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Integrated development of german-speaking socio-cultural competence through the formation of linguistic competence in reading

Desarrollo integrado de la competencia sociocultural alemán a través de la formación de la competencia lingüística en la lectura

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the problem of forming students' socio-cultural competence in the process of learning German as a foreign language in a specialized higher language educational institution. The study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing an analysis of literature and educational practices in specialized language institutions. The focus is on the sociocultural component of communicative competence and its relevance in foreign language learning. The analysis highlights that sociocultural competence is a crucial functional aspect of language communication, encompassing knowledge of the socio-cultural context in which a foreign language is used. Studying the cultural originality of native speakers plays a pivotal role in forming linguistic competence. Informative reading not only improves communicative competence but also meets the professional information needs of specialists, enabling them to acquire knowledge in a foreign language independently. The study reveals the significance of socio-cultural competence in foreign language learning and emphasizes the importance of studying the cultural originality of native speakers. It suggests that informative reading serves as an effective method for

fostering socio-cultural competence and enhancing language proficiency. The findings highlight the need for further research on content selection, structuring of socio-cultural competence, and the development of pedagogical tools in German language instruction at the university level.

Keywords: integration, teaching methods, practical classes, higher education, socio-cultural competence, communicative competence, cultural context.

Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar el problema de la formación de la competencia sociocultural de los estudiantes en el proceso de aprendizaje del alemán como lengua extranjera en una institución de educación superior especializada en idiomas. El estudio adopta un enfoque de investigación cualitativa, utilizando un análisis de la literatura y las prácticas educativas en instituciones especializadas en idiomas. La atención se centra en el componente sociocultural de la competencia comunicativa y su relevancia en el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras. El análisis destaca que la competencia sociocultural es un aspecto funcional crucial de la comunicación lingüística, que abarca el conocimiento del contexto sociocultural en el que se utiliza una lengua extranjera. El estudio de la originalidad cultural de los hablantes nativos juega un papel fundamental en la formación de la competencia lingüística. La lectura informativa no solo mejora la competencia comunicativa sino que también satisface las necesidades de información profesional de los especialistas, permitiéndoles adquirir conocimientos en una lengua extranjera de forma independiente. El estudio revela la importancia de la competencia sociocultural en el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras y destaca la importancia de estudiar la originalidad cultural de los hablantes nativos. Sugiere que la lectura informativa sirve como un método eficaz para fomentar la competencia sociocultural y mejorar el dominio del idioma. Los hallazgos resaltan la necesidad de más investigación sobre la selección de contenido, la estructuración de la competencia sociocultural y el desarrollo de herramientas pedagógicas en la enseñanza del idioma alemán a nivel universitario.

Palabras clave: integración, métodos de enseñanza, clases prácticas, educación superior, competencia sociocultural, competencia comunicativa, contexto cultural.

1. Introduction

The intensification of international relations in the context of integration and globalization trends in the world community contributes to an increase in the general interest in learning foreign languages, in particular German as an important means of international communication. According to many leading scholars, high-quality preparation of young people for diverse communication in a foreign language involves not only learning basic vocabulary and phraseology, spelling, and syntax but also a sufficient understanding of the cultural uniqueness, traditions, customs, creative heritage, and mentality of native speakers.

The relevance of the issue of integrated development of linguistic and sociocultural competence lies in the importance of forming foreign intercultural communicative competence, which is the ultimate practical goal of teaching and learning a foreign language for students of philology and pedagogical specialties. An important aspect is also the correlation between foreign language communicative competence and foreign language intercultural communicative competence.

Foreign language communicative competence as a goal was set earlier with the development of the communicative approach in the methodology and, accordingly, it includes the following components:

- a) linguistic competencies – lexical, grammatical and phonetic;
- b) speech competencies – in speaking, listening, reading, and writing;
- c) educational and strategic competence and linguistic and sociocultural competence.

Teaching intercultural communication through the development of foreign language intercultural communicative competence is a modern goal that has emerged with the development of the intercultural approach. It continues the previous goal and has been intensively researched over the past decade.

The research aims to study the peculiarities of the integrated development of German-speaking socio-cultural competence through the formation of linguistic competence in reading.

