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INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AS AN INTEGRATIVE COMPONENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF FUTURE PHILOLOGISTS

МІЖКУЛЬТУРНА КОМПЕТЕНТНІСТЬ ЯК ІНТЕГРАТИВНИЙ КОМПОНЕНТ ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ ПІДГОТОВКИ МАЙБУТНІХ ФІЛОЛОГІВ

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The research paper investigates intercultural competence as an integrative component of the professional training of future philologists in the context of contemporary language education. It is argued that effective language acquisition cannot be limited solely to the development of linguistic knowledge and skills, since successful communication also presupposes the ability to interpret cultural meanings, respond to cultural differences, and select communicative strategies in accordance with the communicative situation. The aim of the article is to provide a theoretical understanding of intercultural competence, to clarify its structure, and to determine its place in the professional training of future philologists and translators. Intercultural competence is considered as the result of the interaction of linguistic, sociocultural, and pragmatic components. It is demonstrated that intercultural competence does not replace communicative competence, but rather extends it through its cultural-value and sociopragmatic dimensions. Particular attention is given to the leading theoretical models of intercultural competence, the provisions of the CEFR and the CEFR Companion Volume, as well as to the didactic principles of its development, including authenticity, dialogue of cultures, reflectiveness, mediation, discourse analysis, and genre-based types of work. The approaches of M. Byram, D. Deardorff, and M. Bennett to defining the structure and mechanisms of intercultural competence development have been analysed. Particular attention has been paid to mediation, plurilingual competence, and pluricultural competence as important reference points in contemporary language education. It has been established that the development of intercultural competence should be based on the principles of systematicity, the gradual increase in the complexity of learning activities, and the integration of language and culture within a single task. The importance of clear assessment criteria is emphasized, taking into account not only knowledge, but also skills, attitudes, and sensitivity to context. It is concluded that intercultural competence should be systematically integrated into philological training as a necessary component of professional readiness for intercultural communication.

Key words: intercultural competence, professional training of philologists, communicative competence, mediation, sociocultural component, pragmatic component, translator training.

У науковій статті досліджується міжкультурна компетентність як інтегративний складник професійної підготовки майбутніх філологів у контексті сучасної мовної освіти. Обґрунтовано, що ефективне оволодіння мовою не може обмежуватися лише формуванням лінгвістичних знань і навичок, оскільки успішна комунікація передбачає також уміння інтерпретувати культурні смисли, реагувати на культурні відмінності та добирати комунікативні стратегії відповідно до ситуації спілкування. Метою статті є теоретичне осмислення міжкультурної компетентності, уточнення її структури та визначення її місця у професійній підготовці майбутніх філологів і перекладачів. Міжкультурну компетентність розглянуто як результат взаємодії лінгвістичного, соціокультурного та прагматичного компонентів. Доведено, що вона не замінює комунікативну компетентність, а розширює її завдяки культурно-ціннісному та соціопрагматичному вимірам. Особливу увагу приділено провідним теоретичним моделям міжкультурної компетентності, положенням CEFR і CEFR Companion Volume, а також дидактичним принципам її формування, зокрема автентичності, діалогу культур, рефлексивності, медіації, дискурс-аналізу та жанрово орієнтованим видам роботи. Проаналізовано підходи М. Байрама, Д. Дірдорфа і М. Беннета до визначення структури й механізмів розвитку міжкультурної компетентності. Особливу увагу приділено медіації, плюрилінгвальній і плюрикультурній компетентностям як важливим орієнтирам сучасної мовної освіти. Визначено, що формування міжкультурної компетентності має ґрунтуватися на принципах системності, поступового ускладнення навчальної діяльності та поєднання мови й культури в межах одного завдання. Наголошено на важливості чітких критеріїв оцінювання, що враховують не лише знання, а й уміння, ставлення та чутливість до контексту. Зроблено висновок, що міжкультурна компетентність має системно інтегруватися у філологічну підготовку як необхідний складник професійної готовності до міжкультурної комунікації.

Ключові слова: міжкультурна компетентність, професійна підготовка філологів, комунікативна компетентність, медіація, соціокультурний компонент, прагматичний компонент, перекладознавча підготовка.

