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**EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH OF THE FORMATION OF  
INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AMONG  
STUDENTS**

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*Abstract*

The article is devoted to the issue of efficiency checking of the formation of intercultural communicative competence of students in the context of the project for the export of education. It presupposes the development of new forms of joint educational programs, which entails the creation of opportunities for the implementation of intercultural communication and cooperation in an international cultural environment. Intercultural communicative competence is considered in this research as a complex personal education that contributes to the professional development of students, their ability to interact and cooperate with representatives of other cultures and languages in the process of interpersonal communication.

Taking into account large number of representatives of foreign countries studying in the Saratov State Agrarian University, the effective formation of this competence is an integral part of a successful personally and socially integrated result of educational process. The analysis of the existing practice of the formation of intercultural communicative competence of students of several universities in Saratov revealed that the formation of this competence is carried out mainly by traditional pedagogical means. The use of modern technologies, which in this study are information technologies, can significantly improve the efficiency of the formation and development of intercultural communicative competence.

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**Keywords:** Intercultural communicative competence, interpersonal communication, pedagogical experiment.



## 1. Introduction

In 2017 Saratov State Agrarian University named after N.I. Vavilov joined the consortium of supporting educational organizations exporting Russian education. This priority project, supervised by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, will last until 2025. It provides the creation and implementation of the target model of university activities on the export of education. Firstly this model will be introduced in 20 universities, and from 2021 - in all universities of the country. The project will develop new forms of joint educational programs and programs in English language, online education for foreigners, educational tourism routes and summer training programs for foreigners, as well as create a single Internet navigator for the Russian education system.

Currently, more than one hundred foreign students are studying at Saratov State Agrarian University. The top directions of education they choose are veterinary medicine, economics and management, biotechnology. There are groups consisting entirely of students representing foreign countries, in which the learning process is carried out in English, although the majority of foreign students study in Russian-speaking groups. In both cases, daily interpersonal and intercultural interaction takes place. Therefore, the issue of the formation of intercultural communicative competence among students of our university is highly relevant (Kalinichenko, Ivanova, Razdobarova & Lanina, 2017; Fedorova, Stepanova & Novikova, 2016; Kudabayeva, 2016).

The formation of this competence of students will be successful if:

- intercultural communicative competence is considered as a complex personal education that promotes the professional development of students, their ability to interact and cooperate with representatives of other cultures and languages in the process of interpersonal communication;
- take into account the phased nature of the formation of this competence of students using a complex of information technologies;
- monitoring is conducted, allowing evaluating the progress and results of the formation of intercultural communicative competence in the process of professional training of students.

**Table 01.** Systematic use of intercultural information

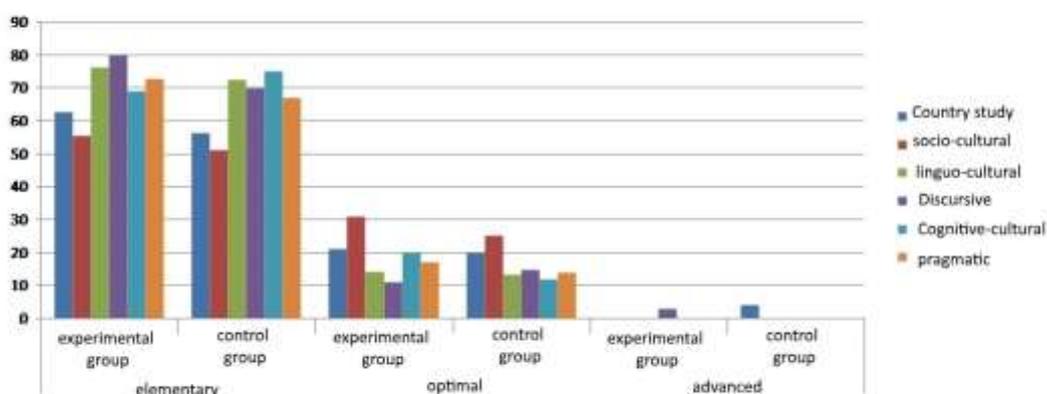
| Intercultural information                                                                                                                     | Usage frequency   | The amount of teachers (%) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Linguocultural information<br>(communicative stereotypes and strategies<br>inherent in this culture)                                          | Regularly         | 10                         |
|                                                                                                                                               | From time to time | 80                         |
|                                                                                                                                               | Do not use        | 10                         |
| Cultural information (holidays, traditions,<br>the places of interest, history of the<br>countries of the language being studied)             | Regularly         | 20                         |
|                                                                                                                                               | From time to time | 80                         |
|                                                                                                                                               | Do not use        | -                          |
| Socio-cultural information (knowledge of<br>ethical and etiquette rules and norms of<br>foreign culture, the basics of business<br>etiquette) | Regularly         | 5                          |
|                                                                                                                                               | From time to time | 70                         |
|                                                                                                                                               | Do not use        | 25                         |
| Cognitive-cultural information (skillful and<br>competent possession of behavioral<br>models)                                                 | Regularly         | -                          |
|                                                                                                                                               | From time to time | 40                         |
|                                                                                                                                               | Do not use        | 60                         |

