

LEARNING WITH A LANGUAGE PARTNER AS A WAY TO FORM INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

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Abstract. The article discusses the component composition of intercultural communicative competence and the conditions for the formation of the "subject of intercultural communication" personality. It is believed that intercultural communication contributes to the acquisition of the ICC. The purpose of the article is to trace the relationship between the frequency of interaction with representatives of another culture and the improvement of language and communication skills, as well as to analyze the data of a pilot experiment. The practical and scientific significance of the work lies in the proposed teaching methodology, which promotes natural language environment immersion, ICC formation, and overcoming the difficulties in intercultural communication. The article presents the results of a sociological survey. In total, 235 people from Kazakhstan, and countries near and far abroad took part in the study. The purpose of the survey was to determine 1) how often respondents interact with native speakers and how confident they feel when communicating in a foreign language and 2) how the practice/study of a foreign language with a language partner (native speaker) affects the formation of ICC. The results of the study revealed the existing problem in the foreign language education of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the CIS countries. Most of the respondents have never had the experience of communicating with native speakers, or communicate extremely rarely and, if necessary, experience a language barrier, fear and uncertainty. Those respondents who practiced with a language partner (native speaker) felt confident and improved their language skills and knowledge of culture. The opinions of respondents about the benefits of studying with a language partner were also analyzed and presented in the article.

Keywords: cultural awareness, intercultural communicative competence, linguistic competence, communicative competence, intercultural competence, language barrier, tandem, language partner.

Basic provisions

Modern reality contributes to the continuous interaction of people of different nationalities, cultures, and religions with each other, but often the dialogue of cultures causes difficulties, misunderstandings, and conflicts. It became obvious that to conduct successful intercultural communication, it is not enough to possess only the knowledge of a foreign language, it is necessary to be able to communicate effectively with people of other views and cultures. That is why the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization studied the issues: "How can we better understand other people, especially those whose beliefs and actions may be completely different from ours? And what can be done to help people purposefully develop the ability to live and work together despite the differences that divide us and sometimes lead to conflicts and even wars?" [1, p.14].

As a result, in 2006, intercultural communicative competence was identified as the central competence of this century and one of the ultimate goals of teaching a foreign language [2, p. 38]. In this regard, the leading scientists of Kazakhstan, headed by Kunanbayeva S.S. carried out a comprehensive modernization of foreign language education with the transition to a new cultural-forming system. According to the new paradigm, the finite goal of foreign language education in Kazakhstan is the formation of a secondary linguistic personality, which is ready and capable of intercultural foreign language communication, using a foreign language with a parallel and interconnected study of language and culture, with an emphasis on the linguistic and ethnic culture of the student [3, p. 7].

It is worth noting that the modernization of education has complicated the task of teachers of foreign languages. Research by Gonen and Sağlam (2012) shows that teachers do not understand how to teach culture, moreover how to measure the level and progress of students' ICC [4, p. 26]. This is due to the lack of an unambiguous definition of intercultural communicative competence, its component composition, and a specific teaching methodology.

Introduction

Having studied numerous definitions of intercultural communicative competence, we agree with Tran (2015) and understand it as “the ability that allows a person to effectively and appropriately interact in a language other than their first language with others from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It consists of linguistic competence (linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discursive competence) and intercultural competence (attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness) that help a person successfully integrate into a multicultural society [5, p. 30]. This ICC component composition was proposed by M. Bayram in 1997, who took the structure of Jan Van Eck (1986).

Thus, in a foreign language class, teachers should teach: - Vocabulary and grammatical structures (linguistic competence); - the use of language forms by the situation (sociolinguistic competence); - understanding and logically building individual statements for semantic communication (discourse competence) [6, p.107], as well as to develop cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills. However, very often in traditional classes, students receive a non-ideal language model and limited knowledge about culture due to insufficient language preparedness and low cultural awareness of many teachers who are not native speakers, and students also do not have authentic communication in natural sociolinguistic conditions, respectively, have fewer opportunities. for the application of the language being studied [7, p. 26]. Although back in the 80s, E. Hall argued that it is not enough just to talk about intercultural communication, it needs to be practiced, i.e., for the formation of intercultural competence, interaction with representatives of another culture is necessary. Similar to language competence, it also requires practice with native speakers to improve it. Zhang Y. (2017), who conducted a study of the ICC level of language teachers, concluded that the experience of immersion in an authentic environment and the frequency of interaction with native speakers affect the level of intercultural competence of

teachers [8, p. 233]. Therefore, to develop intercultural communicative competence among students, it is necessary to create conditions for immersion in the language environment.