2. Theoretical background

Various aspects of the interdependence of language and culture have been discussed in detail in the philosophical, cultural, psychological, and pedagogical literature (Sazonenko, 2000; Rezvan, 2012; Piatnytska & Pozdniakova, 2003; Ortynskyi, 2009; Nikolaieva, 2016; Nahaiev, 2007; Lihum, 2011; Kushnir et al., 2012; Kuzminskyi, 2005; Kozak, 2014). However, at the same time, the same aspects have not been sufficiently studied in terms of foreign language teaching methods in specialized higher education institutions. In our opinion, it is the methodology of teaching a foreign language at a university, based on the scientific achievements of modern philosophy and methodology of education, that can ensure the readiness of future teachers for quality education and comprehensive development of students through a foreign language as an embodiment of authentic cultural activity. In this regard, based on the high relevance and insufficient study of the problem, this paper is devoted to the theoretical analysis of the possibilities of forming students' speech competence in the process of learning German as a foreign language in an HEI.

One of the main goals of teaching a foreign language at a linguistic higher education institution is to develop students' communicative competence in the target language. It is assumed that communicative competence consists of four main components:

- 1) linguistic competence
- 2) speech competence;
- 3) sociocultural competence;
- 4) strategic competence (Styshov, 2008; Dychkivska, 2004; Vlasenko, 2014; Vitvytska, 2006; Butenko, 2012).

A large number of people speak German around the world. It is believed that modern German belongs not only to its native speakers but also to all people who use it as a natural means of communication. In such a situation, determining who can and should become the standard of linguistic behavior for students of a language university is quite difficult. In our opinion, to address this issue rationally, it is essential to establish which model is the most appropriate and appropriate for a particular language learning environment.

For example, when German is learned to communicate at the international and intercultural levels, it is advisable to create appropriate conditions and use pedagogical means, such as explanations, selection of actual language material, examples, etc., so that students form judgments in advance about the different variants of German accepted in the environment by both native speakers and non-native speakers who use this language for linguistic communication.

It is worth noting that learning a language necessarily involves familiarizing oneself, to varying degrees, with the culture of native speakers, and with the norms and values accepted in the society of native speakers. In addition, adequate use of the language is necessarily based on the fulfillment of certain norms of behavior accepted among the representatives of this culture.

Researchers of the problem of developing language competence note that in the vast majority of cases, foreign language teaching is traditionally focused on learning different aspects of language, such as

vocabulary, grammar, and phonetics. Moreover, much attention is paid to the development of skills and abilities in speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Borysko et al., 2004 2013, 2018; Berezivska, 2002; Auzina et al., 2002; Thomas et al., 2005; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009; Bolten, 2007).

Therefore, it should be noted that the functional side of language competence is often ignored. As a result, language learning is reduced to acquiring knowledge about the language rather than mastering the language as a means of linguistic communication. Thus, the formation of the socio-cultural component of linguistic competence in particular, as well as adequate mastery of a language in general, involves the study of its culture. It should also be emphasized that the study of culture is impossible without mastering the language of the representatives of this culture. However, it is necessary to determine who exactly should act as a standard of linguistic behavior in a particular context of foreign language teaching in a specialized language university. In the case of German, it is also worthwhile to determine which culture's representatives will be the optimal model of language behavior that is most acceptable in our language learning environment.

The review of publications shows that modern research on the theory and practice of developing language competence is characterized by conceptual and methodological differentiation, which is determined by the goals and objectives of a particular field of knowledge. It is worth noting that there is a certain consensus in the definition of the terms. Typical for language competence is a great variety of terminology and inconsistency, namely, different components of competence:

- intercultural,
- intercultural communicative,
- cross-cultural,
- transcultural,
- (bi-)cultural,
- ethnocultural, etc.

Scholars debate whether intercultural competence should be distinguished from ICC, ICC from foreign language ICC, and foreign language ICC from foreign language communicative competence. Some researchers use these terms synonymously, but most believe that they are different types of competencies. The British Methodist Michael S. Byram (1997) called the ability to communicate in intercultural situations in one's native language intercultural competence, and in a foreign language – foreign language intercultural competence.

The correlation between foreign language communicative competence and (foreign) intercultural communicative competence, which is nowadays defined by many methodologists as the ultimate practical goal in teaching and learning a foreign language, is a matter of considerable debate. In this regard, it is worth recalling that the term foreign language communicative competence appeared a little earlier with the development of the communicative approach. At the same time, the term intercultural communicative competence emerged only during the formation of the intercultural approach to foreign language teaching. Linguo-sociocultural competence is one of the most important components of foreign language intercultural communicative competence in various concepts. In the presented domestic Ph.D. theses on the training of future foreign language teachers, the focus is on the research of methods of forming lingo-sociocultural (or sociocultural) competencies (Bilotserkivska, 2009; Golub, 2010; Kalinin, 2015; Zadorozhna, 2018, etc.).

