

LATIP 2021**International Conference on Language and Technology in the Interdisciplinary Paradigm****FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AS A
COMPONENT OF THE PERSONAL LINGUISTIC CAPITAL**

Anna Vladimirovna Sakharova (a)*, Elena Lvovna Smirnova (b),
Oksana Grigorievna Ostapenko (c), Margarita Vladimirovna Grushina (d),
Svetlana Germanovna Larina (e)

*Corresponding author

- (a) State University of Humanities and Technology, Orekhovo-Zuyevo, Russia, sakharova5@mail.ru
(b) Ivanovo State Polytechnic University, Ivanovo, Russia, bere8nice@rambler.ru
(c) State University of Humanities and Technology, Orekhovo-Zuyevo, Russia, oxygri@mail.ru
(e) State University of Humanities and Technology, Orekhovo-Zuyevo, Russia, pronyakina_margo@mail.ru
(d) State University of Humanities and Technology, Orekhovo-Zuyevo, Russia, larinasvetlanag@mail.ru

Abstract

The article examines a foreign language communicative competence as a personal resource. The content of communicative competence remains controversial. The component composition presented in the domestic and Western models is somewhat different either. When considering a foreign language communicative competence, the Russian version is taken as a basis, including linguistic, speech, socio-cultural, compensatory, educational and cognitive competence. However, in the modern polylingual space, there is a shift in emphasis from the grammatical and phonetic norms of the language to the need to understand the interlocutor to achieve communicative success. The research methodology is based on the concept of P. Bourdieu, according to which cultural capital, along with economic, social and symbolic capitals, forms a complex of personality resources, which allows one to take a certain social position. Linguistic capital is considered as an incorporated kind of cultural capital, determined by the intellectual, emotional and volitional costs of the personality itself. The most studied aspects of this problem include the question of economic value of the language. In this regard, the term "commodification of language" has become widespread. It seems, however, that the assessment of linguistic capital mainly from the point of view of its possible conversion into economic capital narrows the research horizon and does not allow us to see other advantages of foreign language communicative competence. The study was focused on identifying the attitude of students of non-linguistic specialties to various aspects of the importance of foreign language communicative competence as a factor in the formation of linguistic capital.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Cultural capital, economic capital, foreign language communicative competence, linguistic personality, language capital, symbolic capital



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

1. Introduction

The globalization processes that expand the boundaries of communication clearly show the need to comprehend language as a significant socio-cultural resource. In the Russian linguistic community, there is a steady increase of interest in learning foreign languages. However, the question of whether the possession of a foreign language communicative competence is recognized as a factor contributing to the accumulation of a person's linguistic capital remains little studied.

Modern studies of this problem are focused mainly on two aspects: substantiating the importance of language as an economic resource (Lippi-Green, 1997; Schroedler, 2018) and studying the communicative status of various languages in the context of the global spread of the English language as the lingua franca of our time (Crystal, 2003). In this regard, the term "commodification of language", or the transformation of a language into a commodity (Heller, 2010), has become widespread. Knowledge of a foreign language is considered on the Russian labour market in economic categories: "foreign language - additional profit", "foreign language - a good investment" and "foreign language - competitive advantage" (Laletina, 2012, p. 61). At the same time, it seems that the assessment of linguistic capital mainly from the point of view of its possible conversion into economic capital narrows the research horizon and does not allow us to see other advantages of the formation of foreign language communicative competence.

The specificity of communicative competence as a significant factor in interpersonal communication was first noted by Hymes (1972). He found that language proficiency goes beyond knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, and it also includes understanding the terms of their use. The nature of communicative competence is procedural. This means that it cannot be reduced only to the composition of the relevant knowledge, skills and abilities, but it suggests the unity of linguistic, intellectual and personal factors of the readiness of the subject of communication to engage in communication.

