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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COURSE DESIGN: NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

***Abstract.** Globalization has made intercultural communication inevitable. Communicating with other cultures characterizes today's business, classroom, and community. Therefore, it is important that universities prepare their graduates to challenges of an intercultural academic and working environment. This paper will be of special interest to university professionals concerned with Intercultural Communication Course (ICC) design and assessment of intercultural communicative competence in particular, as it gives a brief review of overseas research and practices in this field.*

***Анотація.** Міжкультурна комунікація є неминучим наслідком глобалізації. Комунікація з іншими культурами спостерігається в бізнесі, академічному та соціальному середовищах. У зв'язку з цим випускники університетів мають бути підготовленими до викликів, пов'язаних із різноманітністю міжкультурних взаємовідносин. Стаття містить огляд міжнародних досліджень в області міжкультурної комунікації і призначена для викладачів — практиків, зацікавлених у розробці сучасного курсу з міжкультурної комунікації, його викладанні та оцінюванні міжкультурної компетенції.*

***Key words:** Intercultural communicative competence, intercultural awareness, assessment of intercultural competence, interculturality.*

***Ключові слова:** міжкультурна комунікація, міжкультурна комунікативна компетентність, міжкультурне усвідомлення, оцінювання міжкультурної компетентності, міжкультурність.*

Introduction

In a multilingual world where learners and co-workers may belong to more than one speech communities, the main goal is not to be a native speaker of English, but to use this language as a tool for interaction among many other languages and cultures. In this new global environment, one of the basic and fundamental functions of a university should then be the fostering of a global consciousness among students, making them understand the relation of interdependence between peoples and societies along with understanding of their own and other cultures and respect for pluralism. (Gacel-Ávila, 2005). Therefore, Intercultural Communication courses need to be developed so that to encourage students to be aware of not just differences among cultures but also develop the ability to detect hidden grip of other cultures through interaction. On this course university graduates are to be formally trained to become intercultural speakers (Byram, 1997), that is mediators who have the ability to manage communication and interaction between people of different cultural identities and languages, coming from their own perspective and taking up another, able to handle different interpretations of reality. The final goal of the course is gaining Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC).

ICC has been endorsed by many educational organizations around the world (ACTFL, 2006, Council of Europe, 2001, UNESCO, 2009) and, given that many people use English to communicate with others who come from different cultural backgrounds, it is essential that ICC be integrated in language teaching, including ELT. The Council of Europe's (2001) Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is the

important document used worldwide that highly recommends the integration of cultural dimensions in language teaching. It defines that one main goal of interculturality is to «help language learners to interact with speakers of other languages on equal terms, and to be aware of their own identities and those of their interlocutors» (Byram et al., 2002, p.7). In essence, when language learners develop intercultural awareness, they can convey information effectively and develop a «human relationship with people of other languages and cultures» (Byram et al., 2002, p.7). This implies that any speaker of English who wishes to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds needs to develop intercultural awareness for effective communication. It is hoped that the following pages will provide a good start on the basic terminology and concepts needed in order to develop intercultural competences and permit intercultural dialogues.

ICC course goals and objectives

Many institutions cite intercultural competence as one desired outcome of ICC courses. However, there is little agreement as to specifically what constitutes intercultural competence. For example, if intercultural competence is comprised of knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness to enable person to interact effectively with those from other cultures, what actually comprises intercultural knowledge?

Intercultural skills? Intercultural awareness? What will help our graduates to coexist and interact in a more and more interconnected world?

