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THE SPECIFICITY OF THE POLYCULTURAL APPROACH IN TRAINING BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The article deals with the problem of intercultural communication as an important element of successful business activity. The relevance of this topic is determined by: 1) the importance of researching the problems of rapid development in the field of information technology and the subsequent globalization that led to the increasing complexity of the communication process in the 21st century; 2) as well as the need to consider the specifics of professional culture within the framework of intercultural communication. The subject of the article is the specificity of the polycultural approach in the training of business communication; the aim is to analyze the peculiarities of the polycultural approach as the most effective and perspective approach in the training of business communication. Based on the analysis, the author argues that the polycultural approach in the teaching of business communication is an effective way to form a polynational democratic education in business. At the same time, the approach is revealed through a complex system related to the integration of people into «global integrity», into a polycultural community. The polycultural approach is a way out of the education crisis, it helps to create a modern system of education and training, based on the principles of humanism and democracy. Such a system is oriented, first of all, to specific conditions, takes into account the interests and needs of specific people, therefore it can not be the same for many educational institutions, but will be exclusively individual.

1. Introduction

The most important characteristic of a modern global society is polyculturalism, defined as the preservation and integration of the cultural identity of the individual in a polynational society. Polyculturalism determines the development of tolerant relations between different nationalities, the formation of a culture of interethnic communication (Matis, 2007), as well as interaction of all types of local cultures, which, in turn, allows creating conditions for the development of cultural tolerance.

In this sense, a polycultural education is of special interest, including the issues of mastering knowledge, experience and norms of behavior, the problems of understanding the phenomenon of the formation of the individual identity of the trainees, their humane qualities, deep knowledge of innate properties, development tendencies, abilities, needs, opportunities for self-development (Ziatdinova, 2006). It is polycultural education that becomes the basis that allows to form a civil and ethnic identity, by educating a person capable of effective life in a polynational world that has a special "planetary thinking" that feels itself not only a representative of the national culture but also an active citizen of the world, the subject dialogue of cultures.

Polycultural education is an education built on the ideas of preparing students for life in a polynational and polycultural environment. At the same time, the dictionary indicates that the main goals of such education are to create the skills to communicate and cooperate with people of different nationalities, races, religions; to instill the skills of understanding the originality of other cultures, and also to eradicate the negative attitude towards them (other cultures) (Bezrukova, 2000). Realization of these goals will allow a modern man to become more tolerant, tolerant, develop a sense of respect for people of a different culture, learn to live with them in peace and harmony, and actively engage in an open dialogue.

In our work we will start from this definition, because we believe that it most accurately reflects the concept of "polycultural education". It represents it from various angles and from different perspectives (in particular: from the point of view of human values and its personal qualities, polycultural component, popular pedagogy, etc.). In addition, we consider it expedient to use the term "polycultural education", since it (unlike the term «multicultural education») is more popular in the Russian education system.

2. Problem Statement

To date, issues related to intercultural communication as an essential element of successful business activity are becoming increasingly relevant. This is due to a number of factors: firstly, the importance of researching the problems of rapid development in the field of information technology and the subsequent globalization that led to a more complex communication process in the 21st century (Shum Su Kei & Yazdanifard, 2015) secondly, the need for a more detailed examination of the specifics of professional culture in the framework of intercultural communication (Dacyuk, 2017) and, thirdly, insufficient scientific elaboration of these issues.

In addition, the study of the specifics of interaction in the business sphere reveals many topical problems. In particular, the problem of finding the most effective and promising approaches in the training of business communication, where a polycultural approach with the ability to institutionalize certain cultural components plays a special role, provide a wide range of "roles", and also provide personal motivation for students taking into account their cultural characteristics (Matis, 2007). Which, of course,

raises the problem of analyzing the specifics of the polycultural approach in the framework of training business communication in a number of the most relevant.

3. Research Questions

This problem was considered by many domestic and foreign authors. In particular, the general issues of polycultural education are explored in the works of Aladyshkin, Kulik, Michurin, & Anosova (2017), Aydin & Tonbuloğlu (2014), Baker (2008), Bekova (2015), Chernyavskaya (2016), Dubinina & Konzhiev (2015), Grant & Chapman (2008), Griva (2016), Kearney (2016), Kramsch (2014), Krechetova (2017), Krummel (2013), Loseva (2016), Mutsalov (2016), Novolodskaya (2015), Pogodin & Li (2017), Shipunova, Berezovskaya, Gashkova, & Ivanova (2017), Zvyagintseva & Valiakhmetova (2014), Almazova, Khalyapina, & Popova, (2017), Popova, Almazova, Khalyapina, & Tret'jakova, (2017). Features of the training of business communication in the context of polycultural education are presented in the studies of Dacyuk (2017), Demina (2012), Özturgut (2011).

