

## DCCD 2020

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

# HOW TO ACHIEVE UNDERSTANDING IN NON-DIALOGUE CONTEXT OF COMMUNICATION?

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### *Abstract*

In the theory and methodology of teaching foreign languages, a time has come that requires a review of the prevailing scientific stereotypes, their transformation under the influence of multiple factors: socio-political, economic and cultural. Among such linguodidactic concepts that require revision, first of all, is the dialogue of cultures, which has become a kind of “mythologeme” in the scientific picture of the world of related sciences: linguistics, cultural studies, linguoculturology, lingvodidactics. *The purpose of the article* is to debunk the sustainability of the myth of the dialogue of cultures as an unchanging positive attitude towards interaction of communication participants belonging to different linguistic and cultural communities. We support the thesis about the presence and manifestation of the “limits” of the dialogue, the possibility and, moreover, the high probability of situations in which dialogue as a constructive interaction of its participants cannot be fully or partially realized. *The findings of the study*: (1) substantiation of the realism and urgency of the study of non-dialogue of cultures as didactic reality, the disclosure of its causes and consequences; (2) systematization of the experience of linguistic educational activities with the focus on preparing students for participation in non-dialogue of cultures. As *conclusions*, it is argued that linguodidactic concepts should be focused on the application of methods and techniques for preparing students for non-constructive conditions of the dialogue of cultures, for a possible conflict communicative situation.

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## 1. Introduction

The “dialogue of cultures” is a key concept of foreign language teaching for at least the last three decades. Its status is based on the significant changes that took place in the perception of culture in such spheres as linguistics, linguodidactics. These changes are inspired by the focus on the development of an personality who represents its cultural identity in the process of communication being ready to perceive the culture of another linguosociety. From these positions, one can trace the following cyclical dynamics of stages, which has become firmly established in the Russian second language education (Tareva, 2017):

- culture acts as the goal of teaching FL during the period of the communicative approach/method;
- culture is considered as a component of the educational content in the era of the ideas of linguoculturological and sociocultural approaches;
- the ability to participate in the *dialogue of cultures* is affirmed as a competence-based objective of foreign language teaching (competence-based and intercultural approaches).

It is the last stage that marks the ideal educational goal, the strive for which necessitates the upbringing of a person who is ready to interact with a foreigner on the basis of a comprehensive understanding of differences and peculiarities of his culture and capable of simultaneous rethinking, comprehension of his national cultural identity, being able to assess it from the point of view of a foreign communication partner. Accordingly, the dialogue of cultures is seen as a key link in the transition from a communicative approach, which for a long time determines the parameters, structure, content of linguodidactic theory and practice, to an intercultural (multicultural) approach that puts problems of (*mutual*) *understanding* at the forefront.

For a long time, the conceptual methodology was based on the generally accepted postulate – it is necessary to teach a foreign language in such a way and to achieve such goals that are able to provide a positive effect of intercultural dialogue, representing constructive behavior of a student in the process of communication with a native speaker. Constructiveness was understood as the achievement of one's communicative intention, connected, firstly, with the desire to express intention, to ensure its perception and understanding on the part of the interlocutor; secondly, with the need to hear your vis-a-vis, to understand it and on this basis to build communication in a foreign language. It was on this postulate that the concepts of teaching foreign languages in various educational contexts were built for a long time, these concepts were embodied in textbooks/manuals, reproduced and massively broadcast to young generations of teachers / teachers of foreign languages from year to year. Thus, the idea of constructiveness (in the meaning of productivity, positive effectiveness) was originally laid down in the concept of “dialogue of cultures”, was inherent in it.

## 2. Problem Statement

It is necessary to research the essence and parameters of the phenomenon of “non-dialogue of cultures” / “limits of dialogue” from the point of view of making didactic decisions that can answer questions about whether there is a need to change the focus of the process of teaching foreign languages

to prepare language learner for situations of conflicting intercultural communication, whether there is a didactic basis for the implementation of this orientation in the practice of teaching foreign languages.