The nature of ICC required is partly dependent on context. Byram (1997) describes three simple examples of intercultural communication:

1) between people of different languages and countries where one is a native speaker of the language used; 2) between people of different languages and countries where the language used is a lingua franca; 3) and between people of the same country but different languages, one of whom is a native speaker of the language used. Thus, a variety of context issues must be taken into account while setting goals and objectives of the course designed. A group of intercultural communication experts from the American Council on International Education (ACIIE) developed an organizational definition of global competence and adopted nine explicit goals of a «globally competent learner» which are as follows (cited in Deardorff, 2004): The globally competent learner:

1. Is empowered by the experience of global education to help make a difference in society
2. Is committed to lifelong learning, global learning
3. Is aware of diversity, commonalities, and interdependence
4. Recognizes the geopolitical and economic interdependence of the world
5. Appreciates the impact of other cultures on American life
6. Accepts the importance of all people
7. Is capable of working in diverse teams
8. Understands the non-universality of culture, religion and values
9. Accepts the responsibility for global citizenship (ACIIE, 1996, p.3).

By considering the above-mentioned issues, we, as course designers, need to identify priorities for Ukrainian students while setting goals and objectives of the course. Should we emphasize knowledge of cultures and cultural practices or rather the capacity of skills and conscious analysis of cultural interactions? Should we include non-verbal

communication? Should we pay attention to psychological traits or only to focus on students' capacity to behave?

The modern ICC course needs evidently to be a performance based course, by the end of which student's intercultural competence could be assessed according to the course objectives achieved. Thus, for course designers an issue of differentiating goals and objectives is crucial. Goals are a way of formulating the main purposes and intended outcomes of a course. By using the analogy of a journey, the destination is the goal, the journey is the course. The objectives are the different points we pass through on the journey to the destination. Stating future-oriented goals clearly helps bring into focus our visions and priorities for the course. The following ones could be examples of goals for a perspective ICC course: «By the end of the course students will be able to explain, employ and appreciate the interrelationship between the studied theories of communication, culture and identity» or «By the end of the course students will learn how to apply the theories of culture and identity to themes of class, nation, gender, power, race, religion and ethnicity». How they will have been achieved depends on a set of objectives. Objectives are statements about how goals will be achieved. Through objectives, the goal is broken down into learnable and teachable and assessable units. By achieving objectives, goals will be reached. For this reason, the objective must relate to the goal. Goals are more general and objectives are more specific. Goals are more long-term, objectives are more short-term. Goals and objectives provide a basis for making choices about what and how to teach. Apart from this, stating goals and objectives is a way of holding yourself accountable throughout the course. Thus, the following set of objectives could provide a basis for the assessment: By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- raise intercultural awareness by creating their own cultural profile through exploring personal and various cultural values, behaviors, perceptions and assumptions;
- avoid potential points of conflict and choose strategies for resolving problems/challenges by exploring diverse cultural systems;
- examine current trends while discussing cultural incidents related to cross-cultural communication awareness;
- examine useful language issues needed for intercultural communication by discussing and using them through simulations;
- discuss aspects (The Hofstede's Onion Model) affecting culture-bound behavior and intercultural communication and to reflect on one's own culture and experience;
- discuss critical incidents and to give realistic explanations and pragmatic suggestions.

Thus, a set of specific, relevant, realistic, measurable objectives should be an indispensable part of the perspective ICC course.

Intercultural competence and awareness

According to Byram (1997), when persons from different languages and/or countries interact socially, they bring to the situation their knowledge about their own country and that of the others. Part of the success of such interaction will depend on the establishing and maintenance of human relationships, which depends on attitudinal factors. At the same time, both aspects, knowledge and attitude, are influenced by the processes of intercultural communication, that is, the skills of interpretation and establishing

relationships between aspects of the two or many cultures and the skills of discovery and interaction. Finally, all these factors should be integrated within a philosophy of political education and develop the learners' critical cultural awareness of all the cultures involved. Byram presents these factors as «savoirs» to be acquired or developed by the learner:

- «savoir être», which is concerned with **attitudes** and values and consists in showing curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own;

- «savoirs», which refers to the **knowledge** of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction;

- «savoir comprendre», related to the **skills** of interpreting and relating, that is to say, the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own;

- «savoir apprendre/faire», connected to the **skills of discovery and interaction** or the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction;

- «savoir s'engager», in relation to **critical cultural awareness** and/or political education, which means having the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries (Byram, pp. 31–54).

