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VECTOR OF SEARCH
ВЕКТОР ПОИСКА

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COMMUNICATIVE SEARCH FOR A WAY OUT OF THE IMPASSE IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: CONDITIONS FOR NARROWING THE "GAPS" BETWEEN THE LANGUAGES

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Abstract
The paper addresses the issue of linguistic differences in cross-cultural communication and discusses communicative strategies that could be used to mitigate them. The authors argue that lingua-didactic multicultural education can help remove the main obstacle in the traditional teaching of Russian as a foreign language (RFL) - a "clash of cultures"; and not only can introduce a model of teaching to write, read, and speak in Russian, but can also offer a system of instruction that will allow the students to understand the way Russians think, which surely would make it easier for them to "translate" a text from one culture into another in a non-native "cultural environment" providing a polylingual format for interaction.
Keywords: cross-cultural communication; communicative strategies; multicultural education; Russian as a foreign language; ecolinguistic system.

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Global integration in all spheres of modern human activity causes the shift of focus in linguistic research to the issues of adequate understanding of other people in a polylingual and multicultural context. Consideration of the addressee factor is a communicatively justified way to develop a dialogue between different cultures, as well as between the communicators representing different language worlds. Charles Morris, a prominent American linguist, stated that 'from the cradle to the grave, and from waking to sleep, a modern individual is exposed to a continuous "barrage "of signs by which others are trying to achieve their goals' [as cited in 9, p.44]. An individual is suggested what he has to believe, what he has to approve or criticize, what he has to do or not to do [as cited in 9, p.45].

So, it is no accident that today researchers discuss the prospects of developing an "ecolinguistic system" [10], and talk about the possibility of

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introducing innovative models of a global "linguistic gravitational system" (including a description of the language role, place, and functions) into the socio-cultural environment and practice of cross-cultural communication [2, p.74]. They claim that isolation of the central and peripheral languages in the "linguistic galaxy" would help overcome the consequences of the disaster of the universal language - the Babylonian confusion of tongues. At globalization forums, linguists also talk about the need of linguistic engineering [9], and critically assess, among others, the problem of the "language of homeostasis" of the ecosystem as a whole [1, p.113].

Virtually all reputable modern scientists studying the postmodern process of social and cultural changes (*global village*), talk about the broadening of the scientific interpretation of the term *globality,* attributing to this term the status of the main factor of civilization development, and suggesting various perspectives for studying the phenomenon, including a lingua-didactic one [11; 12]

Innovative models of teaching foreign languages are implicitly linked to the increased attention of scientists and experts to the study of communication process between the speakers of different languages. It is no accident that today methods of teaching Russian as a foreign language (RFL) have got into the field of multidisciplinary interests. Research efforts in multicultural and multimodal format of the "soft power," as the Russian language is called today, are focused on the issues of the dialogue of cultures, - at the intersection of linguistics and almost all of the humanities studying the speaking man. It certainly allows expanded understanding of the process of transferring or receiving information, as well as four (related to it) language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Reorientation of lingua-didectic studies to culture-appropriate models opens innovative capabilities not as much for foreign language learning, but rather for foreign language education, with an enormous educational, ideological, and social potential to prepare an individual who is ready for a dialogue of cultures [8].

Traditionally, the process of teaching a foreign language was considered mainly through the prism of dichotomies "language - speech", "thinking - speech." But today, according to N. D. Pavlova, scientists are no longer satisfied with the "myth of rational thinking," based mainly on the consideration of speech as a mechanism that supports thinking process, and understanding the language as a well-described system subordinating humans [as cited in 1, p.147]. Suffice it to mention the names of the founders of lingua-pragmatics, such as J. Austin, J. Searle, H. Grice, and others,

whose work focused on personality conditioned, nationally oriented interaction of the subjects of dialogic communication. Later, M. Bakhtin introduces the term "dialogic relationships" (or semantic relations between propositions), and suggests that they should be studies taking into account the identity of a given culture, representatives of which are parties to the intercultural dialogue. As you can see, it took time to recognize the primacy of the human factor in the science of language and its functioning[9, p. 204].

In connection with this, authoritative scholars and practitioners (for example, A. Berdichevsky, I. Lysakova, E. Passov, A. Shchukin, and others) talk about the need to revise the traditional methodological view of the Russian as a foreign language (RFL). The language is an integral, organic part of culture that dictates the "rules of the game." To develop a secondary language personality (which is a goal of modern teaching RFL methodology), it is necessary to form student cross-cultural communicative competence with both linguistic and cultural components.