Linguistic and sociocultural competence in a foreign language is not formed automatically but requires specially trained teachers and appropriate teaching materials that model the dialogue of cultures and intercultural communication. Moreover, it requires a new methodology that fundamentally takes into account the integrated development of this competence with other language and speech competencies, in particular reading competence.

3. Methods

The methodology involves a combination of systematic, synergistic, and cultural approaches to analyze and develop the socio-cultural competence of future foreign language bachelors through interdisciplinary integration. By identifying individual abilities, implementing innovative technologies, focusing on motivated attitudes, using performance assessment tests, and incorporating a cultural approach, the study aims to foster the holistic development of socio-cultural competence in language learners.

The systematic approach is employed to analyze the essence of general cultural and professional training of future foreign language bachelors. It emphasizes the need for unity and interaction among various components of the educational process, recognizing the ongoing intellectual, creative, and professional development of individuals in mastering socio-cultural competencies.

The synergistic approach focuses on understanding the individual characteristics of students and the unique styles of the educational process's subjects. It involves predicting the impact of innovative educational technologies on students and emphasizes the importance of relying on a system of knowledge to foster the socio-cultural competence of future foreign language bachelors through interdisciplinary integration.

A mechanism is developed to identify the individual abilities of students. This involves diagnostic tools, assessments, and observations to understand students' strengths, weaknesses, and learning preferences. The didactic approach emphasizes fostering a motivated attitude among students towards novelty and innovative approaches. It involves creating an engaging and stimulating learning environment that encourages active participation and exploration.

Performance assessment tests are designed to evaluate the progress and development of socio-cultural competence among future foreign language bachelors. These tests include oral presentations, written assignments, group projects, or simulations that assess both linguistic and socio-cultural understanding. A management scheme is developed to effectively introduce innovative technologies in accordance with European educational requirements. This includes planning, implementing, and evaluating the integration of interdisciplinary approaches, ensuring alignment with the goals and objectives of the curriculum.

The cultural approach is utilized to substantiate the theoretical and methodological fundamentals of forming socio-cultural competence. It recognizes the current socio-cultural situation and views a specialist in a particular professional field as a person of culture who encompasses the cultural achievements of mankind. The instrumental and normative model of training is replaced by a cultural and creative model, emphasizing the importance of cultural understanding and creative expression in the formation of socio-cultural competence.

4. Results

Speaking about teaching German in a language university, it should be noted that one of its main tasks is to develop students' ability to communicate adequately in the language they are studying. This is possible if students are familiarized with the rules and norms of linguistic behavior accepted among people who use the language as a natural means of communication. If this (socio-cultural) aspect of language competence is not given due attention in the learning process, the formation of such a skill becomes impossible. Thus, in our opinion, there is no doubt that the role of the phenomenon of culture in the process of teaching a foreign language is extremely important. Therefore, getting acquainted with the original cultural heritage of native speakers and teaching their culture should take an important place in the process of teaching a foreign language for professional purposes. Hence, it is extremely important to determine a pedagogically appropriate and methodologically competent set of the most effective methods and ways of studying culture in the context of language teaching. First of all, in our opinion, it is necessary to determine what amount

of knowledge in the field of culture of the target language is necessary and what exactly language university students should learn to make adequate speech communication in the target language possible (Foreign Languages, 2016). Since in the context of learning a foreign language for professional purposes, one should strive to achieve the highest level of language proficiency, a deep knowledge of social conventions and the acquisition of behavioral canons, verbal and non-verbal norms inherent in native speakers are essential.

To address this issue, it is advisable to teach students strategies for finding a way out of situations that may be beyond their linguistic and sociocultural knowledge to ensure the quality of their language competence. In addition, students should be aware that some phrases may be acceptable in one culture but completely unacceptable in another. However, knowing the list of such phrases does not guarantee the exclusion of errors caused by differences in cultures in the future.

Speaking of pedagogical, organizational, and methodological conditions that contribute to the effective development of sociocultural competence, we should, first of all, note the indispensability of the experience of direct communication with the culture of the language being studied. Unfortunately, this is still not realistic for the vast majority of German language learners at present. However, this does not mean that language should be taught in isolation from culture. All materials used in language learning for professional purposes should be authentic. It seems to us that the authenticity of the textual materials used should be one of the main principles of selecting reading and listening materials. Adherence to the norms of speech communication adopted by native speakers and the naturalness of the context in which the speech communication takes place contributes to much more successful learning. According to this statement, targeted and consistent reading, in particular books containing information on the culture of German-speaking countries, listening to audio materials, and watching videos, programs, and films in German with subsequent discussion, can significantly contribute to the effective development of sociocultural competence. Moreover, in our opinion, it can contribute to teaching students German at the level of understanding, knowledge, and communication skills.