When defining the different «savoirs», no linguistic aspects have been mentioned and all the focus has been on culture and the relationship between cultures, that is to say, interculturality. We should not forget, though, that interculturality means interaction, and interaction is communication, through language of one kind or another. As in Intercultural communicative communication interaction takes place between people from different cultures and countries in a foreign language, the knowledge of the participants of another culture is linked to their language competence through their ability to use language appropriately and their awareness of the specific meaning, values and connotations of the language (Byram, pp. 70–71).

Acquiring intercultural communication competence

Bayo (1993) focused attention on the necessity of developing effective methods for designing and teaching intercultural communication courses. It is stressed that the majority of intercultural communication courses were theoretically oriented and devoted little time to skills development through actual intercultural interaction. As research show, learning cannot be fulfilled by only listening to lectures, reading textbooks, and doing classroom role plays which, although valuable, are performed without actual interacting with people from other cultures. Intercultural communication courses should be seen as a «start-up» process of (a) bringing out the students' conscious awareness toward the different cultures and (b) developing, through conscious effort, intercultural communication skills.

Assessing intercultural communicative competence

Helping students to acquire ICC, and, for the students, acquiring it are not easy tasks in the sense that, on the one hand, this acquisition requires willingness and acceptance on the part of the learner as it affects values and beliefs and, on the other, because it is an

ever-developing competence where the learner must always be alert. That is the reason why some authors consider that culture and more specifically interculturality cannot be tested explicitly, because it is an «intensely individual quest» (Kramsch, Context 257). Apart from this, there is another issue to consider. Since all students enter the classroom with differing viewpoints and worldviews, it becomes almost impossible to simply expect students to become intercultural speakers at the same rate. As a result, many researchers of intercultural competence describe the classroom experience as a process. Byram (1997) describes the intercultural learning process as linear.

Learners enter the process from different points based on backgrounds, life experiences, and perspectives, and move at different speeds. There is no predefined final goal for the students in the classroom, rather each experience becomes its own goal in interculturality (Byram, 1997).

However, a number of methods have been developed up to the present. One of the methods that has been considered as most appropriate to assess ICC is a portfolio that the learner has to build throughout the learning period. The concept of the portfolio has been developed within the context of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The assessment of an individual's ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries is facilitated by a detailed description of the process involved and definition of what is expected of the individual. It is an advantage to the assessor but also to both teacher and learner. All three can benefit from clarity and transparency and agree upon the goals and objectives of the teaching, learning and assessment processes in which they are involved (Council of Europe, 2001). It is important to remember, that their goals and objectives are determined in part by the societal contexts in which they find themselves — national, international and intra-national — and by preoccupations of institutions, which reflects those of the societies in which they function. Thus, the following questions should be considered in assessing intercultural competence by ICC course designers: What is the purpose of the intercultural competence assessment? How will the assessment results be used? Who will benefit from the assessment? Have specific indicators been developed for the intercultural competence assessment? Are the degrees of intercultural competence being assessed? Have student's goals been considered when assessing intercultural competence? Helpful ideas related to these questions can be found in Deardorff's (2006) study, in the framework of which some American nationally known intercultural experts shared their experience concerning appropriate assessment methods in the following way:

1. *«Over the years many of us have tried to use established psychological/personality inventories to measure potential for living and working effectively in another country. Indeed, I have developed my own test for this purpose, the Intercultural Living and Working Inventory. Some people have developed critical incidents or case studies, which a person must read and analyze, to assess intercultural competence. But more and more I am convinced that intercultural competence is primarily behavioral competency and therefore should be measured behaviorally. To do this one must first describe what interculturally competent behavior looks like; and second develop behavior-based instruments to assess individual competency. Along this line, myself and colleagues have produced A Profile of the Interculturally Effective Person which attempts to lay out a behavior-based description of intercultural competency. We are hoping now to focus on the development of behavioral observation instruments which could be used to measure a person's intercultural competency. This book is available on-line and it would be useful for you to review it during the course of your own research».*