Particular interest is the article Shum Su Kei & Yazdanifard "The Significance of Intercultural Communication for Businesses and the Obstacles that Managers should Overcome in Achieving Effective Intercultural Communication" (Shum Su Kei & Yazdanifard, 2015), where the authors note that intercultural communication is a complex process of transmitting and receiving messages between individuals whose cultural experience significantly influences the interpretation of verbal and non-verbal signs. Accordingly, effective skills of intercultural communication allow not only to eliminate many problems, solve conflicts, but also contribute to the development of companies and the business sphere as a whole. Thus, there are many works devoted to the study of the polycultural approach in the teaching of business communication, however, from the point of view of efficiency analysis, this approach was not fully considered.

4. Purpose of the Study

All of the foregoing and determines the choice of the subject and setting the goal of the article: subject – specificity of the polycultural approach in the training of business communication; the purpose of this article is to analyze the features of a polycultural approach as the most effective and forward-looking approach in the training of business communication.

5. Research Methods

The analysis technique is based on the principles of descriptive, comparative-comparative, historical, typological, and statistical methods. In particular, the latter (statistical method) makes it possible to obtain the most accurate and reliable results; it includes: statistical observation, summary and grouping of data, calculation of generalizing indicators (absolute, relative and average values), statistical distributions (variational series), sampling method, correlation regression analysis, series of dynamics, indices. That is, the method of statistical research is aimed at studying the results of educational and practical activities of students of business communication, questioning and testing, monitoring of individual achievements, etc. In addition, the use of the statistical method makes it possible to determine the level of the formation of polycultural competence by criteria and indicators, which, in turn, characterize the components of

polycultural competence and serve as a guide for the objective determination of its level. Accordingly, based on the criteria and indicators, the level of formation of polycultural competence of students of business communication is determined: as lower, average or high.

The analysis of the specifics of the polycultural approach as the most effective and promising approach in the training of business communication is carried out by deducing an average score according to four criteria that reveal the motivational, value, cognitive, operational and creative components. Each indicator is considered through a system of characteristics, the presence and number of which allows us to judge the formation of a component of polycultural competence (Shirina, 2014). Thus, modern research methods make it possible to analyze not only the degree of mastering the learning culture of communication with representatives of different countries, but also the level of development of an appropriate range of polycultural skills in the field of business communication.

6. Findings

In order to analyze the effectiveness of the polycultural approach, determine its specifics, and also reveal the level of formation of polycultural competence of students in the field of business communication, an experimental study was carried out, consisting of two stages. At the first stage, two groups (experimental and control) of students of higher education with a traditional education system participated – a total of 45 people. For evaluation, the Mann-Whitney U criterion. The empirical material obtained during the research was processed on an IBM-PC computer using the STATISTICA for Windows software (version 5.5a).

At the conclusion of the experiment, the following results were revealed (Figure 1): thus, when assessing the cognitive aspect of polycultural competence, most students showed an average level of the formation of a system of polycultural knowledge in the field of business communication. The knowledge was of a general nature, it did not rely on the fundamental ideas about the modern polycultural society and the processes of its formation, the stereotypical vision prevailed. The students showed an uncritical attitude to the information they received, most did not show any independent activity to obtain information about the polycultural world, since they did not see the need for this.
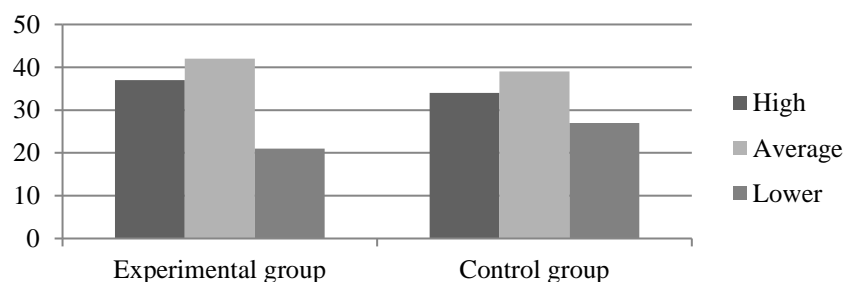

