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Innovative Activity in the Formation of Cross-Cultural Communication and Self-Study Skills in the Pedagogical Higher Educational Establishment

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Abstract

The field of education in Russia is a priority. It is necessary for modern education to meet the challenges of advancing development of society. A specialist who received Bachelor's or Master's degree or a post-graduate should possess professional skills in foreign languages and cross-cultural communication. The development of production and non-production spheres depends on it as well as the general education of our younger generation in particular. Development of cross-cultural communication to a great extent enables the formation of morality, professional development of students at the university. The article analyzes the possibilities of innovative activity in the conditions of the educational environment of pedagogical higher educational establishment for the formation of cross-cultural communication, taking into account the technological and creative approach. The components of the educational environment of pedagogical higher educational establishment are considered as stages: class work, self-cognitive activity in line with the self-education, student's scientific and research work, practice, extracurricular vocational leisure activity, - in terms of the inclusion of students into cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: Cross-cultural communication, Innovative activity, Students scientific and research work, Self-study skills, Educational environment, Project work.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Modern society feels an urgent need for high-class specialists in all spheres of human life and activity. Higher education must meet the challenges of advanced development. According to Russian President Vladimir Putin (2015), "in the next decade we can set a goal to a new level and another scale – to make the Russian school one of the best in the world. I am convinced that this task can and must unite all the political forces, all levels of government, the country's citizens; this task meets the needs of society, and national development challenges. It is important to define the most effective, efficient tools for the realization of our plans together".

Knowledge of a foreign language is characteristic for high-quality professional activity of a competent professional. The study of peoples' languages and cultures brings us to comparative and deep study to achieve successful cross-cultural communication. A different world of language and cultural communication are learned through the national culture. The expansion of international and cross-cultural contacts, strengthening of integration processes of modern Russia has specific requirements for higher education system. The Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" attention is paid to "the creation of favorable conditions for integration of the educational system of the Russian Federation to the education systems of other countries on an equal and mutually beneficial basis" (Federal Law on Education, 2012). It is important to overcome the existing contradictions, to provide mutual understanding of communication participants belonging to different national cultures, which makes the basis of cross-cultural communication. The need for education through life is vital and is based on the dominant focus of communication study as a particular area, on to the formation of communicative culture as a component of human development, and especially on the communicative competence of a specialist. In the conditions of global informatization there is a trend to cultural integration, especially in multi-ethnic countries. The result of the process of cultural integration in Russia is cross-cultural communication. Traditionally in the modern national education system the dialogue of cultures is actively used, as well as the formation of students' ideas about other peoples, fostering tolerance and readiness for constructive and mutually beneficial cross-cultural communication. Various forms of communication are implemented in the Russian system of higher education. New means of communication increase the need and possibility of mediated communication in a foreign language. This requires an appropriate level of linguistic and socio-cultural training. However, a qualitative change in the needs of society requires major changes in higher education, which should prepare competitive specialists possessing cross-cultural communication skills and using modern communication technologies. Today, there are contradictions between the need to establish international links in the information space and

the actual level of specialists training in communication activities; between the need of society and country in competent specialists and the insufficient development of the theory and technology of student's preparation to cross-cultural communication. It is necessary to overcome the contradictions in the training of future specialists. This is possible in the conditions of innovative activity of a higher educational establishment, which is aimed at the integration of educational process, at the shift of educational process to the personality-oriented model. In this case, we can pay attention to person's creative self-realization in a multicultural space.

2. DISCUSSION

The above mentioned trends are implemented in a content aspect of our research. We are interested in the possibilities of innovative activity in the training of future specialists in cross-cultural communication in the educational environment of pedagogical higher educational establishment. According to N.I. Pigulevskaya, "the differences between traditional and innovative systems of education are, above all, in the target setting, which is realized by means of fundamentally different educational technologies" (Pigulevskaya, 2008). Innovative activity is aimed at the intensive reproduction of results of intellectual activity, including them into professional work in order to create new products of this activity, for example, services or technologies. It is manifested in relations with socio-cultural values, norms of behavior and communication and with the language culture in particular. In the definition of the components of innovation activities we rely on the model developed by V.A. Slastenin and L.S. Podymova (Slastenin, & Podymova, 1997: 97), singling out the technological and creative components as crucial for our work with the students.

The technological component in the formation of cross-cultural communication seems possible to be implemented using the technological culture elements. This enables to organize professional educational environment in a higher educational establishment. Under these conditions the activity of a future professional is determined by the ability to influence the consciousness to specify the values imparted in holistic pedagogical process. The process of forming of cross-cultural skills requires comprehensive account of individual features of future specialists, the change of traditional style to innovative activity. The teacher has the opportunity to apply professionally oriented technologies while forming cross-cultural skills, thus designing the system, which involves the incorporation of elements of cross-cultural communication not only into linguistic, but also into pedagogical subjects as well as into practice.

Studying the innovative activity in the formation of students' cross-cultural skills we consider "the following steps: diagnosis, prognosis, projecting, planning" (Rubtsova, 2008: 152). Exploring the readiness of students to cross-cultural communication (CCC), we carried out a diagnosis and identified several groups of students.

1. Students with high level of CCC are distinguished by a high degree of awareness in the field of cross-cultural communication, the ability to make contacts with the representatives of other cultures and foreign-speaking interlocutors, high communicative self-control, a high degree of emotional etiquette, of non-verbal means of communication through which they broadcast their own disposition to the communication partner, thus, demonstrating a high degree of emotional, etiquette and speech culture. Such students are also characterized by the ability to manage emotional state in the process of communication, by the assertiveness in dealing with other cultures representatives.