Problem statement. Modern language education has long ceased to be limited to the development of linguistic knowledge and skills alone. Today, its purpose is much broader. It involves preparing students for real interaction in a multicultural environment, where communication takes place between people with different cultural patterns, value systems, and social norms. After all, knowing a language does not necessarily mean being able to communicate in it effectively and fully.

For this reason, intercultural competence is increasingly regarded as one of the key learning outcomes in foreign language education. Mere command of vocabulary and grammar is not sufficient. It is equally important to be able to interpret cultural meanings, sense the communicative expectations of one's interlocutor, and recognize differences in communication style, degree of directness, and norms of politeness [1].

In the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)," the language user is viewed not simply as a holder of a certain body of knowledge, but as a "social agent," that is, a person who acts in specific communicative situations and always interacts within a particular cultural environment [2]. Successful language proficiency presupposes not only knowledge of words, grammatical structures, or language patterns, but also the ability to navigate the social context, take cultural differences into account, and select appropriate linguistic means in accordance with a specific communicative situation.

In the "Companion Volume (2020)," particular attention is given here to the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, as well as mediation – the ability to negotiate meaning, explain culturally conditioned differences, and help people from different cultural communities understand one another better [3].

At the same time, a certain imbalance remains evident in the actual practice of training future philologists.

There are often situations in which a student may have a fairly good command of the language, but may not always be prepared for meaningful cross-cultural interaction. That is why the need for a deeper theoretical understanding of the structure of intercultural competence, as well as for its consistent and truly systematic integration into the professional training of future philologists as an important component of their professional readiness, has become especially significant today.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The concept of intercultural competence has long

been at the centre of scholarly attention. Language is no longer perceived merely as a system of rules or lexical units. Instead, it is increasingly viewed as an instrument of interaction between cultures. It is precisely in this context that intercultural competence becomes of central importance.

One of the best-known concepts in this field is intercultural communicative competence, proposed by M. Byram. In fact, this concept substantially changed the way scholars began to speak about intercultural communication. Byram demonstrated that intercultural competence is not simply knowledge of facts about another culture. Rather, it is a whole system of attitudes, skills, and cognitive processes: the ability to interpret cultural phenomena, relate them to one's own cultural experience, and develop critical cultural awareness. Without this, genuine intercultural dialogue – open, responsible, and based on mutual respect – is, in essence, impossible [4].

Similar ideas are also developed by D. Deardorff. Deardorff proposes viewing intercultural competence not as a static set of knowledge, but as the ability to interact effectively and appropriately. In this model, a key role is played by the interaction of three components: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It is precisely this interaction that is manifested in concrete communicative behaviour – in the way a person listens, responds, explains, and interprets [5].

There is also another important perspective, offered by the cognitive-communicative approach. Within this framework, intercultural interaction is understood as a process of negotiating meaning. In communication, people constantly explain, clarify, and interpret – sometimes even unconsciously. For this very reason, effective intercultural communication requires more than linguistic training alone. It requires the ability to take into account the context, the roles of interlocutors, cultural norms, and the communicative conventions within which interaction takes place [6].

Thus, contemporary scholarly approaches are fairly unanimous on one point: intercultural competence is a complex integrative construct. It cannot be reduced solely to the traditional understanding of communicative competence. It is much broader. It adds a cultural-value dimension and a sociopragmatic dimension and, in essence, changes the very understanding of what it means to "know a language."

Purpose of the article. The purpose of this article is to provide a theoretical understanding of intercultural competence as an important component of the professional training of future philologists within the modern system of language education. Within the framework of the study, several objectives are

set. First, it is important to clarify the very content of intercultural competence. What exactly do we mean when we use this term? What components does it include? The article proposes to consider it through three interrelated components – linguistic, sociocultural, and pragmatic. These components do not exist separately. On the contrary, they constantly interact.

Second, the issue arises of the relationship between intercultural competence and communicative competence. At first glance, these concepts appear very close. But are they identical? This issue is examined in the context of the competence-based and activity-based approaches that are now widely employed in language education.