**Table 02.** Criteria, indicators, methods, methodology of measurement and evaluation of the structural components of the intercultural communicative competence of students

| Structural components                                         | Criteria of evaluation | Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Methods of analysis                                                 | Methodology of measurement                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| General cultural (regional and sociocultural components)      | Cognitive              | Possession of necessary information about the diversity of cultures, history and social structure of the countries of the language being studied, the ability to analyze and compare different phenomena in other cultures, to reflect on the culture of other countries. | Testing, midterm and final control, comparison, analysis of results | Cultural tests, tasks of communicative and socio-cultural orientation, special questionnaires                                    |
| Communicative (linguistic-cultural and discursive components) | Activity               | Possession of national cultural vocabulary, the ability to identify differences in the meaning of words, to adequately apply lexical units and structures in conversation, given the cultural component of their semantics.                                               | Testing, analysis of the results of communicative tasks, survey     | Lexical tests, communicative tasks of a creative nature, discussions, situational analysis, role-playing games, games-situations |
| Strategic (cognitive-cultural and pragmatic components)       | Pragmatic              | The ability to assess verbal and non-verbal behavior, anticipate the reaction of addressee, overcome social stereotypes that make up the norms of speech behavior, be tolerant and positively interact with people from other cultures.                                   | Questioning, testing                                                | “Cultural assimilator”, “cultural capsules”, multiple choice tests                                                               |

**Table 03.** The results of the analysis of initial level of formation of intercultural communicative competence of students in experimental and control groups

| Groups       | The amount of students | Levels of formation (in % of the total number of students in groups) |      |         |      |          |     |
|--------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|---------|------|----------|-----|
|              |                        | Elementary                                                           |      | Optimal |      | Advanced |     |
|              |                        | Amount                                                               | %    | Amount  | %    | Amount   | %   |
| Experimental | 76                     | 60                                                                   | 78   | 14      | 18,1 | 3        | 3,9 |
| Control      | 72                     | 56                                                                   | 77,8 | 15      | 20,5 | 2        | 2,8 |



**Figure 01.** Histogram of the results of the ascertaining stage of the experiment

## **2. Problem Statement**

The importance of the justification and implementation innovative technologies of the formation of intercultural communicative competence of university students in educational process along with the traditional.

## **3. Research Questions**

During the course of the experiment the essence of the problem in pedagogical literature was investigated; the conceptual apparatus was clarified, the relevant programs and educational literature were analyzed, the observations, conversations and system surveys of teachers were carried out; the information was collected on the present level of formation of intercultural communicative competence among students with the subsequent processing of the obtained data and the formulation of conclusions.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the ascertaining stage of the experiment was to analyze the existing practice of the formation of intercultural communicative competence of students of Saratov State Agrarian University, determining the initial level of formation of this competence according to the developed criteria, indicators and characteristics of the levels.

## **5. Research Methods**

In the course of the experiment, the following methods of psychological and pedagogical research of the process of the formation of intercultural communicative competence of students were used: observation, questioning, opinion poll, testing, and analysis of progress.

## **6. Findings**

In order to test the hypothesis of this study, a pedagogical experiment was organized and conducted. The first and second year students of the agro-industrial faculty, the faculty of management and agribusiness, and the faculty of veterinary medicine, food and biotechnology of Saratov State Agrarian University named after N.I. Vavilov took part in the experiment. The mass character of the experiment was presented by experimental work carried out with almost all groups of the first and second courses with a total coverage of 148 people.

The pedagogical experiment presupposed an ascertaining stage, as well as an analysis of the results obtained. The research included the experimental and analytical phases.