The definition and component composition of foreign language communicative competence are actively discussed in the scientific community. In Russian studies, two approaches to its interpretation can be distinguished. Foreign language communicative competence is understood as: 1) the proficiency level of communication techniques (Goncharova, 2006) or linguistic, speech and socio-cultural knowledge, skills and abilities (Safonova, 2004); 2) the ability and willingness to carry out foreign language communication (Solovova, 2002). The second approach, in contrast to the first, is more focused on the individual-personal factor, including the readiness for communication in the structure of the foreign language communicative competence, i.e. a certain disposition for voluntary involvement in communicative activity. It is in the communicative attitude that "all the linguistic, intellectual and personal resources of the participant in the speech situation are concentrated on" (Milrud & Maksimova, 2017, p. 258). This means that, on the one hand, it is inseparable from the linguistic and discursive components of communicative competence. And, on the other, it is a decisive factor that not only triggers a communicative act, but also expresses the ability of a linguistic personality to control a communicative situation, influence the course of communication, adequately respond to changing circumstances, suggest specific own topics of conversation. The willingness to participate in communication can manifest itself

in such a property as the willingness to communicate (Munezane, 2015), although there is no unequivocal stable connection between them.

As for the composition of the communicative competence, there is a certain scatter of ideas both in the number of components and in their content. At the same time, most authors agree on the importance of the three of them: linguistic, speech (discursive) and sociocultural competence. Linguistic competence is understood as the ability to use grammatically correct forms and syntactic constructions and understand semantic segments in speech, organized according to the existing norms of a foreign language. Obviously, linguistic competence is a fundamental component of communicative competence, since it is the foundation of verbal communication. Speech competence implies the possession of communicative skills in the implementation of four types of speech activity (speaking, listening, reading, writing). Sociocultural competence presupposes possession of a stock of knowledge about the national and cultural characteristics of the country of the target language, the ability to highlight the general and the specific in the culture of the native country and the country of the target language. Separately, we note that the project of a scientifically grounded concept of modernization of the content and technologies of teaching the subject area "Foreign languages" (Learning project "Foreign languages", 2017) are included in the composition of the foreign language communicative competence, along with the already listed linguistic, speech and socio-cultural competences, compensatory competence (enhancement of students' abilities to find a way out in the face of a shortage of language means when receiving information and communicating) and educational and informative competence (development of general and special educational skills; introduction to the available methods and techniques for independent study of languages and cultures, including the use of information technologies).

The research was based on the concept of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977) Bourdieu (1991) about linguistic capital as a subtype of cultural capital, which can exist in three types: incorporated (dispositions of mind and body), objectified (books, dictionaries, etc.) and institutionalized (diplomas, certificates, etc.). According to this understanding of linguistic capital, it can be assumed that foreign language communicative competence can be represented as a unity of communicative ability and communicative disposition. This unity reflects, in addition to the observed and measured knowledge and skills, a whole complex of factors (personal characteristics, cognitive interest, value orientations, motives and personal meanings) that create linguistic capital as a significant resource of a linguistic personality. Linguistic capital makes a certain contribution to the formation of cultural capital and, along with economic (resources of an economic nature), social (a stable network of relations of mutual acquaintance and recognition) and symbolic capital (honour and prestige), lays a complex of personal resources. It should also be noted that according to the concept of Bourdieu, all types of capital are interconnected and can be converted into each other, thereby allowing a person to claim higher social positions.

2. Problem Statement

Foreign language communicative competence can be considered as a certain personal resource, the accumulation of which opens for its owner an access to other types of capital (due to their mutual conversion). Besides: 1) it allows one to get a higher-paid and prestigious professional position (economic and symbolic capital); 2) it expands the scope of social, professional, personal contacts, thereby making it

possible to build a wide network of acquaintances (social capital); 3) it provides access to new sources of information (cultural capital), which creates additional conditions and opportunities for professional and personal growth.