Another important aspect concerns the place of intercultural competence within contemporary international educational frameworks. First, this refers to the provisions of the CEFR and the CEFR Companion Volume (2020), which have become a kind of framework for the development of language education in Europe. These documents clearly demonstrate that language is not merely a system of knowledge. It is interaction between people within a cultural space.

The article also separately considers the importance of intercultural competence for the training of translators. After all, the translator effectively acts as a mediator between cultures. The quality of translation, as well as the overall outcome of intercultural interaction, depends on how well the translator understands cultural meanings, norms of communication, and the pragmatic features of speech.

The methodological basis of the study consists of methods of theoretical analysis and generalization of scholarly sources. These methods make it possible to systematize the existing academic approaches to the understanding of intercultural competence. In addition, the study employs the descriptive-analytical method and the method of conceptual modelling, which make it possible to define the structure of this competence more precisely and to understand its role in the professional training of future philologists.

Presentation of the main material. In the professional training of future philologists, intercultural competence should be viewed as a holistic and integrative system in which different components of language education are combined. It involves the interaction of three components: linguistic, sociocultural, and pragmatic. After all, linguistic accuracy is only one part of the matter. It is more important whether an utterance sounds natural and whether it is perceived as appropriate within a particular cultural context.

The linguistic component is associated with command of the language system – vocabulary, grammar, and syntactic patterns. For a philologist, it is impor-

tant to learn how to use these resources in such a way that cultural meanings are reflected in speech. In other words, this refers to the ability to work with culturally marked vocabulary, phraseology, and typical discourse patterns that reflect culturally accepted ways of formulating ideas, arguing a position, and entering into dialogue. This is important because sometimes the same idea may sound different depending on the cultural expectations of the interlocutor.

The sociocultural component is associated not so much with linguistic form as with an understanding of the cultural context. It concerns knowledge of norms, traditions, values, and patterns of behaviour. It also involves understanding which communicative strategies are regarded as acceptable in a particular society. In this sense, this component corresponds well to the interpretation of sociocultural competence presented in the CEFR [2]. It enables students to perceive speech more broadly – not as a set of words, but as part of social interaction, in which the roles of interlocutors, cultural conventions, and the situational context are all important.

However, it is the pragmatic component that most clearly demonstrates how intercultural competence functions in real communication. It refers to the ability to realise communicative intentions in accordance with the situation, taking into account the status of the interlocutors, social distance, the genre of communication, and norms of politeness. For example, it includes knowing how to formulate a request, express disagreement, or soften criticism. It is precisely here that intercultural misunderstandings most often arise. Moreover, they are frequently connected not with linguistic errors, but with differing cultural perceptions of what is considered an appropriate tone, acceptable directness, or suitable argumentation [4].

As a result, intercultural competence appears as a complex and, at the same time, highly practical quality. It cannot be developed accidentally or merely through occasional “cultural comments” during classes. It requires systematic work within the educational process. Only through the integration of the linguistic, sociocultural, and pragmatic components can a future philologist truly be prepared to act confidently and professionally in situations of intercultural contact [2].

The point is that even a grammatically correct, logically structured, and stylistically appropriate utterance may be perceived quite differently from what the speaker expects. It may appear too direct, excessively formal, or, conversely, overly familiar, depending on cultural norms, habitual patterns of behaviour, and the communicative expectations of the addressee. For this reason, intercultural com-

petence does not replace communicative competence, but rather extends it. It adds the cultural-value dimension without which full-fledged interaction between representatives of different cultures is simply impossible.

A particularly important component in this respect is “mediation” – the ability to negotiate meaning between participants in communication, explain cultural differences, clarify meanings, and rephrase utterances in such a way as to preserve the content while making it understandable and acceptable to the other party [3]. It is the ability to act as an intermediary between different ways of seeing, formulating, and perceiving. That is why intercultural competence should be regarded as a kind of superstructure built upon communicative competence: it ensures not only the effectiveness of communication, but also its appropriateness, that is, its correspondence to the cultural context, value orientations, and communicative expectations of the interlocutors. For the future philologist and translator, this is of particular importance, because in their professional activity, a word is always more than just a word.

