

## Formation of Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence in Business Communication

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**Abstract:** The purpose of an article under analysis is to highlight the topical issue of many sciences of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the intercultural communication competence. This study investigates the nature of intercultural communication competence, makes distinction between communication competence and intercultural competence and emphasizes the main components of intercultural communication competence, formation of that competence in business communication, especially business correspondence. In the theoretical approach, this paper discusses the necessity and benefits to study theory and practice of business communication, analyses what makes intercultural communication competence special and distinctive features of each competence. As an experimental approach we suggest the ways to form intercultural communication competence of students on written type of business communication at universities. On the basis of the results of the study, components, measures of effective intercultural communication competence are presented. And also the intercultural and linguistic problems are given to be solved to be intercultural communicatively competent in Business communication.

**Key words:** Competence • Discourse • Business correspondence • Intercultural speaker • Cognitive aspects

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### INTRODUCTION

The topic of communication competence and intercultural competence became more and more important during the past years: globalization and worldwide contacts between companies, organizations and individuals need the ability to communicate in a successful way.

The main necessity to study Theory and Practice of Intercultural Communication, Theory of Communication, Business Communication, Business Correspondence at high schools and universities is that 1) the development of technology has enabled a constant flow of information and ideas across boundaries. Communication is faster and more available than ever. Also 2) the development of transportation has increased face-to-face contact with people from different cultural backgrounds immensely. These developments, in turn, have affected the world economy. 3) The business world is becoming more international and interrelated and international economies face a true interdependence. 4) Widespread population migrations have changed the demographics of several

nations and new intercultural identities and communities have been born. 5) Cultural diversity and multiculturalism are the realities of working and domestic life everywhere. In the process of migration and general internationalization the idea of a national identity has changed. International alliances and subcultures inside the nations have caused a de-emphasis on the nation-state [1].

The topic of Intercultural communication can be explored in a variety of ways. Scholars who look at it from a mass media point of view are concerned with such issues as international broadcasting, worldwide freedom of expression, western domination of information and the use of modern electronic technologies for worldwide transmission of information. Other groups investigate international communication with an emphasis on communication among nations and governments. It is the communication of diplomacy and propaganda. Still others are interested in the communication inherent in international business, which includes such diverse concerns as negotiations and communication within multicultural organizations [2].

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Basic needs are sensitivity and self-consciousness: the understanding of other behaviors and ways of thinking as well as the ability to express one's own point of view in a transparent way with the aim to be understood and respected by staying flexible where this is possible and being clear and transparent where this is necessary.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

How to form intercultural communication competence of students on written form of business communication or business correspondence at the universities is one of the central aspects of modern life. To train a competitive specialist we need to provide a cultural ground to globalize him in intercultural field which develops according to intercultural communication. The main aim of a modern specialist is guidance with necessary competences, styles of behavior, communicative strategies, relating to the specific side of national values for agreement and consensus of the world.

The course "Business Correspondence" begins with how to write business letters properly, what is business correspondence in general, what types of business correspondence, structural and lexical peculiarities of business letters, business announcements, business reports and proposals, job application letters, electronic mail and fax communications. Writing skills are often the most difficult skills for students of English as a foreign language to acquire. This may be because of the great emphasis on listening, speaking and reading in the classroom. Letter writing is an essential part of communication, an intimate part of business and life experience. Each letter-writer has a characteristic way of writing, his style of writing, his way of expressing thoughts, facts, etc. but it must be emphasized that the routine of the official or semi-official business letters requires certain accepted idioms, phrases, patterns and grammar which are found in general use today. Therefore certain skills must be acquired by practice and details of writing must be carefully and thoroughly learnt.

Business correspondence is the part of Business English dealing with properties of writing different business letters and documents related to the given sphere.

The aim of teaching the course is to introduce the students with the specific features of business writing (letters, memos, reports, minutes, announcements, proposals and job application documents); to identify the functional-stylistic, lexical, structural, cultural peculiarities of the language and style of business documents; to get

acquainted with the specific types of business correspondence; to learn the format of writing.