At the same time, as the practice of teaching a foreign language to students of higher educational institutions shows, mastering a foreign language communicative competence is one of the most complicated and difficult tasks to solve. The formation of a foreign language communicative competence is a process whose success largely depends on how effectively it involves not only controlled factors (knowledge, skills, the degree of development of which can be periodically tested), but also those that cannot be clearly identified (depth of motivation, value preferences, personal meanings).

3. Research Questions

The subject of the study is the attitude of students of non-linguistic specialties to foreign language communicative competence as a socio-cultural resource that can potentially influence the success of personal and professional development.

The authors of the study raised the following questions.

- 1) How obvious is the interest of students of non-linguistic specialties in foreign language communication?
- 2) What are the features of the foreign language communication experience of students of non-linguistic specialties?
- 3) Do they consider foreign language communicative competence as a factor that increases the value of personal linguistic capital?

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to identify the features of students' assessment of non-linguistic specialties (a total of 320 respondents were interviewed) of foreign language communicative competence as a factor in the formation of linguistic capital.

5. Research Methods

The study was conducted by a group correspondence survey. During the survey, students were asked a number of questions grouped in the following areas: 1) characteristics of respondents: a) the level of foreign language proficiency from the point of view of the respondent; b) the communication practices used; c) emotional attitude to cases of communicative success/ failure; 2) ideas about the value of various factors in terms of their interaction with linguistic capital: a) the possibility of creating, developing and strengthening a system of social connections (social capital); b) introduction to prestigious activities (symbolic capital), c) obtaining economic benefits (economic capital).

6. Findings

In the course of the study, the following results were obtained. According to the level of foreign language proficiency, four groups were clearly identified, corresponding to the levels A1 (27.2%), A2 (27.6%), B1 (23.6%), and B2 (12.6%) in the international system of pan-European competencies.

According to the survey, 84 % of respondents use a foreign language in everyday life: listening to music in a foreign language (75.2 %), watching movies (45.5%), communicating in social networks (34.6%), reading books (26.4%). As we can see, among the communicative practices, the predominant ones are those in which there is no feedback in the form of a dialogue.

Assessing their communication experience in a foreign language, the majority of respondents (71.1% and 78%, respectively) noted both satisfaction from successful communication and embarrassment from the fact that they could not successfully conduct a dialogue, did not achieve the desired goal.

Moving on to the second group of questions, we should note the following. The vast majority of respondents (93.5 %) agree that mastering a foreign language communicative competence increases the importance of linguistic capital, since it allows to apply for a more promising, prestigious (symbolic capital) and highly paid (economic capital) position and, consequently, achieve a higher social status.

At the same time, the majority of respondents (95 %) agree that proficiency in a foreign language opens up other prospects in terms of accumulating linguistic capital through its enrichment with other types of resources, namely: 1) access to the circle of highly educated people, interesting interlocutors, getting new knowledge through interaction with them (40.2 %) (social capital); 2) reading literature in a foreign language and, accordingly, expanding horizons (18.3 %) (cultural capital); 3) free communication with people during tourist trips, business trips abroad (social capital).

The survey data show that the respondents themselves estimate the level of foreign language proficiency as low. At the same time, this circumstance does not reduce the interest of students in the development of foreign language communicative competence. Despite the lack of a sufficient linguistic and discursive base, the wish to communicate in a foreign language is quite clearly expressed a competence.

The communicative experience of students of non-linguistic specialties includes a diverse set of language practices involving the use of foreign language communicative competence. Among them, listening to music in a foreign language and watching movies are the most popular, reading foreign literature is the least popular. But in these forms of communication, which represent almost all (except of writing) types of speech activity, the communicative component is expressed differently. The greatest value for the development of foreign language communicative competence of the listed forms is communication in social networks, since it is associated with involvement in a certain communicative situation, the dynamics of communication, mastering the skills of managing this process. The stated preferences of forms of foreign language communication seem to indicate that the readiness for random, spontaneous foreign language communication is not sufficiently formed. The responses are dominated by a pronounced emotional assessment of situations of foreign language communication (both positive and negative). This shows that for the majority of the survey participants, the experience of communicating in

a foreign language was not emotionally neutral, it did not pass unnoticed. In this case, further understanding of the emotional component of foreign language communication is important, which is aimed at forming motivation that initiates the readiness for random inclusion in foreign language communication.