### **3. Research Questions**

The authors posed a number of important questions: How to achieve understanding in the context of non-dialogue communication? How to maintain verbal contact even when the dialogue is broken or not possible due to irreconcilable views, views, attitudes towards the subject of communication? How to change the learning strategies with focus on preparing students for such cases of a dialogue? How they perceive the difficulties of understanding in non-dialogue context of communication? Which features of an individual's potential help to overcome the difficulties of understanding in non-dialogue context of communication?

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

Debunking of the myth of the dialogue of cultures as an unchanging attitude towards the positive nature of the interaction between participants of communication who belong to different linguistic and cultural communities. Introduction of the thesis about the presence and manifestation of the "limits" of the dialogue, the possibility and, moreover, the high probability of situations in which the constructive dialogue cannot be fully or partially realized.

### **5. Research Methods**

To study the problem of non-dialogue of cultures from the point of view of teaching students a second language, theoretical and practical research methods are used: analytical and reflexive (analysis of domestic and foreign literature on the problem covered in the article, analysis of the products of human activity, theoretical modeling of the concept of teaching non-dialogue of cultures), empirical (survey of respondents, statistical processing of the results).

### **6. Findings**

#### **6.1. Limits of dialogue as an actual problem of sociolinguistics, communication theory and linguodidactics**

Kagan (1988) defines in the structure of the communication three types dialogues: *full-fledged dialogue, utilitarian attitude, and pseudo-dialogue*. The latter means the absolute rejection by one culture of another. It results in the loss of mutual understanding, the state of aggression, the situations of conflict, etc.

It is significant that the topic of a problem (conflict) dialogue was touched upon in foreign studies (Aalto & Reuter, 2006; Baraldi, 2006; Dulabaum, 2011; Fuentes, 2016; Himmich, 2013; Igbino, 2011; Stokke & Lybæk, 2016). It has recently begun to actively attract the attention of foreign scientists. In 2018, an interesting discussion was launched on the pages of "Dialogues in Human Geography" Journal, inspired by the article "The possibilities and limits to dialogue" of a group of authors from Canada,

Ireland, Australia, Italy, the USA and Great Britain (Rose-Redwood et al., 2018). The key concepts covered in this article by researchers include the phenomena of “antagonism”, “debate”, “political polarization”, the activity of which is due to the conflict of opposition of different states on political and sociocultural levels of their interaction. It is important that, exacerbating the problem of “limits” in communication, the authors conclude that in creating an interaction space in the age of global polarization, scientific dialogue plays a crucial role.

In the development of the topic raised in the publication, scientists from different countries joined the discussion of the raised issue. For example, the diverse aspects of the “cosmopolitan dialogue” (Qian, 2018), the conditions for rejection a dialogue (“When dialogue means refusal”) (Mott & Cockayne, 2018; Wright, 2018). These publications raise the question of the circumstances of communication and the reasons that impede constructive dialogue, explain the nature of communicative interaction disorders, show that such situations become more and more often in interpersonal and intercultural interaction. The authors develop recommendations on what to do if a dialogue is destructed. The attention of the authors is attracted by the “unreliability” of speech (the precariousness of speech), the inequality of dialogue.

Issues of “non-dialogue of cultures” are at the epicenter of discussions of the Russian scientific community. From the point of view of linguistics, a conflict discourse is described: its parameters, properties, types of manifestation. It is understood as “the process of realization of various intentions (generated by mental paradigmatic connections) in the speech interaction of communicants” (Belous, 2010, p. 1). As indicated by Belous (2010), “the conflict as such, being a supersubjective component of the world’s picture, is an ideal entity, which, due to its global nature, cannot be broadcast by itself: it requires both intermediary tools, such as the communicants, and the social practice of its use - situational conditioning, which is an element of the presuppositional base of any, including conflict, discourse” (Belous, 2010, p. 1). From this perspective, the conclusions made by the researcher regarding dialogue and language as a tool for its (dialogue) implementation are important: “time and the evolution of human civilization dictate the need to switch to modeling possible conflict dialogical situations, which naturally affects the evolution of the semiotic system: the outer side of the sign is already cannot coincide with the subject itself, reflecting not the action plan with the subject, but the action pattern with the sign itself, and undergoes significant changes” (Belous, 2010, pp. 2-3).