The purpose of this study is to identify:

- 1) how often do language learners have contact with native speakers and how confident do they feel during intercultural communication
- 2) how the practice/study of a foreign language with a language partner (native speaker) affects the formation of the ICC.

Materials and Methods

To analyze the language skills and intercultural awareness of foreign language learners, a study was conducted with the participation of 235 respondents over 18 years old from Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, the USA, Turkey, India, Cameroon, Egypt, South Korea, Guatemala, and Vietnam. The online survey was chosen as the main research method. For the study, a Google form was developed and translated into three languages: Kazakh, Russian and English.

The survey included a preamble, information about the respondents, and the main part, consisting of 15 questions. The questions were of various types: open, closed, both dichotomous and multivariate, as well as nominal and semantic differentials. The results of the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics of both general and various sub-samples in the context of relevant characteristics.

Results

In total, 235 people took part in the online survey: 145 of them were aged 18-25, 53 people were in the age category 26-40, 33 people were aged 41-60, and 4 respondents were over 61 years old. The data was collected through Google Forms voluntarily. 47% of respondents are citizens of Kazakhstan, 43% are from the CIS countries, and 10% are representatives of far-abroad countries. According to the answers of the survey participants regarding the level of language proficiency, 16% have an advanced level (advanced and proficiency), 46% - intermediate (intermediate and upper-intermediate), and 38% - elementary (elementary and beginner). Table 1 below shows that most of the respondents studied FL traditionally in schools and universities, also in language courses and on their own, and only 18% (43 people) studied with a native speaker teacher and 20% (47 people) practiced with a language partner.

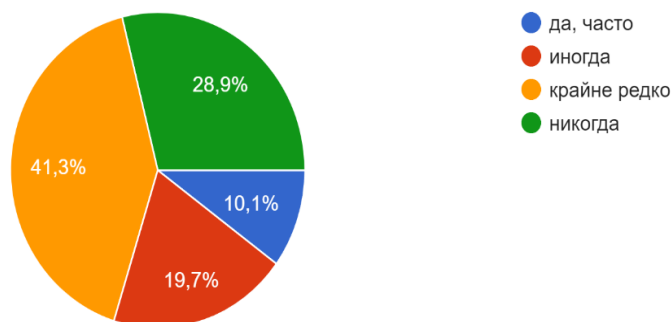
Table 1 Where do (did) you study a foreign language?

at school	at university	at language courses	on your own	with a native speaker - teacher	with language partner
193	164	76	96	43	47

According to Figure 1, when asked “how often do you communicate with native speakers”, 12% (28 people) answered “often”, 23% (53 people) “sometimes”, 39% (91 people) “very rarely”, and 27% (63 people) have never communicated with native speakers of the target language.

7. Часто ли Вы общаетесь с носителями ИЯ?

218 ответов

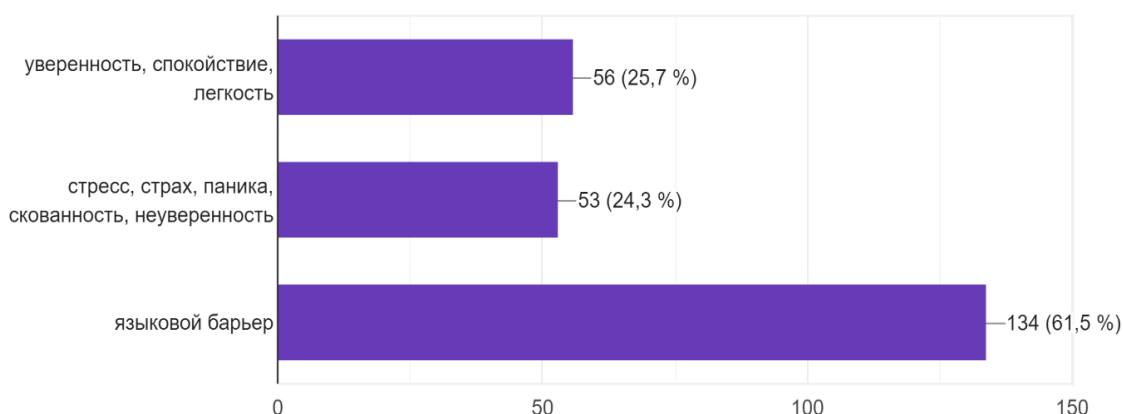


Picture 1 - Frequency of communication with native speakers

As can be seen from Figure 2, during communication or the need to communicate with native speakers, most of the respondents 58% (137 people) experience a language barrier, and 25% (58 people) of all respondents also experience negative emotions such as stress, fear, panic and uncertainty, and only 29% (67 people) during foreign language contact feel confident and calm. These results were quite expected since according to Figure 1, most of the respondents (66%) have practically no experience in communicating with representatives of the language being studied.

