FORMING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN STUDENTS OF NON-LANGUAGE UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT
The relevance of this article derives from the consideration of the problem of development of students’ intercultural communication skills under significant influence of the globalization process on the development of higher education system, especially in those universities where there is a rapid growth of the export of learning services. Foreign language is thought of as the main means of intercultural communication. The object of this paper is to analyze the process of formation of intercultural communication, modern value attitudes towards foreign culture and its bearers among students with allowance for the reality of learning experiences in an agricultural university. The consideration of this issue made it possible to determine modern methods and forms of work in practical classes in a foreign language which will facilitate a solution to the problem. The authors of the article point out that industrial work placement abroad is an effective tool to develop intercultural communication skills. The role of a teacher is considered to be a key one in the formation of students’ intercultural communication skills.

Keywords: Intercultural communication. Language education. Communications behavior. Active forms of education. Curricular practical training abroad.

RESUMO
A relevância deste artigo decorre da consideração do problema do desenvolvimento das habilitades de comunicação intercultural dos alunos sob influência significativa do processo de globalização no desenvolvimento do sistema de ensino superior, especialmente nas universidades onde há um rápido crescimento da exportação de serviços de aprendizagem. A língua estrangeira é considerada como o principal meio de comunicação intercultural. O objetivo deste artigo é analisar o processo de formação da comunicação intercultural, atitudes de valor modernas em relação à cultura estrangeira e seus portadores entre os estudantes com subsídio para a realidade das experiências de aprendizagem em uma universidade agrícola. A consideração desta questão possibilitou determinar métodos modernos e formas de trabalho em classes práticas em língua estrangeira que facilitarão uma solução para o problema. Os autores do artigo apontam que a colocação do trabalho industrial no exterior é uma ferramenta eficaz para desenvolver habilidades de comunicação intercultural. O papel do professor é considerado fundamental na formação das habilidades de comunicação intercultural dos alunos.


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Introduction

An accelerating process of globalization in the world, adoption of digital economy, large-scale changes in various spheres of human activity significantly affect the development of higher education system in Russia, which, according to President V. V. Putin in his message to the Federal Assembly, should play a significant role in the development of Russian society (MIZYUROVA, 2020). With every passing year more and more foreign entrants come to Russia to obtain higher education. According to the state program of the Russian Federation "Development of Education" for the years of 2013-2020, the share of foreign students studying in Russia should grow from 2.3% in 2011 to 10% (https://base.garant.ru).

World education is developing in the context of a dialogue among cultures, its main goal is not just to train a highly professional specialist in a particular field, but also a “cultured man”, being capable and ready to communicate and cooperate with people of different nationalities, races, religions and cultures. As M. M. Bakhtin wrote, “only through a dialogue with another culture can a certain level of self-knowledge be achieved, since in a dialogue of two cultures each one retains its unity and open integrity, while enriching the other” (BAKHTIN, 1979).

Presently, there is a rapid development of the export of learning services in the universities of the Russian Federation. This is one of the priority directions of the international activities of universities. In 2017, the Saratov Agrarian University named after N. I. Vavilov became part of a consortium of supporting educational organizations – exporters of Russian education. The project features the development of new forms of joint educational programs, online education for foreign students, educational tourist routes and summer training programs, and the creation of a single Internet navigator for the Russian education system. In this regard, the development of language education and intercultural communication within the context of the everyday world is becoming more and more relevant.

Materials and Methods

Pedagogy views communication as a purposeful process of interaction between a teacher and students, the tasks of which are information exchange, successful training and education, the creation of a favorable psychological climate and emotional contact via various means of communication. Learning is now seen as an active and creative, productive, intellectual interaction between the teacher and the learners, as well as the very learners inter se (VOROBIOV & MIZYUROVA, 2001). Intercultural communication is an equal cultural interaction of representatives of different lingucultural communities with consideration to their identity and originality, which necessitates the identification of universal values based on a comparison of a foreign language culture and separate culture (TSAREVA, 2017). Participating in any kind of intercultural contacts, people interact with representatives of other cultures, often significantly different from each other. Differences in languages, national cuisine, clothes, norms of social behavior, attitude to work performed often make these contacts difficult and even impossible. But these are only particular problems of intercultural contacts. The main reasons for their failures lie in differences in attitude, that is, in a different attitude to the world and to other people. A major impediment to successful solution of this problem is that we perceive other cultures through the prism of our culture, therefore our observations and conclusions are confined to its context. It is with great difficulty that we understand the meanings of words, deeds, actions that are not characteristic of ourselves. Our ethnocentrism not only hinders intercultural communication, but it is also difficult for us to recognize it, since it is an unconscious process. This suggests the conclusion that effective intercultural communication cannot arise by itself, one is to be intentional in learning it.