The results achieved in linguistics allow us to distinguish a conflicting linguistic personality, which is a constant initiator of tense relations with others regardless of whether problematic situations precede this (Danilenko, 2006). This is a person who is involved in a conflict situation and uses those speech means that are characteristic for conflict discourse, a person who demonstrates “speech aggression” (Shcherbinina, 2006), participates in conflict speech interaction, uses “hostility language” (Gladilin, 2012). It is precisely due to the analysis of such manifestations that the expertise of various speech products is carried out in jurislinguistics.

With the achieved results of linguistic research, conflict dialogue (non-dialogue) is becoming attractive in the linguistic and didactic perspective. Since recent times the interest of some scientists has been attracted to this phenomenon, interpreted in the linguistic aspect from different angles. So, Safonova (2018, p. 29), considering the binary philosophical dichotomy of “dialogue of cultures – non-dialogue of cultures”, argues that non-dialogue of cultures is such an attitude to another culture, as:

- *the attitude of rejection of another culture* (including a complete disregard for the values of another culture, underestimation of its cultural heritage for enrichment of other cultures, rejection of contacts with representatives of another culture);
- *the utilitarian attitude to another culture* (manifested either in uncultural behavior from the point of view of another culture in relation to cultural artifacts and carriers of this culture, or in the forced assimilation of certain characteristics of this culture for pragmatic reasons, or in the excessive idealization of another culture (due to a number of pragmatic reasons or due to cultural ignorance);
- *the manipulative attitude to another culture* in order to oppose another culture for political, economic or other reasons”.

The destructive consequences of non-dialogue of cultures, according to Safonova (2018), are communicative alienation, cultural shock, cognitive dissonance. Sysoev (2018). offers a linguodidactic perspective on the consideration of non-dialogue of cultures. He expands the content of training for intercultural communication of students by including interaction skills in situations of intercultural conflicts or “non-dialogue of cultures”. To these skills (as part of knowledge, skills and relationships), the author attributes the skills “a) to escape from intercultural conflict or to avoid it; b) to suppress intercultural conflict; c) to reach compromise in intercultural conflict; d) to convince the participants of the intercultural conflict that the opponent is right” (Sysoev, 2018, p. 261). According to Baryshnikov (2018), “Bakhtinsky’s ‘dialogue of cultures’ in a linguodidactic context is a beautiful metaphor, since foreign languages are taught in Russian educational institutions in a monocultural environment” (Baryshnikov, 2018, p. 9). The danger of focusing on the dialogue of cultures, according to the author, is “the removal of students from their native culture, in the formation of a new look at their ‘I’” (Baryshnikov, 2018, pp. 9-10).

In our works, we repeatedly raised the question of the nature of the non-dialogue of cultures, interpreting it (the question) from the point of view of philosophy (Tareva, 2019), cultural studies and linguodidactics (Tareva, 2017). As we argue, “the emergence of the dichotomy ‘dialogue of cultures vs non-dialogue of cultures’ is a characteristic sign of the development of the scientific field in accordance with the canons of the post-non-classical period of its existence. New breaking linguodidactic decisions are needed, made at the level of postulating new principles of teaching, creating a specialized set of teaching technologies (in the aggregation of methods and techniques), and especially developing teaching tools, especially textbooks / teaching aids. Sporadic materials in that area are already available. A systematic and multidimensional approach to the didactic solution to the problem of opposing non-dialogue is required for providing conditions for the manifestation of the uniqueness of each partner and their fundamental equality with each other; awareness of the differences and originality of their points of view; orientation of each participant at understanding and active interpretation of his point of view by a partner; expectations of the answer and its anticipation in his own statement; the mutual complementarity of the positions of the participants in communication, the correlation of which is the purpose of the dialogue” (Tareva, 2019, p. 82).