8. При общении на иностранном языке с носителями языка или необходимости общения с носителями языка Вы испытываете

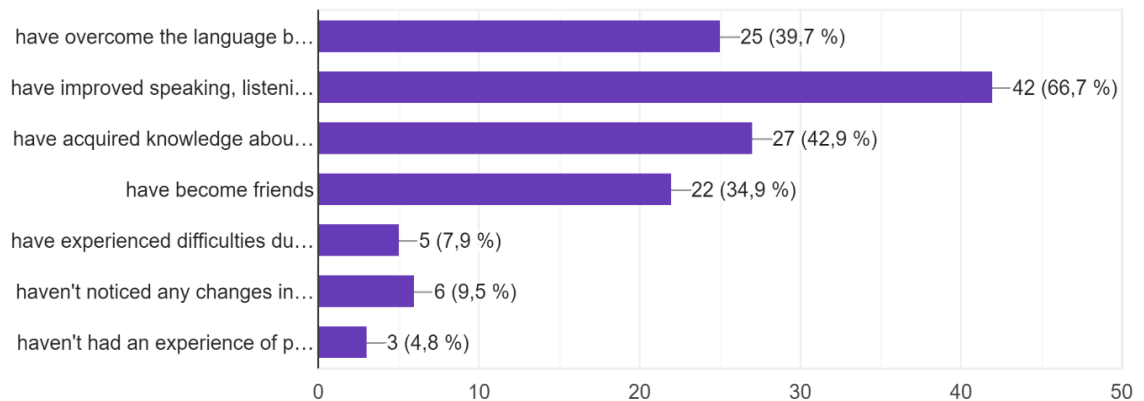
218 ответов



Picture 2 - Emotions experienced during communication in a foreign language

Figure 3 shows the changes that respondents noticed after learning/practicing FL with language partners, 98 people improved their language skills, 58 respondents overcame the language barrier, 61 participants acquired knowledge of another culture, and 50 informants became friends, and only 18 people did not notice any changes. 38 respondents had difficulties due to a lack of understanding of the language and culture. Thus, most of the respondents showed a positive trend.

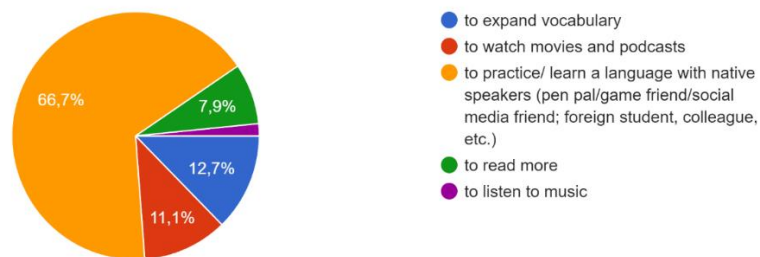
9. After studying or practicing a foreign language with a language partner-native speaker (pen pal/game friend/social media friend; foreign student, colleague, etc.) you
63 ответа



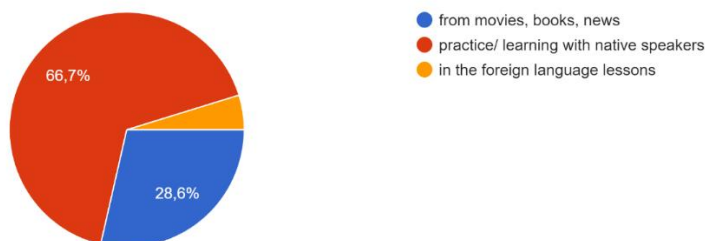
Picture 3 Experience in studying/practicing a foreign language with a language partner

From the diagrams below in Figure 4, it can be seen that a larger number of respondents - more than 60% believe that the best way to improve language skills and knowledge about the culture of the language being studied is to study and practice the language with a native speaker, and almost all of the respondents answered that they would like to have such an opportunity.

