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## **Intercultural Communicative Competence as an Aim of Teaching Foreign Languages in Comprehensive School**

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*The article mainly focuses on the essence and structure of the intercultural communicative competence of senior pupils. First of all, it reveals the basic personal features required for successful intercultural communication. In addition, it studies the interrelation between the intercultural communicative competence and the foreign language communicative competence. Moreover, it suggests forming the perceptive-cognitive aspect of the intercultural communicative competence of senior pupils according to the peculiarities of this school age. Besides, it singles out the constituent parts of the intercultural communicative competence of senior pupils and, as a result, puts forward its definition.*

*Keywords: intercultural communicative competence, intercultural communication, personal features, perceptive-cognitive aspect, cognition, senior school age, teaching foreign languages.*

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### **Introduction**

The interest to the issue of forming the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in comprehensive school is connected to the need for not only raising the level and quality of the knowledge of a foreign language, but (to more extent) the development of the personality of a student as a potential participant of intercultural communication. These requirements totally correlate with the necessity of application of the intercultural approach into the process of teaching foreign languages in senior forms of secondary school and, as a result, forming the ICC of students.

There are not so many works devoted to the study of this competence within the framework of comprehensive school. The analysis of different points of view makes possible to point out that the majority of them (M.P. Alekseeva, V.G. Apal'kov, N.N. Grigor'eva, O.V. Kazakova, I.I. Korotkih, E.S. Orlova, Z.V. Vozgova) place the emphasis on a foreign culture in the process of teaching a foreign language while the native culture plays the role of a support for promoting productive intercultural communication. In contrast to this approach a number of authors (N.E. Iakovleva, A.I. Muratov, I.S. Solov'eva) proclaim the equality of native and foreign cultures which is

a postulate of the intercultural approach. These viewpoints prove the possibility of the parity interaction of cultures: through the native culture we perceive a foreign reality and by means of a foreign culture – the native one.

In that way, the success of intercultural communication depends on the forming of the students' a) respectful attitude to the peculiarities of a foreign culture perceived through the prism of the native culture, b) ability to comprehend their native culture at the moments of its 'collision' with a foreign culture. Due to this intercultural teaching has a direct effect on the individual system of the person's values, plays a large part in its (system's) formation and development (Voinea, 2012). To confirm this idea it is essential to take into consideration the theses of the Federal State Educational Standard (FSSES) of secondary (complete) general education which not directly but quite definitely point out the importance of forming the students' world view based on the dialogue of cultures, knowing their position in the polycultural world, tolerant consciousness and behavior (Federal State Educational Standard, 2012). Consequently, the teaching function of the intercultural approach combines with the educational one; moreover, the priority is given to the latter.

#### **Personal features as constituents of the intercultural communicative competence**

The solution of educational and teaching tasks in the process of using the intercultural approach means the necessity of developing a number of features of a personality who is ready for intercultural communication. Firstly, it is **empathy** – 'an integral feature of the student's personality which combines the readiness for active communication with the representatives of a foreign culture, openness, freedom from

prejudice and adaptation' (Gracheva, 2002, p. 80). This feature is mainly associated with the perception and acknowledgement of a foreign culture, mode of living and mentality. Secondly, the orientation on the native linguistic society, world view in the process of foreign language teaching set the condition for **civic consciousness**. Thirdly, empathic demonstrations and the civic position create the basis for the actualization of such a personal feature, important for intercultural communication, as **tolerance**. This feature is to denote the personal characteristics which take away the negative effect while the 'collision' of cultures. Tolerance is based on empathy and civic consciousness, at the same time it combines them as indispensable attributes.

These characteristics should be interpreted as constituents of the ICC of senior pupils; they are compulsory components of the contents of teaching foreign languages in senior forms of comprehensive school.

#### **Interrelation between intercultural competence and foreign language communicative competence**

To specify the essence of the ICC with reference to the senior level of school foreign language education it is essential to reveal the core of its interrelation with the foreign language communicative competence (FLCC). The scholars' points of view differ on this issue. The most interesting for us is the viewpoint according to which ICC includes FLCC as a natural component. At the same time the zones of their activity in the process of intercultural communication differentiate: the communicative competence is 'responsible' for the students' perception of the language world view – the basis of language consciousness, the intercultural competence – for the acquirement of the conceptual world view.