Thus, the dialogue of cultures as a “beautiful metaphor” today is “landing”, taking into account new challenges of rapidly changing circumstances, during which there is no possibility (time!) to reflect,

make a balanced communication decision, identify the facts of manipulation by the interlocutor and find the proper answer to such an obvious or covert "violence." The dialogue of cultures begins to be firmly associated with its antipode – the non-dialogue of cultures, the study of which is a prospect for the near development of linguodidactic science.

## **6.2. The results of empirical diagnosis of intercultural communication difficulties**

In the course of the study, we set task of analyzing the opinions of teachers from two universities (Moscow City University – MCU and Higher School of Economics – HSE; 56 respondents in total) who have experience in intercultural communication (in English and French) and participate in educational, academic and scientific projects.

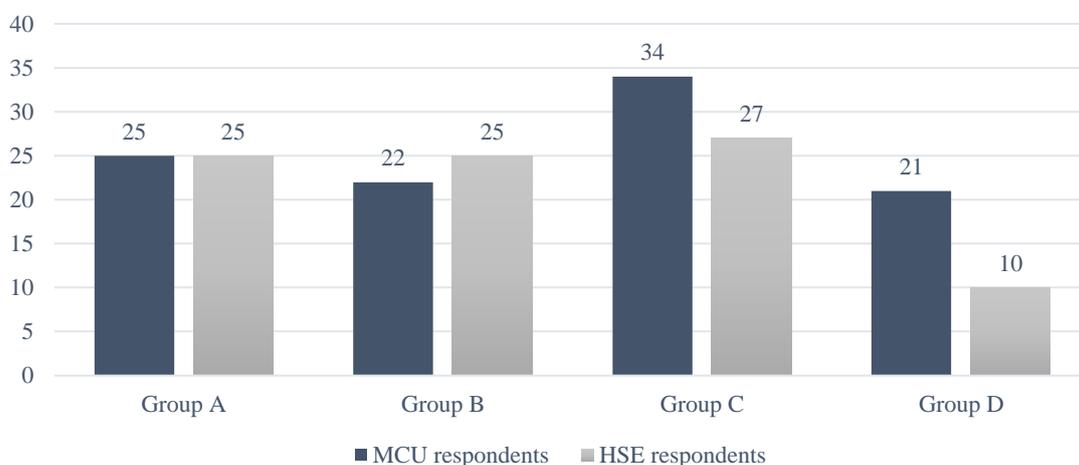
Participants were asked questions regarding the characteristics and difficulties of intercultural communication. As examples, we list the most significant issues from the point of view of the problem being solved: *What is your experience in conducting talks with foreign colleagues? Questions from which areas were discussed with foreign colleagues (education, science, business, politics, etc.)? Has communication with foreign partners always ended in a mutually beneficial result? Have you ever encountered a lack of understanding, rejection of your position? What caused the negative effect of the talks (negotiations) (if any)? What are the causes of disruption in communication with a foreign partner (choose the right one): (a) difficulties associated with non-understanding of a foreign colleague's ideas about the essence of the issue under discussion; (b) difficulties caused by an incomplete understanding of the traditions, customs, norms and rules of conducting business communication with a foreigner; (c) difficulties caused by the lack of consideration of ideas about the native worldview (values, standards, preferences) of the issue under discussion; (d) difficulties determined by the priority of the norms of communication inherent in the mother tongue; (e) difficulties caused by the lack of a habit to compare communicative behaviour accepted in a native and another country; (f) objective difficulties due to the presence of interference (noise and other distractions), unfamiliar environment, lack of knowledge of information about a partner? Did you manage to get out of a difficult situation in the course of communication with a foreign partner? If so, by what means and methods did you use to neutralize the negative effect of the talks (negotiations)? Do you think that it is necessary to teach ways to overcome the difficulties of communication with a foreign colleague?*

The data obtained showed that the vast majority of respondents (87% of the total) experience difficulties in conducting business negotiations. This means that non-dialogue context of communication is implemented in a fairly large number of cases. Most of the respondents (52%) failed to solve the problem, which indicates a low level of their readiness to overcome difficulties of understanding in non-dialogue context of communication. Almost all respondents (98%) recognized the need for targeted training of students to overcome difficulties in the context of intercultural communication. Only 2% of the respondents admitted that only experience of real communication with a foreign partner will help avoid difficulties, and “*learning does not help in this*” (quote from one of the answers).

