

THE FORMATION OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF STUDENTS IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF PRC

Rakova Natalia Andreevna,

Head of Department of Pedagogy and Educational management
of Vitebsk State P.M. Masherov University, PhSD in Pedagogy, Associate Professor

Sun Menghan,

Master's student of Vitebsk State P.M. Masherov University

For achieving the maximum efficiency of communicative interaction, it is necessary to form the corresponding communicative competence before interlocutors of different lingua-cultures meet

This article reveals the current status of students' intercultural communicative competence in teaching English of higher education institutions by the way of questionnaires, and find out some specific recommendations to improve students' intercultural communicative competence and English classes in higher education.

Introduction. Teaching a foreign language is not enough in the global world today. It is an indisputable fact that language and culture are inseparable. Therefore, from the perspective of sociolinguistics, intercultural communicative competence plays an important role in language learning. Intercultural communicative competence is related to the concepts of culture and communicative competence, and is the key to the success of intercultural communication [1].

Main part. The notion of intercultural communicative competence builds on an earlier concept – that of “communicative competence” (CC). In 1972, American sociolinguist Dell Hymes first proposed the concept of “communicative competence” in his paper On Communicative Competence [2]. Hymes defines it as the ability to use language, which roughly includes four aspects: grammar, feasibility, propriety, and reality. Since Hymes put forward the concept of communicative competence, scholars at home and abroad have been discussing it, especially intercultural communicative competence. The famous communication scholar Gudykunst pointed out that effective communicative competence include cognitive ability, emotional ability and behavioral ability [3]. Jia Yuxin further explained the intercultural communicative competence on the basis of Gudykunst's theory [4]. He believed that effective intercultural communicative competence consists of basic communicative competence system, emotion and relationship competence system, plot competence

system and communicative strategy competence system. Gao Yihong also has unique insights into ICC, and she puts forward two levels of intercultural communicative competence training: cultural “leapfrogging” and “beyond”; and for the majority of teachers, ICC mainly refers to the knowledge of how to use the target language appropriately in the target language cultural situation, so intercultural communicative competence can also be called “target language sociocultural competence” [5].

The concept of intercultural communicative competence is relatively new interdisciplinary in nature, so widely used and under so many different conditions that in the end, as Seelye poignantly put it, “only the reader of any publication on intercultural communication holds its true definition” [6]. There are four essential premises for the development of ICC in the current foreign language curriculum for higher education: 1) ICC in the language classroom requires integrated instruction in both language and culture; 2) the objective of ICC instruction can be stated in terms of comprehensive knowledge, such as knowledge, skills, and attitudes; 3) the mode of teaching ICC is dialogue rather than monologue; 4) the teaching process of ICC involves identity formation and aims at empowerment and independent learning.

Nowadays, more and more teachers are gradually realizing the importance of cultivating students' ICC. This research is also based on information gathered through a questionnaire survey of junior college

students at the higher vocational institution where the author works. In this study, the questionnaire survey on the current situation of students' intercultural communicative competence in English teaching in higher education is carried out. The survey was distributed, completed and returned online. In the end, a total of 178 questionnaires were received. The questionnaire will be analyzed in detail as follows:

In part A of the questionnaire, questions 1–4 were filled in with basic information in English. More than 90% of the students could understand the questions, but less than 7% of the students could fill in the information completely except for their names. Q5–8 are English questions that show students' English proficiency (see table 1 below for particular data); Q9–14 are Chinese questions that show students' evaluation of the English class, among which Q12–14 are multiple-choice questions (see table 2 below).

Table 1 – Q5–8

Answer Number	5	6	7	8
A	7%	15%	41%	12%
B	28%	34%	47%	62%
C	45%	35%	9%	17%
D	20%	16%	3%	9%

Table 2 – Q9–14

Answer Number	9	10	11	12	13	14
A	25%	31%	45%	12%	8%	100%
B	63%	38%	38%	6%	85%	100%
C	7%	8%	3%	12%	32%	92%
D	5%	23%	14%	58%	100%	8%
E	/	/	/	45%	5%	/
F	/	/	/	58%	12%	/

Table 1 demonstrates that many students have little or no interest in learning English and believe that doing so is not necessary. Some students are enthusiastic about learning English but lack confidence because they believe they won't be able to do it well. According to table 2, the majority of students are aware of the value of intercultural awareness and communicative competence and are willing to study relevant information. Yet, the majority of teachers continue to place a heavy emphasis on textbooks and rarely extend their students' knowledge outside of the class, which causes students to gradually lose confidence and enthusiasm in learning as well as develop a fear of speaking or even learning English. The focus of part B is on testing students' present proficiency in ICC. According to the study of the papers, most students still have a lot of Chinese habits and ways

of thinking and are not very aware of the contrasts between Chinese and English culture. Some students are aware that the language or actions described in the question stem is inappropriate, but they are unsure of how to improve it.