Answering questions about the importance of foreign language communicative competence as a cultural resource, the respondents confirmed the stability of the idea that the possession of the foreign language communicative competence increases the weight of the linguistic capital of a language personality, makes it a significant factor in a successful professional career. At the same time, proficiency in a foreign language is also highly valued from the point of view of the accumulation of linguistic capital due to its conversion into various types of social and symbolic capital. For the survey participants, the greatest value in this case is the possibility of expanding the communicative horizon through involvement in social communication systems, an access to new sources of information, the ability to engage communication freely, unhindered (meaning the absence of communication barriers).

7. Conclusion

Evaluating the survey data as a whole, we emphasize once again the following key points. 1) Poor language skills (the most common communication barrier) do not reduce the wish to engage in foreign language communication. 2) The wish to engage in language communication does not always characterize a high level of communicative readiness, which is expressed by the predominance of mediated foreign language communication practices (without direct feedback). 3) Foreign language communicative competence is considered as a significant resource that allows a person to improve his social status, which, however, taking into account the indicators mentioned above, should be regarded more as a reproduction of certain social stereotypes than as a certain meaningful personal position.

Such multidirectional trends reveal a certain inconsistency in the motivational and value sphere of a foreign language learner's personality: the expressed emotional attractiveness and significance (cognitive interest) of a foreign language communicative competence do not contribute to the development of an appropriate disposition – orientation on foreign language communication. It seems that the ways to solve this contradiction lie in two main approaches: educational and methodological and control and measurement. The first is focused on the active implementation of educational methods in the process of teaching a foreign language, in which much attention is paid to situational language workshops, the implementation of various game plots that stimulate the conscious free inclusion of students in communicative activities. The second is aimed at developing a differentiated system of indicators that allow flexible and purposeful assessment of the degree of development of knowledge, skills and experience that make up the measured component of foreign-language communicative competence.

References

- Bourdieu, P. (1977). The economics of linguistic exchanges. *Social Science Information*, 16(6), 645–668.
Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Oxford, Polity Press.
Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge University Press.

- Goncharova, N. L. (2006). On the question of foreign language competencies. *Collection of scientific works of SevKavSTU. Series: Humanities, 3*, 74-77.
- Heller, M. (2010). *The Commodification of Language. Annual Review of Anthropology, 39*, 101—114.
- Hymes, D. (1972). *On Communicative Competence*. Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Laletina, A. O. (2012). Globalization and the ideology of language in modern Russia: analysis of metalanguage reflection in the professional sphere. *Questions of Psycholinguistics, 1(15)*, 61.
- Lippi-Green, R. (1997). *English with an accent: language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States*. Routledge.
- Milrud, R. P., & Maksimova, I. R. (2017). Communicative competence as the readiness of students to communicate in a foreign language. *Language and Culture, 38*, 258.
- Munezane, Y. (2015). Enhancing willingness to communicate: relative effects of visualization and goal setting. *The Modern Language Journal, 99(1)*, 175–191.
- Safonova, V. V. (2004). *Communicative competence: modern approaches to multilevel description for methodological purposes*. Euroschool.
- Schroedler, T. (2018). *The Value of Foreign Language Learning: A Study on Linguistic Capital and the Economic Value of Language Skills*. Springer.
- Solovova, E. N. (2002). *Methods of teaching foreign languages*. Prosveshchenie.
- The project of the scientifically-based concept of modernization of the content and technologies of teaching the subject area "Foreign languages". Educational project "Foreign Language" (2017).*
http://www.predmetconcept.ru/public/f48/download/Proekt_nauchno-obosnovanno_j_koncepcii_modernizacii_inostrannyj_jazyk.pdf