**Perceptive-cognitive aspect  
of senior pupils' intercultural  
communicative competence**

As applied to teaching in comprehensive school it is necessary to state the problematic character, difficulty and laboriousness of forming the ICC because of the complexity of its contents. As stated in the literature, the ICC is the ability to perceive, understand and interpret the native and foreign world views in their interrelation and on this basis to conduct the process of foreign language communication with the representatives of another language society (Tareva, 2011, p. 240). Taking into consideration the character of the ICC it is essential to state the objective restriction of the tasks in the area of forming this competence which is determined by the peculiarities of:

- a) school age (incomplete mental physical cognitive readiness for making extensive comparisons of the two cultures, formulating unprejudiced conclusions, etc.);
- b) educational conditions (comparatively little number of hours, increasing independence of pupils, etc.);
- c) complexity and instability of the pupils' motives and needs (change of motives and types of activity, readiness for autonomous socialization, etc.).

Taking into account these peculiarities of senior pupils we should talk about forming within profile school only one of the aspects of activity connected to the participation in intercultural communication – perceptive-cognitive aspect. This summary is based on a number of arguments.

Studying the contents of the ICC within the framework of comprehensive school, the authors (V.G. Apal'kov, I.V. Chicherina, I.I. Korotkih, A.I. Muratov, J. Baxter, Y.Y. Kim, W.B. Gudykunst) single out definite knowledge

and skills necessary for pupils. At that Y.Y. Kim states that the ICC should include 'not only knowledge about the main values and norms, verbal and non-verbal interaction in the process of communication, the use of language as a social means, but the cognitive, affective and behavioral adaptability of the individual inner system in all intercultural contexts' (Kim, 1991, p. 259). It means that at the moment of reception of intercultural essential information pupils should demonstrate in addition to knowledge and skills their profound cognitive abilities connected with comprehension, evaluation, profound comparative analysis, etc.

In this context of discussion it is interesting to lean on the model of intercultural competence suggested by M. Byram. The model includes five basic components:

- 1) The attitude – the ability to relativize one's self and value others, curiosity and openness about other cultures and one's own.
- 2) Knowledge of one's self and others – knowledge of the rules for individual and social interaction both in one's own culture and in the other culture.
- 3) The skills of interpreting and relating – an individual's ability to interpret, explain and relate events from another culture to one's own culture.
- 4) The skills of discovery and interaction – the ability to use the existing knowledge, attitudes and skills in cross-cultural interactions.
- 5) Critical cultural awareness – the ability to use perspectives, practices and products in one's own culture and in other cultures to make evaluations (Sinicrope, Norris, Watanabe, 2007).

Among the components listed the majority (# 1, 2, 3, 5) relate to the receptive activity connected with the perception, comprehension

and processing of information in the process of intercultural interaction.

The idea that an individual's perceptions are more important than objective reality in intercultural communication is stated by many foreign scholars (A. Jones, E.M. Rogers, X. Quach, T.M. Steinfatt). The way each one perceives the world is part of our cultural experience. Our perceptions in that way are culturally determined and in turn influence the way we communicate with others (Rogers, Steinfatt, 1999, p. 145).

As for native authors, some of them (A.V. Annenkova, N.V. Baryshnikov, A.N. Shamov, A.V. Shchepilova, E.G. Tareva) particularly accentuate the significance of the perceptual aspect of the ICC, at the same time many researchers are associated by the ideology of the cognitive approach to teaching foreign languages. Thus, A.V. Shchepilova stresses the regularities of the cognitive process while mastering a language and the peculiarities of the mental activity of students. The author holds the opinion that language information submits to definite cognitive laws and to be mastered 'it should be analyzed' (Shchepilova, 2003, p. 11). This fact, in its turn, means taking into account the differences in the native and foreign cultures, their comparison and leads to the conscious mastering of the facts of the foreign language reality. The same is pointed out by A.V. Annenkova who states that in order to join to something 'foreign' the individual should first perceive and understand the information, in other words, actualize the receptive mechanism of the cognitive activity (Annenkova, 2010, p. 57).

While on the subject of the perceptive-cognitive aspect of activity accompanying the course of intercultural communication, it is essential to reveal those psychological mechanisms which ensure it and are its constituents. As stated in psychology

(A.A. Bondarev, A.N. Leont'ev, A.G. Maklakov, S.L. Rubinshtein) and linguistic didactics (by ideologists of the cognitive-communicative approach to teaching foreign languages: M.V. Baryshnikov, V.Y. Shabes, A.V. Shchepilova), the perceptive activity is a complex cognitive process. It includes the operations of perception, recognition, identification, comprehension, construction of cognitive schemes (according to A.A. Filatova, 2007) and critical processing (interpretation). While actualizing these operations, the **cognition** takes a place which denotes the 'cognitive process or the totality of psychic (mental, intellectual) processes of perceiving the world, simple observation of the surrounding, categorization, thinking, speech, etc. which serve for processing the information coming from the outside though different sensual and perceptual canals or already reinterpreted by a person' (Brief dictionary of cognitive terms, 1997, p. 81).

