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Cross-Cultural Competence of Communicators as a Way to Create a Positive Eco-Informational Environment

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Abstract

This research is dedicated to the study of the essence of the phenomenon of cross-cultural competence, the acquisition of cross-cultural competence, which seems necessary in the context of globalisation. The aim of the article is a clarification of the definition of cross-cultural competence and description of its structure, types of knowledge (subject and procedural) in it, methods and strategies for its assimilation. A number of research methods were deployed to accomplish the objectives of the research – observation, survey, cognitive analysis, modelling, text information analysis method, linguo-ecological analysis, interview and sociolinguistic survey method. The research obtained the following scientific results: the definition of cross-cultural competence is given, its signs are revealed, types of knowledge are indicated in it, methods and strategies for mastering it as well as its frame model are presented. The novelty of the work lies in the development of the theoretical foundations of cross-cultural competence and studying the strategies and tactics for mastering it. The article deals with the problems of a new branch of knowledge – ecolinguistics, one of the areas of which is translation and focus of attention on the negative aspects of intercultural communication. Theoretical significance to practical value is the main provisions and conclusions of the article can be used in the development of the theory of cross-cultural communication applied in the practice of cross-cultural teaching.

Keywords: Competency-Based Approach, Ecolinguistic Approach, Cognitive Analysis, Concept, Environmental Thinking

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Introduction

The interpretation of many linguistic phenomena and problems of intercultural communication in modern linguistics is due to a radical ecological turn of this science. At the present stage, a new branch of knowledge is being formed – ecolinguistics, which studies both the factors which have a negative impact on the development of a language and factors related to finding the ways to enrich the language and improving the culture of speech and communication of ecolinguistics speakers. This branch of knowledge that is being studied is the state of the language as a semiotic system (its semiotic health).

Scientists in this area have shown an in-depth interest in describing the forms of language integration, peaceful coexistence, language tolerance, focusing on the development of the principles of "intercultural communication", "dialogue of cultures" by means of a language. The formation of the intercultural (social) competence of speakers of different national languages is recognised in this case as the most crucial task of linguodidactics and methods of teaching foreign languages (Ionova, 2006: 90-91). Mastering cross-cultural competence is understood as a part of communicative competence which aim is to develop language and speech abilities (Malkova, 2000) and consider it a "multilingual and multicultural competence" (Galskov & Gez, 1998: 43).

Currently, the need for mastering intercultural competence is immeasurably increasing. In the era of globalisation, there is an increasing trend towards crowding out national cultural expressions and the coexistence of global and local cultures; the need for a common language in the process of intercultural communication is increasing, the role of oral speech (oralisation, dialogisation, pluralisation and personalisation of communication) is increasing (Sternin, 2010: 13). According to A.O. Laletina, in the modern world, there is an increase in the proportion of conflict communication (Laletina et al., 2011: 42).

All this contributes an unfavourable environment for communication, which in turn contributes to the implementation of conflict situations of communication,— "the negative speech environment of the existence of communicants" (Vernadsky, 2004: insert page number). The information environment can be considered as a synonym for the noosphere. (Vernadsky, 2004), and the "semiosphere" (Yu.M. Lotman, 2000). According to Yu.M. Lotman, the "semiosphere" forms the communicative-semantic structure of the noosphere – the biosphere organised by rational human thought – considered as a system of symbolic support of consciousness (Lotman, 2000). The intercultural information environment can be considered as the biosphere (noosphere) in which both the psychosphere is combined – the environment where the psychological, intellectual and spiritual life takes place (Zvegintsev, 1996: 159-160) and the sign sphere – the semiosphere because the psychosphere is expressed in language as a repository of public consciousness (Zvegintsev, 1996: 163; Evstratova et al., 2016; Akhmetshin et al., 2018). The research aims to identify the essence of this type of competence and describe its structure. The results of the research can find application in intercultural communication, in linguodidactics and the practice of teaching in foreign languages.

To achieve this aim, the research carried the following tasks:

- Studied the works that consider the intercultural competence of communicators;
- Determined the degree of communicative knowledge about the values of one's own, and the other people's society and the degree of knowledge, skills and types of perception;
- Determined the types of competencies, that are formed as a result of the implementation of any abilities;
- Studied the particularities of creative abilities;

- Studied the particularities of the language picture of the world of other nations.