The analysis of foreign and domestic literature (STERNIN; HOLE; BENNET; KOSTOMAROV et al., 2001) points out to the fact that it is essential for an individual to learn the ropes of communications behavior simultaneously with foreign language acquisition. Communication behavior is an important aspect in language study, along with such as instructions of reading and writing, speaking and understanding, translating. Effective intercultural communication is impossible without it. The teacher should help a maturing person find their own way of responding to various situations that arise in the process of communication; to teach to modify role behavior depending on the situation, to give a learnable drive to a tolerance of themselves and others, regardless of personal characteristics and ethnicity (MIZYUROVA et al., 2020). In this regard, the teacher should teach students modern practices and intercultural communication methods during a foreign language session.
The education system is undergoing a process of comprehensive implementation of the Federal State Educational Standards (FSES) in order to streamline educational system and all areas of educational activity in accordance with the requirements of modern age. The discipline “Foreign Language” embraces the development of students’ skills in using a foreign language in interpersonal and intercultural communication. Clearly, foreign language today has the role of solving the problems of communication between specialists, such as technicians (builders, mechanics, electricians, etc.) from different countries using the necessary knowledge, conversational skills and abilities. In order to suit the modern age, a future specialist needs to constantly work on themselves, perfect themselves in profession (ABDRAZAKOV et al., 2019).

The choice of educational material in the classroom can be determined not only by curricula, but also by its relevance for students. The actual educational activity of a student should be carried out not so much in dialogues as in tasks that require the expression of their own value judgments about what they have seen or heard about the peculiarities of a foreign culture. The sequence of tasks should follow from “understanding” of individual cultural patterns to its “expression” (role playing, business simulation games, presentations, projects, etc.). In the classroom it is necessary to use tasks aimed at comparing individual elements, phenomena, situations of native and foreign cultures. Here is an example. Students read independently the proposed text which describes the situation of “misunderstanding”. Being in the country of the target language, a representative of another culture (or a compatriot) invites his/her acquaintances – native speakers of the language on a visit. He/she prepares several dishes, sets the table festively and waits for the guests’ arrival. The guests cross the threshold, the generous host invites the guests to the table. They decline. Why? The host persistently repeats his/her invitation. The guests decline again. What is the problem? Students make their assumptions. Then, the teacher communicates his/her version: it was not pointed out in the invitation whether they were invited to lunch / dinner, and the guests perceived it only as an occasion for communication, discussion of shared interests, etc. The task of students is to analyze the situation, assess whether this is possible in their home country, try to settle it within the framework of the culture of the country of the target language, etc.

It is difficult to impossible to master intercultural communication skills without understanding another culture and knowledge of the language. In this regard, it becomes manifest that students need to build capabilities of intercultural communication in situations of direct communication with representatives of other nations. One of the most effective means of fostering this skill is the curricular practical training of students abroad. Curricular practical training is aimed at gaining professional skills and professional experience.

The question of how, when and where a student should be in practice remains controversial. Some believe that there is no point in starting practice without book knowledge. But the German specialists of the agricultural university in Triesdorf have long been making practice of a different approach to this issue. Training in master’s program at this university begins with a practical semester. First, students spend 6 months in practice, work at enterprises, getting acquainted with the problems associated with their future activities, write their reports on the practice. After that, the second semester begins — a theoretical one. German agriculturists are confident that it is much easier and more efficient to work with such students. The theoretical semester follows practice again. In the learning process in Triesdorf, the main focus is on interactive forms (seminars, presentations, practices) and practical content (real research). Especially valuable for foreign students is a close combination of theory and practice in comparison with theory-based education in their homeland. The introduction of the international master’s course “Agricultural Management” of the agricultural university in Triesdorf in partner universities is a major draw for the necessary reforms and modernization processes in the field of education in partner countries (BOBYLEVA & PISCHANOVA, 2015).

Currently, foreign practice in the EU countries is a unique experience for teachers and students to maintain existing and develop new scientific, professional, cultural and personal contacts. Such work experience jobs allow them not only to learn as much as possible about agriculture, but also to become acquainted with the culture and traditions of another country (MIZYUROVA, 2015). Practical study abroad contributes to the development of bachelor’s extra professional skills, such as communication skills, intercultural and technical communication, teamwork, the skills to present themselves and their university in another country in a foreign language.
CONCLUSION

In the practice of foreign language teaching the teacher’s role increases, who acts as an intermediary, an “authorized representative” of the culture of country of a target language. In the context of the development of international contacts, it is necessary to look for ways of more effective international interaction, which would include the capacity for various forms of intercultural communication.

Thus, the process of developing intercultural communication skills in students of non-linguistic university is based on the need to organize the learning process based on the transfer of a student from a passive user of knowledge to an active creator who can formulate a problem, analyze the ways to solve it, find the optimal result and prove its correctness. The teaching and learning process of the university should nurture the skills to learn, to form in a student a modern value attitude towards a foreign language culture and its bearers. Foreign and Russian students in joint cooperation are more active in manifesting themselves in all types of university activities: learning, educative, cultural, research, information and communication. This should be a purposeful systematic process (MIZYUROVA & ROKITYANSKAYA, 2020).

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