The experimental phase included the preparation of materials, the organization and the conduct of the experiments. In the course of the experiment, the following methods of psychological and pedagogical research of the process of the formation of intercultural communicative competence of students were used: observation, questioning, opinion poll, testing, and performance analysis.

The analytical phase involves the study and synthesis of the results of the experiment, as well as recommendations for the improvement of the process of the formation of intercultural communicative competence of students.

In order to equalize the conditions of pedagogical experiment, the effort was made on its mass character. The representativeness of the sample was provided by a significant amount of data obtained over several academic years.

According to the work of Yu.K. Babansky and V.F. Kharkovskaya, the optimal pedagogical experiment was provided, in particular, by specifying the conditions for its conduct, by recording the changes taking place in all parameters, as well as by the unity of planning, organization, regulation, control and recording of the results obtained (Babansky & Kharkovskaya, 1972).

In accordance with the conditions, experimental and control groups of students were identified, which were equivalent both in quantitative and qualitative level of the formation of intercultural communicative competence.

Students of both experimental and control groups studied the discipline “Foreign Language” in accordance with regulatory documents. In contrast to the control groups, in the experimental ones, purposeful work was carried out. The necessary pedagogical conditions were created. Among them were: the clarification of tasks on the formation of intercultural communicative competence among students, the content of education was improved, the special technologies were introduced, aimed at the formation of this competence of students (Golubina, 2008; Polubichenko, 2014; Kalinichenko, Ivanova, Razdobarova & Lanina, 2016).

Experimental work was cyclical, since with new recruitment of students, experimental work was repeated. This circumstance contributed to the rechecking of the data and, accordingly, to the adjustment of the process of the formation of intercultural communicative competence of students.

Experimental work began with a study of state educational standards, curricula; the requirements for the mandatory “set” of competencies of students necessary for their future professional activity were analyzed; educational-methodical complexes, teaching aids in a foreign language were investigated; the attendance of classes was carried out in order to analyze the used educational technologies in the course of the learning process, interviews and questionnaires of teachers were conducted.

According to the regulatory documents, in particular, the state program for the development of education, a priority task in the field of vocational education is: firstly, to provide graduates with not only professional, but also basic general cultural competencies and attitudes, including the competence of intercultural communication; secondly, the need to increase the share of educational programs in a foreign language and support projects in order to update the teaching of English language in Russian universities.

As a result of studying the program documentation, it was revealed that the requirements for the obligatory minimum content of educational program for the preparation of a graduate qualification “bachelor” indicate the study of the culture and traditions of the countries of target language, the rules of speech etiquette, foreign language (English) at a level of interpersonal communication (Kalugina, 2016; Kohn, 2018; Markova, 2015).

In the context of this research, the data of interviews and questionnaires of foreign language teachers on the frequency of using intercultural information during educational process present particular interest. The results are listed in Table 1.

As a result of questionnaires and interviews with teachers of foreign languages of various educational institutions (Saratov State Agrarian University named after N.I. Vavilov; National Research University named after N.G. Chernyshevsky; Saratov State Technical University named after Y.A. Gagarin) it can be concluded that the intercultural material in educational process is not used systematically. The teachers give lexical units necessary for everyday use without regard to the cultural aspect despite the fact that linguocultural material, which means, first of all, knowledge and correct use of various foreign words and expressions, the equivalents of which either do not exist in particular country or have a different name, is rather extensively represented in modern authentic textbooks.

During the ascertaining stage of the experiment, the students were also questioned as a result of which it became possible to identify the level of their motivation to learn a foreign language.

The analysis of the results indicates a fairly high motivation of students. Approximately half of the students expressed a desire to learn a foreign language at a conversational level (52%) in order to be able to communicate when traveling abroad during internships; 35% also associate the need to learn a foreign language in order to communicate in social networks, read articles, listen to news and watch videos on the Internet; 7% believe that a foreign language will be useful to them in their professional activities; 3% would like to understand songs in a foreign language; 2% expressed a desire to understand the inscriptions on various goods in stores, signs and ads. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the majority of the students associate knowledge of a foreign language, firstly, with an interest in real communication with representatives of other countries, and therefore of other cultures; secondly, with the desire to expand the boundaries of their cultural space through social networks.

The next stage of the experiment was to identify the degree of the preparation of students for intercultural communication and determine the initial level of the formation of intercultural communicative competence among students in experimental and control groups.