The research, though, begins with a brief review of the literature.

Literature Review

A review of the literature on the problem of competence shows that different research examines various types of competence and gives them inadequate definitions (cite these references). In the works of E.G. Elizarova (2005), communicative competence is understood as a foreign language competence which possesses a set of such characteristics as:

- Dynamism, which is demonstrated in the fact that the ideas (knowledge) of communicants are constantly changing;
- Implicitness (competence is characterised as implicit knowledge);
- Complexity (complex nature of a foreign language) competence is demonstrated in the fact that it includes components of a psychological, anthropological and sociological nature and is not only a linguistic phenomenon;
- Relativity (none of the foreigners cannot possess complete communicative competence in the studied language) (Elizarova, 2005: 221-223).

Under the intercultural competence, B.K. Bazylova and G.A. Kazhigalieva understand the competence aimed not only at mastering knowledge about national cultures and languages but also at removing the "friend-foe" contradiction (Bazylova & Kazhigalieva, 2015: 46). Intercultural competence is considered as a synonym for "ethnocultural competence and is defined as a body of knowledge, ideas about other cultures that are realised through skills and attitudes that ensure effective interaction with representatives of these cultures" (Lebedeva, 2008: 116).

T. Stefanenko believes that ethnocultural competence in the process of intercultural communication contributes not only to the demonstration of a positive attitude towards the presence of various ethnocultural groups in society, characterised as "the ability to understand their representatives and interact with partners from other cultures" (Stefanenko, 2008: 103). According to K.V. Khabarova, N.A. Timofeyeva and N.A. Malysheva, when teaching foreign students Russian as a foreign language, attention should be focused on the formation of the ethnocultural competence of students, which is not only a set of ideas about the specificity of a frequent culture, but also the ability to apply this knowledge in the practice of interaction with representatives of this culture, taking into account their particularities" (Khabarova et al., 2017: 149-150). R.Henvi (1994) seemingly argues that there are four levels of cross-cultural competence in the course of which the communicator focuses on the differences of cultures and their inadequacy (I-II level) and only at the III level comes to an understanding that "justified and rational in the eyes of the carrier of another culture, and only at the fourth level, the communicant learns to perceive "alien culture" through the eyes of its carrier (Henvi, 1994).

Cross-cultural competence is formed when a communicator masters such types of perception as empathy and transcendence. In case of empathy, the communicator learns to see himself in the place of another person and transsection is understood as the next step of mental development when a person learns to think and feel like another person does, associates himself with him, perceives his beliefs. Cross-cultural competence is understood as the ability and willingness of an individual to communicate from another culture (Wiseman, 2003; Vinichenko et al., 2017). The methodological issues are discussed in the next section.

Methodology

The study uses a complex methodological paradigm which includes a variety of approaches, principles and methods, namely, competence as well as psycho-cognitive and linguo-ecological approaches. In other words, this research combines the methods of various sciences that are necessary for studying a complex object. Principles applied in the article

are consciousness, active learning, linguo-ecological and cognitive principles. Working methods are characterised as interactive. Competency-based approach contributes to the formation of eco-cross-cultural competencies as a body of knowledge necessary for communication and understanding of the others in a favourable sphere. The linguo-cultural approach contributes to the development of the values and norms of another culture on the basis of studying the linguoculture as units, containing in its structure information about the values, sociocultural attitudes and mentality of other people and learning about the language picture of the world of other people as a set of concepts (Ionova, 2006; Apakhayev et al., 2017).

The cognitive principle involves the integration of knowledge from various sciences for the study of a complex object. The linguoecological principle is aimed at studying the object as an ecosystem that includes various components aimed at creating an information system favourable for communicators. The modelling method is used in the process of building a frame of "eco-cultural competence, models of various situations of intercultural communication, modelling the behaviour of communicants in situations of "defective" and sufficient competence, in situations of modelling the desired modifications of personal behaviour (Onyusheva et al., 2018: 149). Moreover, in these cases, a modelling method is the primary means of changing behaviour (Bandura, 2007). The method of frame semantics is associated with the process of conceptualising the concept of eco-cultural competence and its types. It allows to simulate the principles of structuring and reflecting an inevitable part of human experience, knowledge in the meanings of language units as well as the ways to enhance general knowledge (Boldyrev, 2004: 29). The method of included observation is used in collecting factual material on the behaviour of communicants in the process of intercultural communication. The method of the psycholinguistic associative experiment is used to identify the associations of respondents which arise on the stimulus-presented word, idiom, concept and linguistic culture of another

language. When processing the results of the experiment, attention is focused on the level of competence of the respondent, his possession of various types of competence. The following sections discuss the results of the research.