Particular attention in analyzing the results was given to the issue of the causes of the difficulties encountered in intercultural business communication. The data obtained were grouped by us, which allowed us to distinguish the following groups of difficulties:

- difficulties associated with ignorance / rejection of a different picture of the world (ideas of communication partners about the surrounding reality) (*group A*);
- difficulties associated with taking into account the native picture of the world (own ideas about the surrounding reality) (*group B*);
- difficulties associated with the lack of comparison of ideas about the native and other pictures of the world (*group C*);
  - difficulties of an objective nature (*group D*).

The results of processing the results are presented in Figure 1, where the number of respondents is 56 (36 - teachers of Moscow State Pedagogical University, 20 - teachers of the Higher School of Economics); the number of processed answers (it was possible to choose several options from the proposed ones) - 102 (MCU), 87 (HSE).



**Figure 01.** Opinion of respondents about groups of difficulties of intercultural communication

As the result of the analysis of the obtained data showed, respondents with over 3 years of experience in intercultural communication, indicated as the maximum difficulty in interacting with a foreign partner a lack of experience / habit of comparing ideas about the surrounding reality that differ in their native and other worldviews (difficulties of group C). It seems that these difficulties should attract maximum attention when preparing students for a dialogue with a foreign colleague. Difficulties associated with ignorance / misunderstanding / rejection of the particularities of the communication partner's worldview (difficulties of group A) have a slightly lower weight. Surprising for us were the data on the importance of taking into account by the participants in communication the peculiarities of their own mentality, and the perceptions inherent in their native linguistic culture (difficulties of group B). Hypothetically, we assumed that this indicator would not cause such a response among the surveyed participants. The least significant are mentioned difficulties associated with the objective interference of communication (difficulties of group C). Important in evaluating the results of the analysis is the fact that the opinions of the respondents of the two academic schools practically coincided in recognizing the priority of difficulties in understanding in non-dialogue context of communication.

### **6.3. Understanding in non-dialogue context of communication: set of components**

To overcome the difficulties of understanding in non-dialogue context of communication, special knowledge, skills and qualities of a person are needed:

- knowledge of language units with a national-cultural component of meaning;
- knowledge of the parameters of the intercultural context of interaction between the native and other linguosociums: value attitudes of participants, historical and current cultural factors, etc.;
- knowledge of “interfering” phenomena in the native and foreign languages in order to avoid a false understanding of the interlocutor;
- skills to understand information by combining and comparing the native and other conceptual pictures of the world;
- skills to correlate the interlocutor’s speech with the goals and situation of intercultural communication;
- skills to recognize and understand the elements of culture in the interlocutor’s speech through the prism of his own picture of the world;
- skills to determine the peculiarities of an intercultural communicative situation in which a foreign language message is implemented;
- skills to identify the social status of the interlocutor, sociolinguistic features of his speech behaviour;
- skills to get out of situations of communicative failure;
- skills to ignore material that does not bear a culturally-evaluative connotation and does not affect the understanding of oral communication;
- skills to predict, suggest the further content of oral message with the help of guesswork, knowledge about the sociocultural realities, traditions, customs of another linguosocium and their true actualization;
- skills to carry out the transfer from the native picture of the world to another;
- skills of conjecture;
- qualities: sociocultural observation, sociocultural tact, awareness of actions to compare pictures of the world, independence of comparative activity, purposefulness of comparing and / or combining pictures of the world.

