriculum into a single content (Evan & Gibbons, 2007). Following the model of a multimedia project that

includes logical steps: (1) analysis, (2) design, (3) development, (4) implementation and (5) evaluation, we have developed a list of mandatory elements of the diploma project in the form of a portfolio indicating the volume of each element :

- a project plan;
- an annotation of the project;
- an essay (12-15 p.);
- sources (guides, directories, local history literature, cartographic material, at least 25-30 positions);
- the form of the material presentation and its design (advertising video, informational, virtual tour of the museum, city, region of Russia and France, video);

and also the criteria for evaluating a multimedia presentation of a project are presented (See table 1).

Table 01. Grading Table

Stages	Criteria	Points
Design and execution of the project	1. The rationale of the topic and proposed solutions. The practical focus of the work	
	2. The volume and completeness of development, independence, completeness, readiness for defense	
	3. The level of creativity: the originality of the disclosure of the topic, approaches, proposed solutions	
	4. The reasoning of the proposed solutions, approaches, conclusions	
	5. The presentation quality: design, compliance with standard requirements, rubrication and structure of the text, quality of diagrams, drawings	
Defense of the project	1. The quality of the report: composition, completeness of the presentation of work, approaches, results; argumentation	
	2. The volume and depth of knowledge on the topic: erudition, the presence of interdisciplinary connections	
	3. The presentation of the project: the culture of speech, manner, the use of visual aids, a sense of time, an improvisational beginning, support for the attention of the audience	
	4. Answers to questions: completeness, reasoning, conviction, desire to reveal the topic and strengths of the work	

4. Purpose of the Study

In accordance with these initial positions, the content of the diploma multimedia project was defined as “French National Identity: Linguistic and Cultural Aspect”. The goal was set to create a finished product intended for a potential consumer or employer: advertising tourism services, new routes, an interactive city tour (architectural and urban planning) or a museum tour (literary and artistic), a video about a cultural event, that is, a product that has potential for practical use in the media.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis of the study is the reflective-activity approach to the organization of the educational process at the university, as well as the subject-oriented approach to the management of student

educational projects. Methods used at the theoretical level are the following: analysis and synthesis, comparison, modeling, extrapolation. Methods used at the empirical level include: analysis of scientific and methodological literature, scientific observation, generalization of experience, experiment. Methods at the empirical and theoretical levels are in close interaction, since the empirical and theoretical levels of cognition are inseparable.

6. Findings

Held in 2017 the experiment confirmed the productivity of the accepted hypothesis. The research objectives included the search for clear selection criteria and the content of control procedures. It was necessary to determine which of the control procedures can be considered relevant at the stage of final assessment. The content of the thesis project was determined in accordance with the program of the studied disciplines and is designated as “French National Identity: Linguocultural Aspect”. In selecting the themes of the graduation projects, the importance of the idea of intercultural interaction between the two countries, Russia and France, with a predominance of cognitive orientation, was taken into account. The proposed topics give students a vector of the future project, regarding the fields of linguistics and culturology, politics, history, art, etc. The main emphasis is on the intercultural dialogue of our countries in various fields, the relevance of the topic, the demand for leisure and tourism services in the market (Cherkashina, 2017). Here are a few examples of multimedia projects that have been submitted to the defense and received the highest rating from the state commission:

- A virtual tour of the palace and park ensemble "Versailles" and the palace and park ensemble "Peterhof" as a form of French-Russian dialogue.
- A virtual tour of Moscow "The French in Moscow: a historical and architectural guide."
- A video "Trianon Dialogue, the Franco-Russian Forum of Civil Societies."
- A commercial “Traveling to the little-known and picturesque places of Russia” (for lovers of outdoor activities).
- A video guide on Russian restaurants in Moscow.
- A promotional video for the 2018 World Cup.
- A video "Healthy lifestyle in France and in Russia."
- The French model of ecotourism as an example of new opportunities for Russia.

It should be noted that students are free to choose the topics of a multimedia project and, as experience in preparing diploma projects over three years shows, they find original stories within the framework of this topic, for example, a multimedia project of 2019 the video “Dialogue of cultures through the prism of bike-brotherhood in France and in Russia”. The stages of work on the project were identified in a cyclogram indicating the schedule of consultations and meetings of the professor and students. A list of the required elements of a graduation project in the form of portfolio was developed indicating the volume of each element. It is important to note that effective multimedia projects are implemented through consistent planned efforts based on a measurable learning outcome. The implementation model of a multimedia project demonstrates the specific stages of work on a project:

1. to determine the educational goals, objectives and audience,
2. to consider and explore existing project options,

3. to set the format and deadlines,
4. to determine the content, activities and stages of project preparation,
5. to develop criteria and assessment tools to determine the effectiveness of the project,
6. to perform the final assessment of the product and the process.

As a result, students created projects that have the potential for practical use in the media, in the work of tour operators, tour guides, and heads of cultural centers.

7. Conclusion

A research project involves the generation of new, demanded (and practical) knowledge. Project work has a meaningful educational result, which should be separately highlighted and discussed by the participants. All these requirements are quite serious, since it is understood that student projects are evaluated by the professional community, according to the same rules as “adult” projects (Evstratova et al., 2018). Despite the difficulties of the experiment being conducted for the first time, all the projects submitted for protection by graduates of IIH MCU, starting in 2017, were distinguished by their thoughtfulness, a creative approach, a high level of technical performance and were evaluated positively by the state certification committee. The multimedia projects presented for defense were highly appreciated by the employers present at the state final examination who had the opportunity to assess the graduate's readiness for real activities in the field of intercultural communication.

During the work of the state commission, it was revealed that the special objects of attention of the members of the commission-employers were:

- pragmatic skills, in particular, the language representation of the project, its technical support and interaction skills;
- the cognitive result of training, namely, cultural knowledge about the country of the language being studied;
- a cognitive strategic learning outcome, for example, the ability to make a comparative analysis of the presented linguistic and culturological phenomena in terms of intercultural (Russian-French) communication.

Graduates, in their turn, saw the possibility of implementing their prepared projects at the labor market. This increased their interest in expanding linguistic knowledge and skills, in the search for new forms of language use in the field of intercultural communication. The experiment also showed that if there is a well-thought-out system of control and measuring materials, the final assessment of graduates can verify the formation of more elements of intercultural professional competence in both pragmatic and cognitive fields.

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