Obviously, communicative competence involves awareness of the communication standards, which allows every participant of the communicative process to jointly build a communication space in the process of the dialogue. To ensure that this dialogue "makes sense," and does not resemble a conversation of the characters from the theater of the absurd, communication rules of its members must be completely, or at least partially, the same. Therefore, there is an interesting question: what, in fact, is the communication norm, what is it composed of, what is the "natural" way of its formation (for example, for a child who is learning about the world and mastering his native tongue), and what problems arise when it is formed "artificially" (when learning a foreign language)?

Being the key to the success of any communication, communication norm is a comprehensive and multi-level concept. In addition to purely linguistic forms (a linguistic norm in its "pure" function), it includes extra-linguistic elements (basic knowledge about the existing and/or pre-existing cultural concepts of the language environment, about the standard reminiscences common for all or almost all native speakers, about the standard ways of structuring and categorization of conceptual space used by the members of the language community, etc.).

Obviously, both purely linguistic and extra-linguistic (cognitive) criteria, for determining the communicative norm, are not stable: the world around us and the means of its reflection in the human mind are constantly changing, the limits and

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priorities of concepts are changing, too, and as a consequence, corresponding language means and communication models are also changing.

In itself, the concept of communication norm is rather vague. If we talk only about the linguistic norm (as a part of the communication norm), we can see that native speakers are sometimes not able to explain to a foreigner why this or that expression does not seem right. Very often, this situation is observed in a translation class: all the lexical and grammatical means seem to be chosen correctly - and yet, the phrase sounds strange, does not feel right for a native speaker. But even if not in conflict with the norm of the language, a phrase may not agree with the communicative norm - may be inappropriate (stylistically, or from the point of view of the standard use) in the speech situation.

All of the above leads us to the conclusion that, to develop students' communicative competence in a foreign language, it is necessary first to give them an idea of the communication norm.

It is obvious that the formation of the communication norm requires a fundamentally different approach when we teach foreign students, not native speakers. When children learn to talk, they form their communicative norm "from scratch" - children's speech errors are related, as a rule, to a conflict between the inherent human desire for regularity and violations of regularity, common for a natural language.

If we talk about adults studying a foreign language, the picture is quite different: in the mind of an individual adult, there already exists a nationally specific conceptual model of the world and the corresponding linguistic picture of the world with its language standards, as well as the model of the communication process. If we compare those norms in the native and studied languages, then obviously, they may relate to each other in some ways, may somewhat disagree or may even conflict, but they cannot be absolutely identical. This mismatch of the norms can be both formal - at the level of different syntactic structures (when the interlocutors' common communication space is not broken) - and deep (when deep cognitive components of the interlocutors' knowledge are not the same, and their common communication space is not continuous, but includes "gaps", where the interlocutors experience confusion or misunderstanding of each other).

Let us look at the communication process, and the conditions that make it possible.

As noted by E. Popov [6], during the communication process, in the mind of each of the communicators, there is his model of the world, a model of his partner and of the language they use, a model of the dialogue's structure and a model of

himself as a language user. At the same time, if the communication takes place between two interlocutors in their native language, misunderstanding usually occurs when there is a partial mismatch of the knowledge about the structure of the dialogue and/or of the communication task, as well as of the models of the self and other. The model of the language of communication is usually more or less the same. The larger the area of matching, the more successful the act of communication will be and, consequently, the lower will be the risk of misunderstanding or miscommunication between the interlocutors. With significant discrepancies in the models, the risk of misunderstanding increases (as it often happens in the communication between the representatives of different social, age and gender groups).

Generally, as noted by Y. Prohorov [7], if in the language space one of the communicators is not a language personality in full (i.e., his model of the language, of the dialogue's structure, etc. are significantly inferior to the level of a standard native speaker), then a successful act of communication could be possible only if the second party has more than the standard knowledge of the subject they discuss, of his interlocutor (his knowledge - both linguistic and non-linguistic), and of the structure of the dialogue. This observation has been confirmed in the process of teaching RFL, - students successfully communicate with the teacher, but often "crash", trying to find a common language with a native speaker in the street (even with fully matching communicative intentions) because the second interlocutor, in this case, does not know about the level of the foreigner's knowledge, about the gaps existing in his communication model, and does not want to make an extra effort to fill in these gaps to ensure the continuity of the common communicative space.

In principle, when a foreigner is communicating with a native speaker, misunderstandings can be caused by a partial or complete mismatch between any of the above models in the minds of the communicators. As a consequence, a foreigner makes different types of mistakes - stylistic (if his model of the interlocutor is incorrect), grammar and vocabulary (if the language and dialogue's structure models are wrong), and purely semantic mistakes, sometimes surprising for a native speaker because of their complete absurdity (they are caused by a mismatch between the models of the environment, the standard ways of structuring and categorization of conceptual space, and characteristics of the members of different cultural and linguistic communities).