The objectives of the given course may be formulated as follows: critical study of the material on the theme; exposure of the aims, place, importance, role and contents and contexts of the aspect of letter-writing; defining the specificity of lexis in different spheres of business correspondence; searching the peculiarities of the structure, manners and styles of business letters; arranging and classifying the business letters according to the sphere of usage, giving useful tips and advice how to write them in proper way; to find out a good solution for effective letter writing skills taking in consideration writing, cultural, intercultural, communicative aspects.

**Main Part:** And here in the given article our task is to define the communication and intercultural competences, give their nature and specificity and the intercultural communication competences to be formed and improved in written form of business communication, that is, business correspondence.

Although there is still some disagreement among communication scholars about how best to conceptualize and measure communication competence, there is increasing agreement about certain of its fundamental characteristics. We draw heavily on the work of Brian Spitzberg and his colleagues. The following definition of communication competence illustrates the key components of their approach: competent communication is interaction that is perceived as effective in fulfilling certain rewarding objectives in a way that is also appropriate to the context in which the interaction occurs [3].

Communication competence involves not only knowing a language, but also what to say to whom and how to say it appropriately in a particular situation. That is, it includes not only what is grammatically correct and what is not, but also when and where to use language appropriately and with whom. It includes knowledge of rules of speaking, as well as knowing how to use and respond to different speech acts; that is how, for example, to apologize or make a request, as well as how to respond to an apology or a request, in a particular language or culture.

All of this involves taking account of the social and cultural setting in which the speaking or writing occurs, speaker's and writer's relationships with each other and the community's norms, values and expectations for the kind of interaction, or speech event. When I buy something in a shop, for example, I take account of the cultural setting I am in, the kind of shop I am in and the

relationship between me and the person working there as I carry out the particular interaction. I do this at the level of language in terms of grammar, vocabulary, discourse structures and politeness strategies, as well as how I behave physically in the particular situation [4].

Communication competence is often described as being made up of four underlying components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence; that is, mastery of the language code (grammatical competence), knowledge of appropriate language use (sociolinguistic competence) and knowledge of how to connect utterances in a text so it is both cohesive and coherent (discourse competence) and mastery of the strategies that speakers use to compensate for breakdowns in communication as well as the strategies they use to enhance the effectiveness of the communications (strategic competence) [5].

Communication competence involves the mastery of a language's grammar and lexis and the sociolinguistic and pragmatic components are an essential part of it. The interest was mainly on speech acts, language functions and register variation. Students in this approach learn how to greet, invite and request information [6].

Communication competence is individual's knowledge of the rules or prescriptions for knowing what to do and how to act in specific circumstances, groups, times and places.

Communication competence is knowledge and skills of interrelationship with other people, massive group of people and the ability to make effective negotiations. To be communicatively competent a person should have knowledge on functions of communication, specific rules of communicative process, verbal and nonverbal types of communication, listening techniques, feedback, psychological types of partners, social roles and methods of presentation [7].

Communication competence is knowledge of not only if something is formally possible in a language, but also knowledge of whether it is feasible, appropriate, or done in a particular speech community.

Communication competence is a functional language ability which has the following characteristics: a) it is of dynamic character; b) it is of implicit character; c) it is of complex character, which means that communication competence is not purely linguistic phenomenon, it includes psychological and sociological and anthropological components; d) it is of linguo-cultural character; e) it is of relative character which means that the final level of competence is relative.

The study of intercultural competence primarily has been motivated by practical concerns. Businesses, government agencies and educational institutions want to select people for intercultural assignments who will be successful. Lack of intercultural competence means failed business ventures, government projects that have not achieved their objectives and unsuccessful learning experience for students [8].