Thus, the theoretical analysis of the problem of forming students' speech competence in the process of learning German as a foreign language in a specialized linguistic HEI has confirmed that:

- 1) knowledge of social conventions, assimilation of behavioral canons, verbal and non-verbal norms, as well as cultural specifics is a necessary and important part of the pedagogical process of developing language competence, which consists of the following main components: linguistic, language, socio-cultural, and strategic competencies.
- 2) learning a foreign language should be based on familiarizing students with the culture of its speakers, with the norms and values accepted in the community of native speakers' language speakers;
- 3) the experience of direct communication with the culture of the language being studied is a necessary organizational condition that contributes to the effective formation of students' sociocultural competence;
- 4) the pedagogically and methodologically sound use of such linguistic and didactic methods can significantly contribute to effective German language learning.

These methods include reading, listening to audio materials, and watching videos, programs, and films in German that contain information about the culture of Germany, Austria, and other German-speaking countries. Additional benefits can be achieved by discussing the information with students after using these methods, which will help to develop students' sociocultural competence.

Reading is a receptive form of language communication and consists of two interrelated and inseparable processes: reading technique and comprehension of the text being read. In recent years, a positive trend has intensified toward practical mastery of a foreign language in the form of speaking training. However, reading does not lose its significance, because, unlike oral speech, it has unlimited opportunities to enrich

a specialist with new information. In their professional activities, future teachers may often be faced with the need to read methodological manuals, operating instructions, newspaper articles, annotations, etc., as well as with the need to make the right choice according to the degree of usefulness of this information for themselves.

In foreign language teaching methods, there is a type of reading called informative reading. It is aimed at acquiring, processing, and using information from the text. Informative reading has specific features that are characteristic of professionally oriented reading. In particular, it is subordinated to professional activities and depends on professional vocabulary, includes the functions of professional written communication, and aims to obtain professionally relevant information and the intended use of this information.

In this case, communication, namely the dialog between the text and the reader, is professionalized, becoming a dialog between specialists in a particular field of knowledge. The reader, interpreting the text, comments and evaluates it under his or her professional associations, agreeing or disagreeing with the train of thought outlined in it, replenishes his or her knowledge, joins the achievements in the field of interest, and can generate his or her text. According to this provision, there are three main subtypes of informative reading: evaluative-informative, appropriative-informative, and creative-informative.

Appropriative and informative reading is accompanied by making various notes that reflect the permanent content of the text (or its' invariant).

Creative and informative reading usually involves the second reading of the source and one's notes to formulate and articulate one's thoughts (orally or in writing) about the information presented by the author. Work on professionally oriented texts can be divided into three stages: before reading the text, during reading, and after reading.

Pre-textual level of work on the text – students are asked to familiarize themselves with the keywords of the text, translate the title, and identify the topic (*read the title and decide what the text is about; by what word in the title did you realize that this information is about...*). Then students do training exercises to eliminate lexical and grammatical difficulties in the text.

The post-textual stage includes creative exercises aimed at developing the following skills:

- to extract the necessary information from the text;
- to summarize the information received;
- to correlate individual semantic segments of the text;
- to draw conclusions based on the information received;
- to evaluate the content of a processed passage;
- to interpret the text.

Experience has shown that teaching reading professionally oriented texts based on a system of exercises at the pre-textual and post-textual stages helps to intensify the process of learning a foreign language. From the didactic point of view, the system of exercises in informative reading should prepare students' thinking for the transition from the automated performance of speech actions at the sentence level to complex thinking activities while reading professionally oriented texts in a foreign language.

It is quite obvious that the effectiveness of informative reading and, accordingly, the effectiveness of the mediated professional dialog between the text and the reader, as well as between the reader and the author, depend on the development of specific interactive skills of complex foreign language professional-oriented reading. In this regard, the process of teaching informative reading in a language or pedagogical university should be aimed at developing the following skills in future engineers-pedagogues: evaluating

professional information, assigning the extracted information, and creating a new product. One of the conditions for the success of such an educational process can be competently selected authentic professional material, educational materials created on its basis, and authentic tasks related to professional or scientific activities. An example of an assignment that can contribute to the comprehensive development of the above skills is the preparation of an essay on a specific topic. Within the framework of a certain professional topic, students are encouraged to choose a more specific topic following their professional and academic interests, for example, related to the preparation of a term paper, diploma, project, or laboratory work. To write an essay, students need to select at least three different genres of authentic sources in a foreign language. These sources can be articles in scientific and technical journals, brochures, reports, reference materials of various kinds, textbooks, manuals, programs, collections of tasks and exercises, documentation related to the field of technical or industrial application, contracts, trade catalogs, advertising materials, reference books, and other types of information resources. Furthermore, the selected sources must be as authentic as possible and relevant to the topic of the work. This approach to selecting sources will allow students not only to deepen their knowledge in a professional field but also to improve their foreign language skills.