6. In your opinion, the best way to improve your language skills is
63 ответа



13. The best way to improve cultural awareness of the target language country is
63 ответа



Picture 4 Ways to enhance ICC

Discussion

According to the study, it is possible to trace a directly proportional relationship between the frequency of communication with representatives of the target language

and emotions during language contact. 89% of respondents interact with native speakers sometimes, very rarely, or never, and 83% experience foreign language anxiety and communication difficulties. Thus, the less often immersion in the language environment, the greater the uncertainty, lack of confidence, and communication difficulties.

Also, the answers of respondents (47 people) who had the experience of practicing the language with language partners (pen pal/game friend / foreign student, colleague, etc.) were separately selected and analyzed, 71% of them feel confident and calm, 96% improved their language skills and cultural awareness, as well as overcoming the language barrier. In addition to overcoming communication difficulties, informants identified the following advantages of gaining knowledge with language partners outside of school hours: *“immersion not only in the language, but also in the culture of the native speaker; real dialogue, with all the features such as accent, constructions, slang; the opportunity to hear a living and modern language; more informal atmosphere, fun, plus you learn new words; instant feedback, the ability to simultaneously improve the skills of both your speech and listening comprehension; only a native speaker can convey the nuances of the native language that are not described in any book, plus cultural differences, without understanding which you will never be able to start speaking fluently; in classes with a native speaker, you can always talk about how their culture and customs look like, what they do in their free time, how they think and understand the world.”*

Also, the answer of one of the respondents about the benefits of learning with a language partner *“... the absence of a language barrier and pressure”* confirms the data obtained by A. Seidikenova, M. Malshy (2022). Scientists have found that foreign language anxiety in foreign language classes most often appears before the teacher during spontaneous unprepared speech. When students study with a language partner, they have no fear of making a mistake, since their knowledge is not assessed, therefore, students feel more comfortable and experience less stress [9, p. 334].

Another positive aspect of studying with a language partner, as respondents noted, is immersion in culture. Zhang Y. (2017) in his work pointed out that language teachers are often poorly prepared for teaching the culture due to their lack of experience in interacting with representatives of this culture [8, p. 233]. Difficulties in teaching culture are related to the fact that, firstly, culture is dynamic, it changes with each new generation, given the development and continuous dialogue of cultures. Secondly, culture can be compared to an iceberg with nine-tenths of its surface hidden underwater and what is learned in traditional lessons at school or universities - national holidays, food, sports, dancing, music, clothing, and attractions - these are just superficial knowledge. Complete and deep knowledge about a culture, such as thinking, values, attitudes, and a model of social interaction, can only be learned in close interaction with representatives of a given culture.

Based on the results of the survey, we can conclude that the formation of intercultural communicative competence requires practical experience and immersion in the language environment, the most effective method of organizing authentic communication is the study of a foreign language in tandem with a native

speaker. While working with a tandem partner, students in a relaxed way expand their vocabulary and hone grammatical structures, learn to use language forms according to the situation, get acquainted with the culture, overcome language barriers and uncertainty, and most importantly, immerse in intercultural communication.

Conclusion

The possibility and necessity of interaction between people from all over the world require the skills of successful intercultural communication. For the formation of these skills, experiential learning is necessary, i.e., practice with native speakers, as well as sufficient language proficiency and cultural awareness. The results of the study and many years of personal experience at the university show that in Kazakhstan and the CIS countries there is a serious problem in foreign language education because students who study a foreign language in the learning process do not have the opportunity to practice with representatives of this language. In turn, the lack of a language environment and live communication with native speakers gives rise to a language barrier and fear of communication. Moreover, in traditional foreign language classes, the culture of the country is studied periodically and superficially. This leads to the fact that students do not have intercultural communicative competence.

For the formation of the "subject of intercultural communication" personality, it is necessary to create conditions for immersion in the language environment. At least once a week, students should study with a language partner in tandem. By learning a language with a tandem partner, students gain confidence, all language skills and cultural awareness improve, and students are immersed in intercultural communication, thereby forming intercultural communicative competence.