Intercultural competence is the ability for successful communication with people of other cultures. This ability can be existed already at a young age, or be developed and improved thanks to willpower and competence. The goal of assessing intercultural competence is to find out if a person has the ability or the potential for it. Cultures can be different not only between continents or nations, but also within the same company or even family: every human being has its own history, its own life and therefore also its own culture, cultural affiliation (geographical, ethnical, moral, religious, political and historical). Intercultural competence involves the learner's awareness of own culture, understanding of the relations between language and culture and providing insights into ways to explore, analyze and compare cultures. Within this framework, the foreign language learner is viewed as an "*intercultural speaker*", someone who "crosses frontiers and who is to some extent a specialist in the transit of cultural property and symbolic values" [9].

Intercultural competence is the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people to the world.

Intercultural competence is 1) an interdisciplinary field of research that studies how people communicate and understand each other across group boundaries or discourse systems of various sorts including national, geographical, linguistic, ethnic, occupation, class or gender-related boundaries affect language use; 2) the exchange of information between individuals who are unlike culturally [10].

Analyzing the different definitions of communication and intercultural competence we can say that both of them are the most important issues of thoroughly studying and investigating nowadays. Then, communication and intercultural competences are much related with each other, because language and culture are not separable from each other [11].

Intercultural communication competences refer to the ability to cultures, including your own and use this understanding to communicate with people from other cultures successfully.

Intercultural communication competence is a term which is used to refer to the degree to which an individual is able to exchange information effectively and appropriately with individuals who belong to a different culture [12].

In other words, intercultural communication competence is knowledge of individuals on correct verbal and nonverbal communication, style of behavior in communication, norms and principles of own and foreign culture, proper actions of communicators, different contexts.

### CONCLUSION

Intercultural competence is needed as the basic ability for any interaction. It is not only necessary to have social skills, but also to improve the sensitivity and understanding for other values, views, ways of living and thinking, as well as being self-consciousness in transferring one's own values and views in a clear, but appropriate way. Intercultural competence helps understanding others and achieving goals.

Having discussed and analyzed the whole essence and specificity of intercultural communication competence, we suggest the next model to be improved: knowledge (oriented to judge not only locally but globally); formation of intercultural and communicative competences (in all disciplines of curricula, not only in language teaching); challenges in culture teaching (teaching cultures in foreign language and training of teachers and students); development of linguistic world view and functional language use (conceptualizing the world and formation of common positive attitudes); development of critical thinking and assessment skills (getting profit to one's culture and finding proper solutions).

### RESULTS

To be competent and to make business communication effective the students have to follow the next components:

- To have a good command of foreign language or a proficiency of a second language.
- To know common characteristics or traits which make your communication possible and effective.
- To define the context and types as physical, social, business and interpersonal.
- To gain the areas or domains of intercultural communication competence:

- The ability to establish and maintain relationships;
- The ability to communicate in order to accomplish something of mutual interest or need;
- The ability to communicate with minimal loss or distortion.
- To have sufficient knowledge, suitable motivations and skilled actions.
- To realize the essence of a context and its types, its influence on Intercultural communication competence.

To form intercultural communication competences on students the following measures should be undertaken:

- Special training of language teachers on areas as anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, economics, arts, intercultural communication, communication theory, academic writing.
- More research about culture and language teaching, learning and evaluation.
- Educational authorities should consider the inclusion of a cultural component in the examinations, curricula and state standards.
- Organization of national conferences, seminars, master classes and symposia on the topic.
- Encouragement of the production and publication of working papers dealing with the specific aspect of business communication and business correspondence.
- Compiling textbooks dealing with cultural issues and intercultural communication competences.
- Training and assessing students for intercultural communication competences or certain skills and knowledge.
- Socializing or sharing foreign culture experiences of students, teachers.

As the result of formation intercultural communication competence of students on the course "Business Correspondence" the following linguistic and cross-cultural problems should be solved:

- Students have to know the target language perfectly.
- Students have to realize the context of letter writing.
- Students are aware of verbal means of communication in letter writing procedure.
- Students have to follow the correct lexical and grammatical rules of the target language.
- Students have to identify the forms, styles, format of business letters and documents.

- Students have a good knowledge of four basic competences (grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic) in letter writing process.
- Students have to know the rules, regulations and norms of certain cultures.

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