Figure 01. Results of the experiment in the system of traditional education

The study of the emotional-value aspect showed that those who do have a positive motivation for the development of polycultural knowledge are not always, they usually do not have the polycultural qualities (tolerance, empathy, conflict-free, etc.) necessary for positive interaction with representatives different cultures. The majority showed an emotionally negative perception of other cultures, which reduces the motivation for acquaintance, studying other peoples, striving for interaction with their representatives. The experiment revealed that the traditional education system is not effective enough to form a proper level

of polycultural competence in the field of business communication. The results of the experiment led us to the need for a purposeful formative work, expressed in the creation of pedagogical conditions for the formation of polycultural competence in this field.

The second stage of the pilot study was conducted in higher educational institutions, where attempts are already being made to introduce modern approaches to education (including the polycultural approach), in particular, the Massive open online courses (MOOC) on "Uniweb" 1 platforms ("Master of Business Administration", "Negotiation Engineering"), "Coursera" 2 (courses: "Business, Marketing and Sales") and others are used in training. The author's methods are implemented, taking into account the national and cultural specifics of the communicative behavior of students (for example, in China, the philosophy of Confucius plays a big role, as well as the characteristics of a high-context culture, the USA is characterized by a low-context culture, Russia occupies an intermediate position). In addition, sets of exercises are being developed that can effectively teach students the ability to maintain a comfortable psychological atmosphere of business communication, monitor the emotional state in conflict situations, and take into account behavioral stereotypes.

Among such exercises should be allocated:

- "Names and qualities" (the exercise is used to familiarize participants and to help them memorize each other's names; each participant should introduce himself and name his or her own quality);

- "My card" (exercise is used to form self-awareness; everyone creates his business card, with its help tells about himself everything that he considers necessary, it will help the group to know a person);

- «Добрый день, Hello, 嗨!» (the goal is to get acquainted with the various ways and forms of greetings adopted in different cultures);

- "Welcome rituals" (the goal is to recall and reproduce the traditional forms and rituals of greetings adopted in the United States, Russia and China);

- "Introduce yourself to others" (the goal is to improve mutual understanding in communication at the non-verbal level, as well as to improve flexibility in complex situations and resourcefulness);

- "Values of Russian, American and Chinese culture" (the goal is to definition of cultural values through the analysis of folklore, literature, history, etc.);

- "Everest" (exercise, to identify the basic qualities necessary for effective intercultural interaction and interfere with it; the goal is to help participants realize their real and potential opportunities for effective polycultural interaction);

- "Foreigner" (the exercise is used to examine the meaning of familiar foreign expressions in new, unusual angles; allows the student to stand in the position of a "naive listener" who does not know what he is talking about), etc.

Within the framework of the author's methodology, the training is divided into two stages: at the first stage – the similarities of international / global business communication are being studied (that is, the universal professional discourse in the sphere of business communication; at the second stage – studies the differences in business communication in different countries (in the context of different cultures, ethno-

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[1] http://uniweb.ru/

[2] https://www.coursera.org/

cultures, etc.). In particular, at the first stage of training ("teaching similarities in global communication – universal professional discourse in business communication") a number of similarities: for example, it concerns questions of punctuality, organization of the security of the meeting, discussion of the agenda, preparation of final documents (thus, the most typical phrases of Americans are «The Parties undertake to keep confidential and not to disclose to third parties any information relating to the Contract and supplies of the Goods» or «Unless the Parties have stipulated otherwise in the Specification, an independent expert organisation shall certify such complaints»; most typical Chinese phrases are «根据合同法规定，当事人一方违约时，守约方只能向违约方主张违约金和经济损失的一种，既主张违约金又主张赔偿损失的一般不会得到法院的支持»; the most typical Russian phrases are «Если переговоры не дадут положительных результатов, то любой спор, разногласие или требование, возникающее в связи с Договором, его толкованием, исполнением, прекращением или недействительностью, подлежат разрешению в Международном коммерческом арбитражном суде при Торгово-промышленной палате Российской Федерации в соответствии с его Регламентом»).