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ТІЛДІК СЕРІКТЕСПЕН БІРІГІП ТІЛДІ ОҚЫТУ МӘДЕНИЕТАРАЛЫҚ ҚАРЫМ-ҚАТЫНАС ҚҰЗЫРЕТТІЛІГІН ҚАЛЫПТАСТЫРУ ТӘСІЛІ РЕТІНДЕ

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Аңдатпа. Мақалада мәдениетаралық қарым-қатынас құзіреттілігінің құрамдас бөлігі және «мәдениетаралық коммуникация субъектісі» тұлғасын қалыптастыру шарттары қарастырылады. Мәдениетаралық коммуникация МКҚ-ін қалыптастыруға ықпал етеді деп саналады. Мақаланың мақсаты – басқа мәдениет өкілдерімен өзара әрекеттесу жиілігі мен тілдік және коммуникациялық дағдыларды жақсарту, олардың арасындағы байланысты қадағалау, сондай-ақ пилоттық эксперимент деректерін талдау. Жұмыстың практикалық және ғылыми маңыздылығы ұсынылып отырған оқыту әдістемесіне негізделеді, ол табиғи тілдік ортаға енуге, МКҚ қалыптастыруға және мәдениетаралық қарым-қатынастағы қиындықтарды жеңуге ықпал етеді. Мақалада социологиялық сауалнаманың нәтижелері берілген. Зерттеуге Қазақстаннан және алыс-жақын шетелдерден барлығы 235 адам қатысты. Сауалнаманың мақсаты: 1) респонденттердің ана тілінде сөйлейтіндермен қаншалықты жиі араласатынын және шет тілінде сөйлескенде өздерін қаншалықты сенімді сезінетінін анықтау; 2) тілдік серіктеспен (ана тілінде сөйлейтін) шет тілін практикалау/оқу МКҚ қалыптасуына қалай әсер етеді. Зерттеу нәтижелері Қазақстан Республикасы мен ТМД елдерінің шет тілін оқытудағы проблемаларын анықтады. Респонденттердің көпшілігінің ана тілінде сөйлейтіндермен ешқашан қарым-қатынас жасау тәжірибесі болмаған немесе өте сирек сөйлеседі және байланыс қажет болса, олар тілдік кедергілерге, қорқыныш және сенімсіздікке тап болатыны анықталды. Тілдік серіктеспен (ана тілінде сөйлейтін) оқыған респонденттер өздерін сенімді сезінеді, тілдік дағдылары мен мәдениет туралы білімдерін жетілдіреді. Сонымен қатар, мақалада тіл серіктесімен оқудың артықшылықтары туралы респонденттердің пікірлері талданып, ұсынылды.

Тірек сөздер: мәдени хабардарлық, мәдениетаралық коммуникативтік құзыреттілік, тілдік құзыреттілік, коммуникативтік құзыреттілік, мәдениетаралық құзыреттілік, тілдік кедергі, тандем, тілдік серіктес.

ОБУЧЕНИЕ С ЯЗЫКОВЫМ ПАРТНЕРОМ КАК СПОСОБ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается компонентный состав межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции и условия формирования личности субъекта межкультурного общения. Считается, что межкультурная коммуникация способствует приобретению МКК. Цель статьи – проследить взаимосвязь между частотой взаимодействия с представителями другой культуры и совершенствованием языковых и

коммуникативных навыков, а также проанализировать данные пилотного эксперимента. Практическая и научная значимость работы заключается в предложенной методике обучения, которая способствует погружению в естественную языковую среду, формированию МКК и преодолению трудностей в межкультурной коммуникации. В статье представлены результаты социологического опроса. Всего в исследовании приняли участие 235 человек из Казахстана, стран ближнего и дальнего зарубежья. Целью опроса было определить: 1) как часто респонденты взаимодействуют с носителями языка и насколько уверенно они себя чувствуют при общении на иностранном языке; 2) как практика/изучение иностранного языка с языковым партнером (носителем языка) влияет на формирование МКК. Результаты исследования выявили существующую проблему в иноязычном образовании Республики Казахстан и стран СНГ. Большинство респондентов никогда не имели опыта общения с носителями языка, либо общаются крайне редко и при необходимости контакта испытывают языковой барьер, страх и неуверенность. Те респонденты, которые занимались с языковым партнером (носителем языка), чувствуют себя уверенно, улучшили свои языковые навыки и знания о культуре. Также в статье были проанализированы и представлены мнения респондентов о пользе обучения с языковым партнером.

Ключевые слова: культурная осведомлённость, межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция, языковая компетенция, коммуникативная компетенция, межкультурная компетенция, языковой барьер, тандем, языковой партнер.

Статья поступила 12.11.2022