#### **Structure of the perceptive-cognitive aspect on senior level**

As applied to communicative activity carried out in context of the intercultural dialogue, perceptive-cognitive ability means the highest extent of forming and organization of all the operations and procedures described.

As a result of analyzing the information obtained it is possible to conclude that with reference to the cognitive-perceptive aspect of the ICC senior pupils of comprehensive school should in the framework of the curriculum:

- **know** their cultural peculiarities and realize the influence of other cultures on their own speech behavior;
- **know** the cultural peculiarities of the country which language is studied;
- **understand** the influence of the native culture on the interaction with the representatives of a foreign culture;

- **be able to** interpret the phenomena of a foreign culture from the position of its representatives;
- **be able to** foresee the interpretation of the phenomena of the native culture from the position of the representatives of another linguistic society;
- **be able to** interpret the phenomena of a foreign culture from the position of the native culture;
- **have the skills of** revealing cultural similarities and differences between the representatives of different cultural groups;
- **have the skills of** comparing the national concepts in the native and foreign cultures;
- **be able to** analyze the differences in the phenomena of a foreign culture through the prism of the native culture;
- **comprehend** the values of another linguistic society and compare them with the values of the native language culture.

Defining the components of the perceptive-cognitive aspect of the ICC should certainly be linked with the argumentation of the possibility of their appropriation by students – senior pupils.

Studying this school age L.N. Tanklaeva claims that senior pupils are capable of forming an abstract world view, establishing profound correlations between various areas of the cognizable reality, productivity of independent logical thinking. They have a developed individual style of mental activity, an interest to scientific search, formed consciousness and self-consciousness. They can regulate purposefully their attitude to the surroundings and their activity (Tanklaeva, 2006, p. 60). The scientists point out that on the senior level of education adolescents carry out easily the operations of abstracting, are able to form hypotheses and analyze situations,

summarize and reason. Perception at that age ‘becomes selective, purposeful and analyzing’ (Fel’dshstein, 1995, p. 161).

In that way, on the senior level of education in comprehensive school pupils are able to carry out the perceptive activity of analyzing and interpreting the phenomena of the native and foreign cultures, developing on this basis their own world view. Consequently, at this stage, particularly within the framework of the profile level the forming of the perceptive-cognitive aspect of the pupils’ ICC is not only possible but essential for satisfying their needs and developing their personality.

Thus **the intercultural communicative competence** of senior pupils considered in its **perceptive-cognitive aspect** represents **the ability and readiness of pupils for perception, comprehension and interpretation of a foreign culture in its interaction with the native culture, based on the knowledge, abilities, skills and personal features.**

### Conclusion

In such a way, within this article the aim of revealing the essence and structure of senior pupils’ intercultural communicative competence was gained. Moreover, this competence was considered in the framework of its cognitive-perceptive aspect the expediency of which corresponds to the peculiarities of the senior level of education.

This perspective of the ICC represents a new educational value. The beginning of the grounds for realizing this innovative idea marks a significant stage of developing the science of teaching foreign language and culture in profile school. Only under the condition of forming the perceptive-cognitive aspect of this competence it is possible to gain the strategic aim – forming the ability of pupils for communication on the intercultural level.

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## **Межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция как цель обучения иностранным языкам в общеобразовательной школе**

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*Целью данной статьи является анализ сущности и структуры межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции старших школьников. В первую очередь выявляются основные личностные качества учащихся, необходимые для межкультурной коммуникации. Также рассматривается связь между межкультурной коммуникативной компетенцией и иноязычной коммуникативной компетенцией. Выдвигается идея формирования перцептивно-когнитивного аспекта межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции старших школьников исходя из особенностей данного этапа обучения. Кроме того, выделяются структурные компоненты межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции и в результате предлагается ее определение.*

*Ключевые слова: межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция, межкультурная коммуникация, личностные качества, перцептивно-когнитивный аспект, когниция, старший школьный возраст, обучение иностранным языкам.*

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