In the process of conducting a free-associative experiment (Table 1), we involved 80 respondents from different nationalities. They were shown 40 stimulus words (linguoculture) – realities and idioms. The task of the experiment was to study the content of images of the linguistic consciousness of representatives of different cultures, to establish differences in the content of images of consciousness. The experiment aimed to find out the answers to the words-stimuli, the determination of the level of competence and the nature of the perception of another communicant.

Results

The concept of eco-cross-cultural competence is a new term of an emerging science – eco-cross-cultural science, the conceptual apparatus of which, as well as its ontological, epistemological and methodological foundations are under development. Psycholinguistic associative experiment, the methodology of which is described by R.M. Frumkin suggests the study and analysis of respondents' answers to the word-stimulus. The response is an associative reaction that follows immediately (Frumkin, 2003).

Table 1: Words – Reactions of the Russians and the Kazakhs to Shanyraq Linguistic Culture				
Word to stimulate – shanyraq (the ceiling in yurts)	**Topical meaning**	**Paradigmatic**	**Syntagmatic**	**Mentallysymbolic**
Russian	The ceiling of the house, circle, vault	The ceiling of the house	black, ceiling	
Kazakh	Vault of the yurt, house	Large house, parents' house, otau (house), newlyweds' house, shanyrak is associated with the house, where rules the harmony	Kara Shanyraq-Parents' House of Otau, Shanyrak ynbiikBolsyn (may your house be strong) Shanyrak ortagatuspesin (may the family not collapse)	Shanyraq is associated with the sky, with one of the parts of the cosmological model of the world among the Kazakhs according to which it stands out.
Kazakh: qaz	Bird, neck, clouds	Modest long-necked, bird	Qaz baur (porous clouds), not changed, gooseneck, stand up	Upper world (where live the Gods of Tengri) middle world where people live, the lower world – the place of dead people. Home of Kazakh (numnah house) is associated with this world: shanyrak means the head of the sun, uik (fastening the skeleton of the yurt – the body), this kerege means the walls of the house, the yurt symbolically represents the model of the cosmos
Russian	bird	rogue, important, irritation	Goose frowning, important goose, such a goose, decent goose, like water off a goose, good goose	Associated with negative connotations, value orientations: positive (bird) and negative when characterising a person, symbolic value
English people	Bird			

Table 2: Words-reactions of the Kazakhs and the Russians to the Linguistic Culture of Russian Culture				
Word for stimulus	**Thematic**	**Paradigmatic**	**Syntagmatic**	**Mentallysymbolic**
Kazakh: maslenitsa (a type of holiday)	holiday			
Russian: maslenitsa	Farewell the winter, pancakes, quiet evenings, playful gourmet, Saturday with parents	Holiday mummers, farewell, remembrance, fire	All carnival	Meeting the sun of spring. Pancakes – the cult of the deceased. The first pancake was not eaten, placed on the dormer window or given to the poor, to the remembrance of the soul
Russian: old file		Scoundrel		Negative Value Orientations
Kazak	A special kind of white bread			