2. *What are the best ways to measure intercultural competence? First of all the «best ways are often time intensive, labour intensive, dichronic (over time), use expensive instruments, and require a commitment of both institutions and the target population to accomplish. So, the best ways relate to what can we do with the time and money and opportunities we have to asses intercultural competence?» Pre- and pot-tests of various kinds are often used. There are more subjective measures such as ability to code switch culturally as well as linguistically, ability to understand the basis of cross-cultural conflict and how to avoid it, and even analysis of narrative diaries to detect shifts in cognition and attitude towards difference. Critical essays can express attitude and understanding about intercultural events or experiences as can creation of critical incidents that show an understanding of what and why something went wrong in an intercultural transaction.*

Conclusion. Intercultural Communication competence is based on «savoirs», that is, skills, abilities, values and attitudes, rather than the transmission of knowledge. This does not mean that traditional instruction or the gathering and structuring of information are banned in this competence. However, the importance of the intercultural teacher and course designer, as a mediator rather than a transmitter of knowledge, who is aware of the abilities which have to be taught, becomes essential. We must be prepared to develop ICC courses that help students acquire intercultural competence based on accurate needs analysis and appropriate materials and methodologies. We must acknowledge the fact that much of the language that our students need will not be found in any course books or pre-packaged materials; therefore, we must be willing and able to prepare our own. Naturally, to prepare ourselves to do all of this, we need to be trained and take advantage of professional development opportunities in ICC course design training by relying on the expertise of more experienced colleagues. What is needed is a joint effort by teachers and researchers in designing and implementing more interactive activities for the course and descriptors of intercultural competences to provide quality assurance in Intercultural Communication course design and delivery.

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НЕВІДПОВІДНІСТЬ ГРАМАТИЧНОЇ КАТЕГОРІЇ РОДУ І СОЦІАЛЬНОЇ КАТЕГОРІЇ ГЕНДЕРУ: ПІДХОДИ СУЧАСНОЇ ГЕРМАНІСТИКИ

Анотація. У статті з позицій когнітивної лінгвістики проаналізовано взаємозв'язок між категоріями статі, гендеру і граматичного роду та висвітлено підходи сучасної германістики до вирішення конфлікту між мовною категорією роду і соціальною категорією гендеру у випадку позначення жінок лексемами узагальнюючого чоловічого роду.

Abstract. The article investigates the interrelation between the categories of sex, social and grammatical gender in the framework of cognitive linguistics. It highlights approaches of modern Germanistics to resolving the conflict between grammatical and social gender in case of naming women using generic masculine lexemes.

Ключові слова: гендер, концепт, мовна норма, узагальнюючий чоловічий рід, германістика.

Key words: gender, concept, linguistic norm, generic masculine gender, Germanistics.

Грамматична (морфологічна) категорія роду притаманна індоєвропейським мовам поряд з категоріями числа та відмінку. У германських мовах категорію роду позначають термінами, похідними від латинського «genus» — у перекладі «клас», «рід», «вид». На перший погляд, ця категорія давно вивчена лінгвістикою і не передбачає наукової дискусії. Проте починаючи з 70–80-х років ХХ ст. ця тема набуває дедалі більшої актуальності у зв'язку зі зміною парадигми гендерних відносин і невідповідності усталених мовно-стилістичних норм новим соціальним запитам. Різні методи та рівні вирішення цього конфлікту різними націями породжують додаткові непорозуміння у міжкультурній комунікації. Мета цієї статті — застосовуючи когнітивний підхід, описати і проаналізувати основні наукові позиції, які існують у сучасній германістиці щодо гендеру і граматичного роду, а також надати практичні рекомендації щодо гендерно-збалансованої комунікації.

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