To specify these approaches within the framework of philological training, it is advisable to turn to the most influential models of intercultural competence, as well as to outline the didactic mechanisms of its development and possible assessment tools within a university course.

First of all, it is worth referring to M. Byram’s concept of intercultural communicative competence. It is one of the foundational frameworks for understanding intercultural competence in language education [4]. At the centre of this model are not only knowledge, but also attitudes – openness, readiness for dialogue, and the ability to refrain from hasty judgments. Equally important are the skills of interpreting cultural phenomena, relating them to one another, as well as critical cultural awareness. After all, a future philologist should not simply “know about the other,” but should be able to work with cultural meanings: to explain them, compare them, reflect on them, and sometimes even reconsider them. That is why Byram’s model is especially productive for philological training: it shifts intercultural competence from the sphere of information to the sphere of interpretation and action.

No less illustrative is D. Deardorff’s process model. Within this framework, intercultural competence is understood not as a static set of characteristics, but as a dynamic process [5]. The focus is no longer simply on what a person “has” in terms of knowledge, skills, or attitudes, but on how these elements interact with one another, develop into

internal outcomes – such as flexibility, empathy, and ethical sensitivity – and are then manifested in external behaviour that can be observed in real communication. In other words, intercultural competence is understood here as a process of inner work rather than merely an external demonstration of awareness.

Also highly valuable in its own way is M. Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) [7]. It describes a gradual movement from ethnocentric to ethnorelative ways of perceiving cultural differences. The model helps explain why students sometimes respond to cultural differences with denial, simplification, devaluation, or, conversely, uncritical admiration. These are not merely “incorrect” reactions. Rather, they may represent possible stages in the development of one’s perception of the other. Consequently, the teacher gains an important tool: they can do more than simply identify difficulties; they can also design learning situations in such a way as to support the student’s gradual movement toward a more mature, flexible, and reflective position. For philological education, where students constantly interact with other discourses, genres, speech norms, and politeness patterns, this model appears particularly relevant.

Finally, special attention should be given to the CEFR and, in particular, to the CEFR Companion Volume (2020), where the action-oriented dimension of language education is further strengthened and mediation, as well as plurilingual and pluricultural competence, are placed at the centre as important framework reference points [3]. The intercultural component can no longer exist as a separate “cultural studies insert” within a language course. It must be embedded in everyday language practices – in reading, writing, oral interaction, text analysis, the interpretation of utterances, and discourse work. Interculturality in contemporary language education is a way of organising language activity itself.

Thus, the comparison of the above-mentioned approaches provides grounds for an important generalization. Despite differences in emphasis, all these models converge on one point: intercultural competence cannot be reduced to knowledge alone. It is manifested in the ability to act, interpret, explain, relate, and negotiate meaning in interaction. For this reason, its development requires purposeful didactic design.

If one proceeds from the assumption that intercultural competence has an integrative character, a methodologically important question quite naturally arises: how exactly should it be developed within the real educational process so that the cultural component does not turn into a set of “background facts,”

but genuinely influences students' communicative behaviour. What is needed is to structure the learning process in such a way that culture is present in speech, in interpretation, and in the choice of communicative strategies, that is, so that it becomes a real factor in communicative activity. Teaching practice and contemporary recommendations in language education make it possible to outline several principles that are particularly productively implemented within the disciplines of the philological cycle.

First and foremost, this concerns the principle of authenticity. For the development of intercultural competence, students must work with materials in which cultural meaning functions not artificially, but naturally, within living discourse. These may include fragments of interviews, public speeches, podcasts, excerpts from literary or journalistic texts, etiquette formulas in correspondence, and genre patterns of academic or business communication. It is important to understand why an utterance sounds the way it does, which social roles it actualizes, which cultural expectations it relies on, and what pragmatic effect it creates. In other words, the student must learn not only to read the text, but also to perceive behind it the cultural logic of speech.