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Indeed, in speech generation, the choice of language forms is dictated by the communicative requirement to express a certain meaning, and to express it adequately to the communication situation, making it clear and understandable for the interlocutor. In this process there are the following stages: finding a class of the units that can express the meaning; choosing among the members of the class of lexemes that will satisfy the stylistic requirements (determined by the communication situation, cultural level of the communicators, and individual experience when speaking in similar situations); constructing the "building blocks" for phrases, and finally, designing statements - "assemblying" the "building blocks" into phrases according to the corresponding syntactical rules. In addition, when it comes to speaking, rather than writing, the requirement of correct intonation and sound design should be added to the above mentioned ones.

It is obvious that, in the process of statement generation in a foreign language, the student may make mistakes at any stage. He may choose a wrong lexical form, inadequate for the communicative intention. This may be caused by various reasons. Here are the most common:

1. Foreigners do not know which of the lexical units (expressing similar meaning) are the most frequently used and would be appropriate in a given speech situation (students under the influence of the interference of their mother tongue [3, 10], usually tend to choose lexical units, the most standard in their view, based on the norms of their own language; and these units may not be the most frequently used and standard forms in the language they study).

2. Foreigners have little or no feeling of the units' stylistic coloring, choosing sometimes even obscene forms - in full confidence that they use common, stylistically neutral language units (most often it happens with the people who know the foreign language quite well, - beginners' vocabulary is not rich enough).

3. Students confuse the words that have similar sound forms, but absolutely unrelated in meaning. Note, that one of the criteria for the selection of a particular word by a foreign student is sometimes its "easy pronunciation". Therefore, quite a significant part of the vocabulary, actively used by native speakers, but difficult for foreigners to pronounce, remain in the passive part of foreigners' vocabulary.

4. Foreigners may make mistakes at the stage of phrase and sentence construction - choose a wrong verb tense, agreement or word order (guided by the standard word order in their native language), use set expression common for their native language (but not used in the foreign language), and, finally, may make mistakes in pronunciation and intonation.

One of the standard errors foreigners make is affective [4] and exaggerated "literary" speech (due to the lack of knowledge of the standards in a natural conversational speech). It is especially characteristic of the students who have studied a foreign language at home, and used only textbooks with recorded dialogues and educational texts based on classical literature (mostly of the 19th century). Although such materials are very useful for extended cultural education, they may also do a "disservice" to the students, - it would be inappropriate and funny to speak the language of Turgenev and Dostoyevsky in everyday situations. And a foreigner may be disappointed and surprised to see people laughing; he will not understand why his speech seems comical to Russian interlocutors.

When listening to a native speaker, a foreigner also faces difficulties due to: improper scanning of the sound and intonation form of statements and their individual components (division into syntagms and separate words); inability to recognize set phrase (he tries to translate each word and does not understand the meaning of the entire phrase); misunderstanding (due to ignorance of the norms of acceptable variation) of incomplete sentences in conversation, inability to understand the connotative nuances of words (the subjective-modality of the living speech is particularly difficult for a foreigner to understand).

We would also like to dwell on the problem of so-called "small" words [5]. Working with a foreign audience, instructors are constantly faced with the fact that there is a particular group of words that are difficult for foreigners to understand, remember and use in speech. One of the students called them, very aptly in our view, "little" words (for almost all of them are composed of one or two syllables).

When the students were asked to make a list of difficult to learn "small" words, it appeared that this list includes mostly functional words (particles and conjunctions), as well as a number of adverbs.

Why are these words so difficult for students? Obviously, this is due to the fact that these words have an extremely high degree of contextuality. Each of them can express, depending on the context, a wide range of meanings, but not all of these meanings can be found in translation dictionaries (a real help in such cases could be a dictionary-thesaurus of the Russian language, but foreigners seldom use such dictionaries, preferring to look for direct translation of the words or combinations that include these words in their native language, - and it is not always possible). Moreover, context may not only determine the meaning, but also the part of speech

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these words belong to - the words "jump" from one category into another, functioning as a conjunction, as a particle, or as an adverb. This results in a greater variability of their location in the structure of a sentence (compared with the other parts of speech), which creates particular difficulties for students who cannot logically understand the algorithm of their placement in the text, and the degree of their importance for the meaning of the phrase. In addition, the external form of such words does not, as a rule, give any information about the particular part of speech they belong to (again in contrast to the significant words), from the point of view of a foreigner they look like some "outsiders" in the language being studied: students can neither determine their place in this system, nor group them based on any grounds (usually when studying a foreign language words are grouped in the minds of students on the basis of their assignment to the same part of speech, which is usually determined based on the form of the word, - this observation is confirmed, for example, by the fact that students of a foreign language usually look for the words they forgot among similar sounding words of the same part of speech as the forgotten words). Being short in length, "little words" do not allow the student to select morphemes, in particular the root morphemes, in their composition, - and the student is not able to correlate the data of the word with any word-forming unit (morphological analysis, which often makes it possible to guess the meaning of an unknown foreign words, in this case, does not help). Note, that the brevity of these words also prevents their memorization; students have difficulty storing in memory the words that are too long or too short: the easiest to remember are the words consisting of 3-4 syllables.