Table 3. Words-Reactions of the Kazakhs, the Russians and the English to the Linguistic Culture of English Culture				
The word for stimulus	**Thematical**	**Paradigmatic**	**Syntagmatic**	**Mentallysymbolic**
Russians: time	Day: morning, evening, night, present, past	Season, spring, winter, summer, day and night, calendar, time, oldness, youth	Time to scatter and collect stones, an hour has struck, when the hell freezes over (when cancer on the mountain whistles), till doomsday, till the cows come home (after Friday, on Thursday),	
Kazaks: time	Day, night, tomorrow, hour, now, past, July, midday, twilight, evening	Time, June	Time is gold	Situational: milking time of mare (biesauimuakyt- 1,5 hours), cooking the food time (et pisirim uakyt-2 hours), the necessary time for boiling water for tea (shay kaynatuuakyt – 40-60 min)
English people	Time, present, morning,	Calendar, pasttime	Shooting season, time forbids,	Time is money, time presses, connect time

night time, evening				

Table 4. Results of the Free Associative Experiment

Number of respondents	Number of words	The ethnic composition of group			Coped with the task	Not coped with the task
		Kazakhs	Russians	English	Representatives of an ethnic group	Representatives of other groups are primarily English 5%, Russians and Kazakhs, because of their cohabitation in Kazakhstan, have some similar associations that diverge.
60	40	20	20	20	85%	

Table 5. Associative Psycholinguistic Experiment No. 2 on the perception of representatives of different nationalities through the eyes of the Russians

	Own perception		Type of perception			
	empathy rejection perception +	sympathy	alienation	foreigner	ethnic prejudice	Rejected perception
Kazakhs		If a neighbour lives in the same territory, countryman		Heterostereotype hospitable	Asian, five fingers (besbarbachniki-used to eat with the help of five fingers), Kalbit, cross-eyed, horde	+
Germans			+	Heterostereotype: punctual honour "Ordnung" workers	Thelma Fritz sausage box	+
English			+	Heterostereotype: restrained, reasonable value time and money	John Bull, puddings, children of Albion	+

Americans			+	Heterostereotype: business, calculating, friendly, energetic, patriotic	Uncle Sam, smiley, adventurers	+
French			+	Heterostereotype: frivolously	Frog-eater	+
Japanese			+	Heterostereotype: polite	Yellow-belly	
Italians				Heterostereotype: noisy	Wop (pasta-eaters)	+
Caucasians				Caucasians hetero-stereotype cruel	Black, black-ass, (persons of Caucasian nationality)	+

We used in our work a free-associative experiment aimed at studying the consciousness of multilingual communicants, carriers of a kind of national culture since it is a free-associative experiment that is one of the devices that allows looking indirectly at the characteristics of the formation and functioning of the human linguistic consciousness (Goroshko, 2001: 5).

Table 6. Results of the analysis of the perception of other nationalities through the eyes of Russians

Number of respondents	Stimulus words: ethnonyms	Rejection of perception	"Own" perception
80%	Kazakhs, Germans, French, British, Americans, Italians, Japanese, Caucasians	78%	22%. Causes: increased intercultural contacts, market development, cultural and language expansion, neighbourhood, fraternity, mobility, partial socialisation in another culture

Table 7. Psycho-linguistic experiment. The degree of communicative knowledge about the values of their own and someone else's society and the degree of knowledge, skills and types of its perception

Representatives of linguo-cultural communities	Degree of variation in knowledge of values		Degree of mastering the knowledge of skills of types of perception				
Russians, Kazakh	Knowledge of the values of their own society		The degree of knowledge of the values of another society	Knowledge of the values of another society	Knowledge of skills, skills, knowledge	Knowledge of communication postulats	Knowledge of types of perception
	Complete knowledge during the enculturation	variable	Variable due to the assimilation of other	Insufficient, do not provide an understanding	Assimilation (partial) of subject knowledge,	Ignorance of communication rules of different	Rejection of perception

			cultural patterns		non-mastering skills usage of knowledge	nations (an agreement, cooperation, dialogue)	
%	95%	85%	30%	70%	35%	40%	80%

Culture as a set of values should be assimilated by the society members in the process of socialisation. However, at the same time, cultural values can be both general and variable, so according to F. Sharafian (Sharifian, 2011: 5-15), the consciousnesses of the members of society constitutes a cultural network.

The results of a psycholinguistic experiment to determine respondents' knowledge of representatives of linguocultural communities of their own and other cultural values show that community members have full (95%) or partial (85%) understanding of the cultural artefacts of their social system. The analysis of knowledge and skills necessary in the process of intercultural communication shows that they are not sufficiently learned: knowledge of skills and abilities of the subject is 35%, knowledge of communication postulates is 40%, the manifestation of alienated perception in the process of communication and foreigners is 80%.