No less important is the principle of the dialogue of cultures. It is useful to offer students tasks in which they compare how requests, refusals, criticism, compliments, or small talk are realised in different cultures, and which linguistic markers signal distance, formality, or emotional restraint. Such work not only deepens understanding of another culture, but also helps students better perceive the specific features of their own. Moreover, it contributes to the development of the critical cultural awareness discussed by M. Byram [4], since it teaches students not to compare external forms mechanically, but to reflect on the cultural values and communicative norms that underlie them.

Third, the principle of reflectiveness is of great importance. Intercultural competence is not developed solely through the acquisition of rules. It begins to grow in a genuine way when the student reflects not only on how one is expected to speak, but also on how they themselves perceive what is different, what interpretive habits they possess, which judgments they tend to make automatically, and what they regard as "normal" or "strange." External communicative behaviour changes slowly without work on attitudes and internal outcomes – flexibility, empathy, and a willingness to hear the other [5]. For this reason, it is extremely important to create space for reflection within the educational process. In practice, this may take the form of a brief written comment

following the analysis of a situation of intercultural misunderstanding, a self-assessment of one's own reaction, or an attempt to reflect on how the student would change their communicative strategy if they found themselves in a different cultural environment. Such tasks, though seemingly small at first glance, often produce a very important result: they teach students not only to speak, but also to understand why they speak in the way they do.

For the effective development of intercultural competence in higher education, special attention should be paid to the pedagogical conditions under which it is integrated into the course structure. The issue concerns not only what is taught, but also how this content is methodologically organized. First of all, language and culture should be combined within the same task so that the cultural component is not presented separately, but naturally embedded in the work with texts, genres, and communicative situations.

Such an approach can be implemented in practice through those types of tasks that are particularly effective in a philological classroom. One of the most effective formats is situational analysis, or a case study, based on a brief description of an intercultural misunderstanding. In such a task, students are expected to identify exactly what caused the communicative failure: an excessively direct tone, an inappropriate form of address, disregard for social distance, genre mismatch, or another culturally conditioned factor. After that, they propose alternative utterances that preserve the content of the message while changing its pragmatic effect and making the communication more appropriate. It is precisely here that the relationship between linguistic form and cultural norm becomes especially visible.

No less productive is the discourse analysis of authentic fragments – correspondence, interviews, public discussions, or other types of real communication. In this case, the student's task lies not merely in understanding the text, but in identifying markers of politeness, hedging, and implicitness, as well as means of softening an utterance or, conversely, signals of categoricalness, and in explaining their function. Such work makes it possible to see how speech is organized not only at the level of grammar or vocabulary, but also at the level of social and pragmatic meanings.

The assessment of intercultural competence requires a distinct methodological approach, as it cannot be reduced to knowledge of facts about a country, its traditions, or behavioral norms alone. The level of this competence is revealed primarily through a student's ability to interpret speech, respond to cultural differences, and shape their own communica-

tive behavior in accordance with a specific situation. For this reason, assessment should include not only knowledge, but also skills, attitudes, and sensitivity to context. At the same time, it should be based on clear and transparent criteria in order to avoid vagueness and excessive subjectivity.

This is especially important in translator training, where intercultural competence is a necessary professional requirement. A translator must convey not only the content of an utterance, but also its intention, tone, social distance, and expected communicative effect. This requires attention to cultural connotations, politeness norms, and the genre and discourse expectations of the target audience. As a result, literal translation is not always communicatively effective, even when it is formally accurate. That is why intercultural competence should be treated as a systematic component of the training of future philologists and translators.

Conclusions. Intercultural competence should be understood as an essential integrative component of

the professional training of future philologists, since it ensures not only linguistic accuracy, but also the cultural appropriateness and pragmatic adequacy of communication. The analysis has shown that this competence is formed through the interaction of linguistic, sociocultural, and pragmatic components and is manifested not simply in knowledge about another culture, but in the ability to interpret meanings, respond to cultural differences, negotiate meaning, and choose communicative strategies according to context. For this reason, its development requires systematic integration into philological training through authentic materials, mediation, reflective tasks, discourse analysis, genre-based activities, and clear assessment criteria. This is particularly important in translator training, where intercultural competence becomes a necessary professional condition for achieving not only semantic accuracy, but also the effective transfer of intention, tone, and communicative effect in intercultural interaction.

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