### **6.4. The analysis of the experience of preparing language learner for participation in conflict intercultural communication: descriptive focus**

The problem of preparing students for those situations of intercultural communication when cultures – native and studied – find themselves in ideological antagonism, is one of the most difficult for making didactic decisions. Cases of conflict situations, discrepancies in ideas and opinions during the intercultural dialogue have not previously been studied with the aim of subsequent didactization. For the most part, such cases were not taken into consideration. Objective reality makes us think about how to teach students to act in a difficult communicative situation, when communicating with a partner is a *pseudodialogue* or, as is accepted today in Russian linguodidactics, *non-dialogue of cultures*. Researchers seek to answer the questions: *what causes the “non-dialogue of cultures”?* *How to achieve understanding*

*in the context of “non-dialogue of cultures”? How to prepare university graduates for the conflicting conditions of dialogue interaction with a foreign communication partner?*

Scientific thought is only at the beginning of understanding the technology of teaching students communicative behavior in the context of non-dialogue of cultures; the manifestation of the latter is only sporadically taken into account in the construction of linguistic-educational concepts. Scientists today only approach the understanding of such cases and making decisions about their (approaches) integration into the methodological system.

In search of a didactic solution to the issue of teaching a foreign language in order to overcome misunderstanding Safonova (2018) offers training students in the field of identification of communicative failures, interference, barriers and the development of their (students) skills to get out of them (Safonova, 2018). The author considers it necessary to begin the search for a typology of communicative barriers based on the achievements of “culturology, psychology of intercultural communication, communication theory, sociology and the experience of cross-cultural interaction of people in different areas of the globalizing world with a focus on a specific area of communication (at university, minimum on everyday life, administrative, academic, business, scientific, managerial) and in terms of communicative competence” (Safonova, 2018, p. 32). The typology proposed by the scientist includes ethnocentric barriers, cross-cultural barriers, socio-stratification barriers, subcultural barriers, ideological barriers, metacultural barriers of a continental and geopolitical nature. In addition, the search for a solution to the question of preparing students for activities in a non-dialogue of cultures brings Safonova (2018) to the need for a content analysis of verbal and non-verbal behavior of participants of intercultural communication, identifying varieties of communication barriers and accumulating them in a single bank. Such content analysis “is aimed at:

- obtaining a linguodidactic description of personally and professionally significant events in a particular field of communication (for example, in the field of academic communication, these include an international seminar, international conference, international forum, international projects, academic exchanges);
- defining of communicative-behavioral scenarios and communicative-cognitive schemes that operate in cross-cultural / pluricultural communication in a specific field of communication, that is, the creation of linguodidactic conditions for their methodological modeling for educational purposes<sup>4</sup>
- defining of a complex of intercultural macro-skills (with their subsequent detalization in micro-skills), which can be the subject of training and control in preparation for professional intercultural communication and which should be taken into account when developing the regulatory and methodological base for teaching FL” (p. 34).

Baryshnikov (2013), in order to exclude ideological influence on students, proposes to eliminate such methodological requirements from educational practice as:

- to imitate in communication with foreign partners in intercultural interaction;
- to master the speech-behavioral strategies and tactics of foreign interlocutors;
- to incorporate into the culture of a foreign interlocutor
- to renounce own language, fully acculture;

- to abandon own values, gain value orientations characteristic for foreign communication partners (Baryshnikov, 2013).

Thus, it can be stated that the question of preparing of a foreign language learners gradually leaves the state of a theoretical and ascertaining description. It goes into the phase of searching and implementing practical technologies, the realization of which will reduce the conflict of intercultural communication and create among students *intercultural communicative competence* (for more details, see Tareva, 2017; 2019, Fantini, 2018; 2019; 2020).

## 7. Conclusion

The achievement of mutual understanding in the course of intercultural dialogue is an extremely complex process, during which special knowledge, skills, abilities, and qualities of the participant's personality manifest themselves. Their development (upbringing) is a labor-intensive process that requires restructuring the training system of university graduates (linguistic and non-linguistic). Special methodological solutions are needed at the level of development and application of specific principles, methods, techniques, means and forms of teaching foreign languages. Particular attention should be paid to the use of practice-oriented technologies, primarily the case method, which is able to fully reflect the parameters of a real non-dialogue of cultures. The case, stimulating students to comprehend, analyze the essence of intercultural conflict, decide on how to get out of a difficult problem situation of intercultural interaction, will reduce the polarization of intercultural relations and ensure the productivity of contacts at various levels of international relations.

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