Discussion

A review of the literature shows that in most cases, scientists consider the indiscriminate types of linguistic communicative linguocultural, intercultural, foreign language and cross-cultural competence, but there is still no precise definition of the term intercultural communication, descriptions of its structure, definitions of the types of its descriptors (Silagadze, 2017; Silagadze, 2018). R.S. Jeger understands competence as a basic ability (not inherited either genetically or biologically), but acquired by an individual and formed internally in the process of self-motivated interaction with the world (Jeger, 2010).

The types of competencies that are formed as a result of the implementation of any abilities are:

- social competence is the ability to share information, communicate, establish and maintain social ties;

- personal competence is the attitude to the world work and oneself, discipline motivation, self-awareness and flexibility;
- methodological competence is the ability to develop, select and apply appropriate strategies for solving problems, possession of critical thinking and ability to learn;
- business competencies are knowledge and skills that go beyond a specific culture of the sphere (Sheper, 2010: 297).

In our opinion, eco-cross-cultural competence is vital for communicators of intercultural communication. Its structure can be complicated and have many components: grammatical, discursive sociolinguistic (Canale & Swain, 1980), organisational (covering the formal aspects of communication) and pragmatic (focusing attention) on the functional aspect of communication (Bahman & Palmen, 1986). According to A. Knapp-Potthoff and K. Knappintercultural, communication includes three components: affective, cognitive and strategic (Knapp-Potthoff & Knapp, 1982). Cross-cultural competence characterised as communicative competence includes:

- knowledge (necessary information for effective interaction),
- motivation (a positive attitude towards another culture),
- skills (necessary behavioural skills for effective interaction) (Griffin, 2006: 64).

The work of Griffin Emori correctly identifies the components of cross-cultural competence (knowledge, skills and motivation) necessary for the communicator. However, all these specified components of intercultural communication do not sufficiently clearly contribute to the replenishment of intercultural knowledge, nor they are sufficient for the understanding of the

representation in the situation of communication.

In the structure of eco-cross-cultural competence, we consider the creative abilities described as intercultural aimed at the formation of this type of competence. Such creative abilities include cognitive-psychological and pragmatic cognitive-psychological abilities which are understood more widely than language ability defined by Yu.N. Karaulov as a non-layered set of linguistic abilities and readiness to carry out speech acts of varying degrees (Karaulov, 2007). If speech ability is aimed at learning the language and using it in various situations, then the cognitive-psychological ability involves the development of the psychological functions of the individual in the human psychosphere. V.D. Shadrikov believes that abilities are the properties of functional systems that implement individual mental functions which have an individual measure of severity and are demonstrated in the success and qualitative uniqueness of the development and implementation of activities (Shadrikov, 2012: 142).

Natural abilities can be completed by a system of intellectual operations that develop essential mental functions: perception, memory, imagination, representation, and thinking (Shadrikov, 2012: 143). The main mental functions include language and knowledge since knowledge is a product of the receptive speech and cognitive activity of a person, and a language is a form of expression of thought, representation and imagination of a person, the results of his perception in the memory of a person.

Knowledge is formed in the process of scientific and naive cognition of the world around, drawing up a concept, understanding its subjects, conceptualising this concept by comparing the concept of an object with the others, highlighting its distinctive features. The essence of knowledge consists of a reliable generalisation of the facts in which there are the necessary, the regular and the individual in common for the random (Spirkin, 2001). A person extracts them during the actualisation of

three factors: nature (external conditions of people's life), culture, considered as an antonym of the notion "nature", so "culture is something that a person did not receive from the natural world but brought, did or created [herself]/himself" (Manakin, 2004: 51) as cognitive knowledge as cognitive activity.