The identification of the level of the formation of intercultural communicative competence of students was in three directions: testing of general cultural and socio-cultural knowledge; testing communicative, practical skills; testing of students in order to determine the level of proficiency in behavioral models.

The following tests were used to analyze the formation of intercultural communicative competence of students: 1. a linguistic test, which allows identifying the initial level of language proficiency; 2. general cultural and regional geographic tests, revealing the degree of awareness in the field of general cultural knowledge and value systems that exist in the countries of the language being studied; 3. the tasks of a communicative nature, assessing the level of knowledge of communication strategies inherent in this culture, knowledge of tactics and discursive skills of intercultural communication; 4. tests, revealing the ability to verbal and non-verbal communication, to regulate speech behavior adequately to the situation.

As a result of the application of these methods, it became possible to obtain objective indicators of the level of formation of intercultural communicative competence of students. The determination of the

level of formation of this competence was carried out on the basis of the structural components identified in the first chapter: general cultural, communicative, strategic, and relevant criteria and indicators.

A complex of criteria, indicators, methods and methodologies for measuring and assessing the level of formation of intercultural communicative competence of students are presented in Table 2.

The developed analytical tools allow distributing the formation of intercultural communicative competence among students in accordance with three levels: elementary, optimal and advanced.

The elementary level is characterized by: satisfactory knowledge of a foreign language (starting or basic level); the possession of initial ideas about the diversity of cultures, history and social structure of the countries of the language being studied; satisfactory knowledge of national cultural vocabulary, insufficient ability to adequately apply lexical units and structures in interpersonal communication; extremely inadequate ability to play out and participate in intercultural communication; the inability to evaluate verbal and non-verbal behavior, to overcome social stereotypes; tolerant and positively interact with people from other cultures.

The optimal level is characterized by: good knowledge of a foreign language (pre-intermediate or intermediate level); sufficient ideas about the diversity of cultures, history and social structure of the countries of the language being studied; good knowledge of national cultural vocabulary; the ability to apply lexical units and structures in interpersonal communication; the ability to play out and participate in intercultural communication; sufficient ability to evaluate verbal and non-verbal behavior, to overcome social stereotypes; tolerant and positively interact with people from other cultures.

The advanced level is characterized by excellent knowledge of foreign language, the ideas about the diversity of cultures, history and social structure of the countries of the language being studied; solid knowledge of national cultural vocabulary; formed skills to apply lexical units and structures in interpersonal communication; the ability to actively participate in intercultural communication, the ability to assess verbal and non-verbal behavior, to overcome social stereotypes; be tolerant and able to interact productively with people from other cultures.

Table 3 reflects the average indicators of the results of the ascertaining experiment, obtained in the ascertaining and experimental groups and the distribution of students according to the levels of formation of intercultural communicative competence.

Multimedia computers enriched with modern software and communications based on global and local networks - the Internet / Intranet dominate in the basis for the development of computer tools for teaching foreign languages at the present stage.

Multimediaism in the development of foreign language teaching systems currently prevails, because here the specificity of information presentation is reflected by the combination of text, image, audio and video presented in one space-time volume, which contributes to a complex effect on students, immersing them in a virtual language environment, and provides conditions for intercultural communication (Bryleva, 2007). It is a virtual educational environment, its component - a virtual multimedia learning environment for intercultural communication is one of the main means of its formation.

Thus, it is possible to say that the main innovative tools for the formation of intercultural competence of students are modern information technologies that contribute to the formation of a virtual intercultural environment.

The structure of the virtual multimedia learning environment for intercultural communication can be represented by three blocks:

-resource and informational (multimedia courses - dialogue “Nibelung”, audio library, video library, multimedia dictionaries and encyclopedias);

-communicative (EBS SGAU, chat rooms, blogs, language social networks, video conferencing, intercultural forums);

-training and evaluative (“Nibelung” dialogue, multimedia course test designer, web quests).

## 7. Conclusion

The results obtained after the ascertaining stage of the experiment, allow drawing the following conclusions:

- the level of general knowledge of a foreign language in the control and experimental groups is defined as rather low, which indicates the possibility of forming intercultural communicative competence among students;

- in the process of learning a foreign language, improper attention is paid to socio-and linguistic cultural knowledge and strategic skills of students; there is insufficient use of traditional innovative forms, methods and means of education by teachers;

- the lack of intercultural knowledge, on which successful intercultural communication depends, indicates the need to form intercultural communicative competence of students using information technologies.

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