Various clichés and based on them neologisms or puns, used as expressive means (often to create a comic effect), are also difficult to understand for foreigners.

In general, the problem of the role of standard requires special attention. If for the members of a linguistic community, knowledge of the standard helps anticipation in the process of speech (and, consequently, helps in the perception of information), and its violation serves as an element of surprise, as an expressive means, for a foreigner it is not the same. Not knowing the standard, he takes neologisms based on it as the most common combinations and sometimes uses them later in the generation of his own statements, as standard formations, which confuses and surprises native speakers. Standard for native speakers reminiscences of works of art, films, anecdotes, etc. are also difficult to understand for a foreigner. Deliberate "breaking" of the literary norms - of course, within their allowed variation, - is often used in speech for greater expressiveness, or to establish a better contact with someone. Foreigners, not knowing the boundaries of these frames, are often surprised by the "wrong" statements, and sometimes just do not understand them.

On the other hand, foreigners are always looking in the target language for structures similar to the standard structures in their own language (since they already know the norm in their native language, including the core of this norm - the standard). When the structures agree, the problems usually do not arise, such foreign forms are easy to remember. If the structures do not match, they are difficult to remember. In these cases, it is easier to remember "exactly the opposite" constructions by contrast (as opposed to the matching patterns that are learned by analogy). The worst situation is when there are no complete and partial mismatch structures – the teacher has to spend a lot of time to develop the skills to use such structures before they are stored in memory. This practical observation confirms, in particular, the idea that repetition and contrast are the leading system-forming principles used to develop the student's knowledge of a foreign language in the process of learning.

How can we form a communication norm (and thus communicative competence) in practice, in the process of teaching a foreign language? To address this global problem, we suggest that an intercultural training, which we recognize as an innovative teaching model, should be implemented in the practice of foreign language education. The construction of this model has an analogue in the socio-cultural, educational and professional practice of students, which opens up the possibility for them to learn the traditions of the nationally specific interactions accepted in a given country. Thus, students perform the role of "representatives and retranslators of this particular culture" [1, 9].

One of the main tasks of the intercultural training is to teach students to look for the ways to solve social, educational and professional problems, related to the "cultural iceberg" - visible and invisible national-ethnic-specific values, to acquire the skills of its interpretation, and the ability to use an invisible "cultural backpack" or "cultural assimilator" [2, p. 96].

Having analyzed the models of foreign students verbal behavior, in the course of cross-cultural training, we could define three levels of their perception of the new culture: 1) cognitive value of the information – a cognitive field of training; 2) social experience - a pragmatic field of training; 3) personal experience – an axiological, evaluative field of training. According to such recognized

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scholars as T. Balykhina, I. Zimnyaya, V. Kostomarov, V. Kinelev V. Mironov, E. Passow, "for the first level, - it is sufficient to have an idea about the facts of culture, for the second, - you need to possess the concepts and be able to perform any action, the third level requires judgments related to the personal emotional and evaluative attitude to the fact of the foreign culture" [2, p.117]. Thus, multicultural competence of a language user can be considered at three levels: cognitive, affective, and communicative-behavioral. Within the framework of the intercultural discourse (as a historically formed "ribbon of life" that, according to Ferdinand de Saussure, L. Shcherba, E. Benveniste, and Z. Harris, should be included in the communication process), it is impossible to communicate effectively without understanding of the 'foreign point of view on the issue, without comparing, analyzing the specifics of a particular culture, without being aware of the stereotypes of at least two linguistic world. Only on these conditions, the methodological field of learning a foreign language (in particular, the Russian language by foreign students) will expand its limits to the study of the *language-culture-people*, with the intercultural aspect of linguistics reflecting both self-awareness, and cross-cultural awareness [13].

Lingua-didactic multicultural education is designed, primarily, to remove the basic contradiction of the traditional methods of RFL – a "clash of cultures"; secondly, it should introduce not only a model of teaching writing, reading, and speaking in Russian, but also a system of learning in which the students will be able to understand the way Russians think, which surely would make it easier for them to "translate" a text from one culture into other in a non-native "cultural environment", systematically providing a polylingual format for interaction [8, p.341]. The task for the future is to develop a model that will teach students to think in Russian, to feel in Russian and, at the same time, preserve their national identity.

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