By distinguishing concepts of the linguistic picture of the world of other nations, the linguistic culture of other culture, the communicator supplements its operations with analogies (establishing similarities, similarities with other concepts and linguistic cultures) and associations (establishing connections between new words in the process of conducting a contrast analysis). We propose to distinguish the structure of this complex phenomenon, various subtypes of competences developing in the process of realisation of the communicative, psychological ability of the communicant, namely:

Linguocultural competence can be understood as "knowledge of the whole system of cultural values expressed in language as the ideal speaker" (Vorobyev, 2006: 44). We believe that linguoculturological competence should be viewed as a bicultural set of values and skills of representing knowledge and skills of using them in the process of communication. "The cultural scenario is understood as an abstract mental structure which is based on the speaker's interpretation of a situation of extra-linguistic reality as a repeating dynamic process consisting of a set of episodes and having a set of participants with fixed fields" (Plotnikova, 2005: 32). According to A. Wezhbitskaya, "differences between cultures lie in quality" (Wezhbitskaya, 2001: 164). In the native culture, a person knows that every sign has "two sets of information: a reflexive layer, knowledge and methods of actions" (Ufimtseva, 1995: 57). However, when borrowing values (artefacts of culture, words of another language, and linguistic culture), usually "only the reflexive layer (knowledge) is borrowed, but the method of action with the subject, as a rule, cannot be borrowed" (Ufimtseva, 1995: 60).

Cognitive and psychological competence is a combination of knowledge and skills to implement "one's own" and "someone else's" perceptions, categorisation and attribution of the world within the other culture. To do this, a person should not feel prejudice against someone else, but, on the contrary, show empathy towards him or her, understood as a transition from his/her own vision of the world to the recognition that there are the equal experience and attitude of another individual (Byram & Morgan, 1986).

- Sociolinguistic competence is a combination of knowledge and skills of the differentiated use of one's own and foreign languages depending on the situation of communication and stratification variables (social status of the speaker, his social positions, social roles, social relations).
- Pragmatic competence is a set of knowledge and technology about speech and communication in the situation of intercultural communication, the postulates and strategies of communication, cooperation, politeness, tolerance, etc.
- Ecolinguistic competence is understood as a set of knowledge and technology to ensure a safe tolerant information environment of communicants, which is aimed at ensuring mutual understanding. To apply these laws, the technology of linguo-ecological analysis is used.

The composition of species competencies in the composition of eco-cross-cultural competence was determined on the basis of psycholinguistic associative experiments (Tables 1-3), which were obtained during the conducted research aimed at studying the competencies of communicants, studying the types of their perceptions and identifying the degree of variation in knowledge of the values of their own and other society, degree of knowledge, skills and types of perception. The results of the experiments are reflected in Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7. As a result of the experiments, it was established the need for a broad understanding of eco-cross-cultural competence as a body of knowledge,

technology as the ability to communicate with the others in the process of intercultural communication, in the structure of which different sub-competencies are distinguished: linguo-cultural rhetoric that assimilates the language and cultural scenarios of its application and skills of perception of "someone else", a manifestation of empathy and sympathy for him and desire to understand his feelings and experiences.

Ecolinguistic competence is aimed at mastering knowledge and skills of maintaining a safe information environment of communication. Ecocross-cultural competence is formed as a result of updating the cognitive and psychological abilities of the communicant. The results obtained in the course of the research will find application in the practice of intercultural communication as well as contribute to the theory of cross-cultural competence.

Conclusion

The central purpose of the research was to probe the cross-cultural competence of communicators as a way to create a positive eco-informational environment. In the result of the studying competence as a body of knowledge necessary for the study of another language and the implementation of intercultural competence, scientists have studied various types of competence, given their definitions. However, such types of competence (communicative, linguistic, ethnocultural and cross-cultural) could not be used to enrich the information potential of communicants and improve their skills since:

- focused on any side of the competence (mastering the cultural knowledge of other people, enhancing the literacy of people, the study of the type of perception of the communicant, empathy), contributing to his adaptation to someone else's;
- subject knowledge was studied in isolation from the technology of its application;
- competences were considered out of touch with personal abilities;

- knowledge and skills contributing to the safety of the environment of the communicant environment were not considered.

Meanwhile, the results of psycholinguistic experiments showed that a communicator of intercultural communication required versatile knowledge and skills. They allow not only mastering topics or other knowledge, but also mastering technology that contributes to the accumulation of sociocultural experience of communicants in "alien" cultural environment when exploring the cultural scenarios of cultural artifacts of other people, the skills of using knowledge, norms, and postulates of communication. In accordance with other cultural models, we need skills aimed at maintaining contact with the "alien", its correct perception (empathy and sympathy) and understanding in the course of interaction.

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