The first stage involves students searching for meaningful information from a variety of sources in a foreign language. When selecting materials, students compare them with their existing knowledge of the subject content and evaluate the importance, usefulness, and novelty of the information they contain. They also determine in advance the possibilities of using this information in their work, per the task.

The second stage involves students making notes on the content of the text of various types or highlighting information of professional importance in the text itself to use in their work.

In the third stage, students create a new logically connected product, where it is important to formulate their thoughts about the information presented by the authors. At this stage, it is important to take into account the task assigned to students to write an essay and to be able to use the information collected during the search process to create a high-quality product.

One of the promising areas of improving the effectiveness of the formation of socio-cultural competence of future bachelors of German is an integrative approach to developing training materials, which is the basis of interdisciplinary integration. Following the development of the theory and practice of the integrative approach, scientists and practitioners are introducing a system of integrative subject-based learning, outlining the principles of interdisciplinary integration, namely:

- orientation of training to the current requirements of social development;
- formation of a comprehensive system of knowledge, a unified picture of the world, and a scientific worldview;
- combining integrative and differentiated approaches to learning;
- continuity of education and its access to the level of professional education.

Currently, interdisciplinary integration is understood as the mutual penetration of the content of various academic disciplines and the creation of a single educational socio-cultural environment through using innovative pedagogical methods, tools and organizational forms of education. They form the basis of interactive technologies and ensure the formation of a high level of socio-cultural competence of future German bachelors. The holistic, integrative nature of forming the socio-cultural competence of future bachelors of German on the basis of interdisciplinary integration is also determined by the technological approach to mastering academic disciplines. This involves determining the expected learning outcomes determined by its goals and is based on the substantiation of the content of learning, the choice of a pedagogically relevant structure (sequence) of learning the content, means of achievement, control of time and level of students' mastery of the relevant phenomenon under consideration. The selected scientific

approaches in the context of the study are implemented in a comprehensive manner, complemented and constitute the methodological basis of scientific research.

5. Discussion

The intensification of international relations in the context of integration and globalization has increased the general interest in learning foreign languages, including German, as a means of international communication (Onishchuk et al., 2020). It is widely acknowledged by leading scholars that high-quality language preparation goes beyond basic vocabulary and grammar skills and extends to understanding the cultural uniqueness, traditions, customs, creative heritage, and mentality of native speakers (Bahlai et al., 2019; Dvorianchykova et al., 2022; Mykytenko et al., 2022). The relevance of integrating linguistic and socio-cultural competence lies in the need to develop foreign intercultural communicative competence, which is a practical goal of foreign language teaching and learning for students in philology and pedagogical specialties (Karpiuk, 2020). It is important to establish a correlation between foreign language communicative competence and foreign language intercultural communicative competence. Foreign language communicative competence, encompassing linguistic and speech competencies, has long been recognized as a goal in language education, supported by the communicative approach. However, in order to fully engage in intercultural communication, learners need to develop additional competencies beyond language skills. This includes educational and strategic competence, as well as linguistic and sociocultural competence.

6. Conclusion

The research conducted in this area is not a final solution to the problem of developing students' language competence when learning German as a foreign language at a university. However, in our opinion, further research can be aimed at selecting and structuring the content of sociocultural competence, as well as at developing teaching methods and pedagogical tools necessary for students to master it while learning German in a university context. This may contribute to further improvement of the process of learning a foreign language at HEIs and the development of student's language competence.

Thus, informative reading contributes to the improvement of communicative competence. It allows specialists to meet their professional informative needs and acquire knowledge independently with the help of a foreign language, thus contributing to the formation of integral professional and personal socio-cultural and linguistic competence in the future. Therefore, developing skills in informative reading is important for both improving communicative competence and meeting the professional needs of specialists. It can help individuals acquire knowledge independently in a foreign language, leading to the formation of well-rounded sociocultural and linguistic competence.

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