The second stage of training ("teaching differences in business communication typical in defferent countries, different ethnocultures") reveals the differences between English, Chinese and Russian business communications. These differences are due, first of all, to the peculiarities of the culture of the West and the East. For example, in Western culture, for oral communication during a business meeting, it is customary to communicate specifically in the case, with very little time for meeting; in the eastern culture it is necessary to agree in advance on a business meeting, preferably in writing; At the meeting itself, time is given to a polite welcome and introductory conversation anticipating the subject of a business meeting. During the greeting, Western businessmen shake hands, when they say Mr, Mrs / Miss / Ms, then the name. Eastern businessmen welcome with a slight bow, at the address after the surname it is customary to pronounce a position, rank or profession.

The results of the second stage of the study are shown in Figure 2, the summary data in Table 1. Statistical processing and an objective interpretation of the results obtained led to the following conclusion: the polycultural approach in teaching allows to form a polycultural environment as a basis for human interaction with elements of other cultures; develop the ability of a person to cultural self-determination; to determine for themselves value orientations in relation to their own culture.
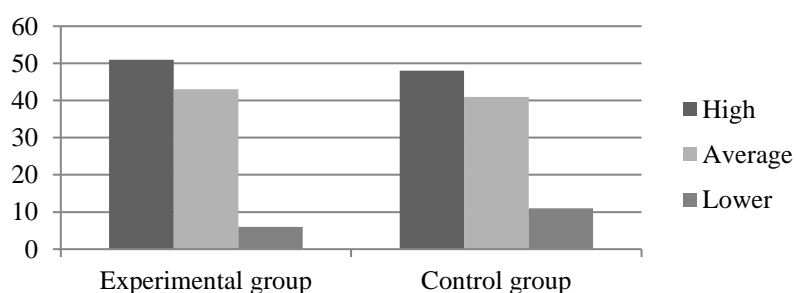

Figure 02. Results of the experiment in the system of polycultural education

Table 01. The final data of the level of the formation of polycultural competence

The level of the formation of polycultural competence	Traditional education		Polycultural education	
	Experimental group, %	Control group, %	Experimental group, %	Control group, %
High	37	34	51	48
Average	42	39	43	41
Lower	21	27	6	11

In addition, the polycultural approach to learning promotes the development of such qualities as the tolerance of the views and judgments of people; recognition and development of cultural pluralism in society; recognition of equal rights, duties, and opportunities for all citizens; effective participation of all and everyone in decision-making, which concern both the personal life of a person and the life of society as a whole; justice for all and everyone; freedom of choice; respect for majority decisions and protection of minority rights; respect for the rights of free choice, etc. Most of all the above goals and categories of polycultural education are realized in the process of business communication – a phenomenon directly related to the development of business and business spheres, communication techniques that take into account a variety of factors (personality of the interlocutors, their moods, interests, etc.). Accordingly, the polycultural approach in the training of business communication is the most acceptable and effective.

The need to teach intercultural business communication today is gaining increasing importance. Participation in global business projects leads to the fact that increasingly among employees of the company there are many-sided people (with different cultures and different experiences). Therefore, the most important advantage of a polycultural approach in the training of business communication will be the mastery of the skill of building an effective intercultural dialogue, within which (Shum Su Kei & Yazdanifard, 2015):

- understand and recognize the values and beliefs of people of different cultural backgrounds;

- the appropriate (not the same for all) way of intercultural communication, taking into account the different cultural experiences of life: a departure from ignorance of the cultural differences of people is realized;

- successfully resolve possible conflicts between people with different cultural traditions, because there is no fear and fear of a different culture;

- all cultures are defined as equal, respectively, refers to them equally, because there is no culture superior to other cultures (the rejection of ethnocentrism);

- "correctly" are people with different cultural traditions, since there is a departure from stereotyping (hanging labels and classifying the surrounding people based on information obtained from the media, their own experience, etc.).

7. Conclusion

A polycultural approach in the training of business communication is an effective way of forming a polynational democratic education in the business sphere. It forms a complex system, connected with the integration of people into «global integrity», into the polycultural community, which today is the most important and fundamental category of social philosophy and theoretical sociology. The polycultural

approach is a way out of the education crisis, it allows us to create a modern system of education and training, based on the principles of humanism and democracy. Such a system is oriented, first of all, to specific conditions, takes into account the interests and needs of specific people, in connection with this it can not be the same for several educational institutions, but will be exclusively an individual.

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