Through the analysis of the questionnaire and the query of relevant materials, the author believes that from the current actual situation, there are still many problems in the improvement of students' intercultural communicative competence, which are specifically reflected in the following aspects.

1. ICC is still not given enough attention in colleges and universities. Over the past few decades, the development of ICC among language learners has been recognized as an important goal in foreign language education programs throughout the world. Not only is the integration of cultural elements in the language program recognized as facilitating the development of communicative competence in the target language, there is also a growing tendency among language teachers to move away from teaching information about other cultures towards developing knowledge from other cultures and one's own [7]. Faced with such employment requirements, colleges and universities can only require students to aim at passing the English grading test. It is still challenging to develop ICC in English since vocabulary and grammar are still stressed over language use and cultural understanding.

2. Based on the actual condition at hand, it appears that many teachers themselves lack the necessary cross-cultural awareness and corresponding pedagogical knowledge. When it comes to teaching students English as a second language and fostering their intercultural communicative competence, teachers are irreplaceable. Yet, recent research evidence suggests that lack of intercultural awareness and teachers' inadequate covering of intercultural knowledge in class are the main factors to affect students' intercultural communicative competence [8]. This is because teachers are less exposed to intercultural communication knowledge when they are learning English as students, and some teachers have not even been exposed to this kind of knowledge during the educational process.

3. It goes without saying that a student's mother tongue will have a big impact on them. We know that the phenomenon of mother tongue transfer is common in second language acquisition (SLA). Negative transfer takes place on all levels of language structure, for example the phonetic level, where the learner's foreign accent is evident when learning the foreign language [9]. In the process of learning English, students are greatly affected by the negative transfer of Chinese. Due to the inherent mindset, students will have great deviations and misunderstandings in their understanding and cognition of the target language.

4. Students are not motivated to learn English independently, and they are afraid of intercultural communication. Based on the current state of college English education, it appears that students are used to teachers' "indoctrination" methods of guidance, lack the cognitive skills necessary for active learning, and are unwilling to independently conduct research and explore cross-cultural knowledge. In addition, a large number of students have a fear of intercultural communication. Some of these students are timid to communicate with foreigners because they are not confident in their English proficiency. Some students cannot communicate smoothly with foreign friends because of their limited cross-cultural knowledge. Inferiority complexes occur when communicating with foreigners, which seriously hinders the improvement of ICC.

From the results and analysis of the above-mentioned questionnaires, it can be concluded that students have very little intercultural knowledge and they lack of the encouragement and opportunities to cultivate the communicative competence to get along with foreigners. It is urgent to improve the ICC of college students, especially those of higher vocational colleges. First of all, teachers should improve their professional quality and intercultural communicative competence. Secondly, when teaching English to student, it is important to read deeply into the course materials' content and solidify the fundamentals of the language. Thirdly, it is important to continually evaluate and modify teaching methods as the teaching content is gradually improved. Furthermore, teachers must foster students' cultural self-confidence. Last but not the least, teachers can provide students with multi-channel learning paths and encourage students to participate in intercultural communication activities.

Conclusion. Thanks to previous related theory and literature, the author can reveal the real condition of students' ICC in higher education. As we all know, one of the most frequently used languages in

communication worldwide is English. One needs to be highly skilled at intercultural communication in order to master English. Consequently, it is crucial to enhance students' intercultural communicative competence when teaching English as a foreign language.

Literature

1. Li Hongyan. The influence of college English culture teaching on college students' cultural identity from the perspective of cross-cultural communication / Li Hongyan, Yu Liping // *Inner Mongolia Education*. – 2020. – Vol. 24. – 66–67 p.

2. Hymes, D. On communicative competence / D. Hymes. – Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972. – 169–193 p.

3. Gudykunst, W.B. Culture and interpersonal communication / W.B. Gudykunst, S. Ting-Toomey, E. Chua // *Sage series in interpersonal communication*. – 1988. – Vol. 8.

4. Jia Yuxin. *Intercultural Communication* / Jia Yuxin. – Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 1997.

5. Gao, Y. Models of L2 identity development revisited in the context of globalization / Y. Gao // In X. Dai & S.J. Kulich (Eds.). *Identity and intercultural communication: Theoretical and contextual construction*. – Shanghai: Shanghai Education Press, 2010. – 239–259 p.

6. Seelye, H.N. *Teaching Culture. Strategies for Intercultural Communication* / H.N. Seelye // *Teaching German*. – 1984. – Vol. 20, № 1. – 318 p.

7. Bouchard, J. *Ideology, Agency, and Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Stratified Look into EFL Education in Japan* / J. Bouchard. – Springer, 2017. – 93–98 p.

8. Hao, Q.H. A Survey on Chinese College Students' Intercultural Literacy / Q.H. Hao, Y. Zhang // *US-China Foreign Language*. – 2009. – Vol. 7, № 7. – 1–5 p.

9. Wang, R. On the function of mother tongue transfer in English vocabulary acquisition / R. Wang, X. Xiang // *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. – 2016. – Vol. 6, № 11. – 2208–2214 p.