2. Students with average level of CCC are distinguished by partly formed intercultural skills, by partial level of awareness in the field of CCC. Such students are also characterized by the inability to implement sign systems of information process in interaction (communication) situation: optical kinetic, para- and extralinguistic; inability to control their emotional state in cross-cultural interaction (communication). Students with this level of CCC have the average communicative self-control.

3. Students with low level of CCC experience similar difficulties in communication, as the students with average level of CCC, but are more straightforward in perception and evaluation of a foreign-speaking interlocutor; they show negative motivation in learning the basics of etiquette culture, the lack of preparedness and capacity for dialogue of cultures, the lack of emotional and etiquette culture of interaction, low self-communicative control (Papernaya, 2003: 64).

In the course of innovative activity we applied prognosis as educational goal-setting: from the personality of a future specialist to the appropriate target setting. Pedagogical prognosis process is necessary for obtaining information on forming the student's cross-cultural communication skills, relying on science-based regulations, technological approaches and methods (modeling, hypotheses, mental experiment). Considering the external conditions and the logic of the process of forming cross-cultural communication, we carry out a search prognosis, thus, we define the future state of the object – the level of development of cross-cultural communication skills of a future specialist. In our research we implemented the prognosis of a standard nature, namely we examined the best ways and conditions to determine the level of forming of cross-cultural communication skills.

During the projecting stage for achieving the goal of the formation of cross-cultural communication skills it is necessary to carry out high-quality work on such components of the educational environment of pedagogical university as: class work, self-cognitive activity in line with the self-education, student's scientific and research work, practice, extracurricular vocational leisure activity.

Class work is fundamental for the formation of cross-cultural communication. In this regard, great opportunities are provided with project work, which is an efficient innovative technology that promotes language proficiency, the inner student's motivation, level of independence. The value of the project method consists in the facts that the knowledge acquired reaches the level of practical actions, affecting the emotional sphere of students and creating conditions for competition. The project work is enhanced with individual and collective responsibility for fulfilling the task. The project becomes a personally significant task, which increases the students' motivation to work.

The starting point becomes the teacher's task to find online information of a professional nature. Whereas the teacher, on the one hand, can specify the concrete websites, where the required information is available, and, on the other hand, he may not do so, so that students develop the skills of independent search.

Project work, regardless whether it is group or individual, enables to activate not only the intellectual skills (search key words and information in foreign language text), but also the communicative skills (the ability to understand the speaker, defend their point of view and clearly state their thoughts). As a result, the students making presentations of their project demonstrate completely different texts on the topic.

Taking into consideration the efficiency of project method in higher education, the teachers of the department of foreign languages and teaching methods of Armavir State Pedagogical University developed a teaching complex "English for special purposes. Education" for students who study to get the bachelor's degree in Education.

The book consists of 9 units. Each unit includes professionally oriented texts representing coherent product of speech which are semantically complete and well-structured, the system of exercises to work with them, as well as minimal thesaurus, compiled on the basis of the texts.

The basic content of the texts reveals the main aspects of the topic, stated in the unit. While selecting the texts their informative, educational value and relevance of the subject were taken into account, which makes it possible to increase bachelors' educational and professional level. They are not only informative, but also aimed at bridging the gap between the

intellectual development of students and their language competence, the texts have educational significance, contribute to the formation of practical skills in all the main types of speech activities. We started from the fact that the text material which is connected with common theme and presented in logical sequence will provide a solid basis, logic support in learning English.

The texts for teaching various reading types (Intensive reading, Extensive reading, Skimming, Scanning) are accompanied by questions that are to develop speaking skills, the ability to ask questions and give complete answers to them engaging background knowledge of the discussed issue. The texts can be used by students as a guide for to search information to make projects relating to the unit on the Internet and in other sources.

After-reading tasks are as follows: comprehension questions, completion tasks, expansion tasks, gap-filling, matching, true-false statements, presentation, finding differences/similarities, listing, multiple choice, making a plan, paragraphing, table filling. Many exercises are creative and contribute to activation of mental activity, to development of students' imagination and memory, as well as to a deeper assimilation of the material, as the tasks constantly stimulate students' interest in learning English. Such exercises include role play, project work, research tasks. Most of these exercises involve pair and group work. For example, the teaching complex contains the following tasks:

- *Using websites, newspapers or media site, collect as much information as possible about any university in your country. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation on the results of your research.*
- *Gather information about any outstanding Russian or foreign educator (tutor) and his contribution to Pedagogy. Describe his famous works. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation on the results of your research.*
- *Organize a discussion which will touch upon the following questions:*
- *Is college and university very expensive in your country?*
- *Which college/university degrees are most common?*
- *What opportunities are there for college graduates?*
- *Is it difficult for young people to find a job? (Papernaya & Rubtsov, 2015: 122).*

During class work on the formation of cross-cultural communication we also implemented monitoring, online testing, variety of new information (computer) technologies, tutor support,

individual learning trajectories, portfolio benchmarking, case-technology, modular technology, the technology of distance learning and others.

For example, cross-cultural communication monitoring has revealed the dynamics the level of formation of cross-cultural communication in the students' groups. It demonstrated the openness of the educational process in pedagogical higher educational institution. All participants of the holistic process of professional training of future specialists were involved. The activity was shown not only by lecturers and students of higher educational establishment but also school and college teachers, high school students. Internal and external audit was implemented, thus, employers participated in the state final certification. The technological approach to educational activities was used, in which the monitoring as a diagnostic tool of foreign language competence was included into set of learning cycles as a major element. The monitoring promoted the revealing of grounds for harmonious adjustment activities of students. The professional orientation of the educational process within the established standard for all educational levels and in all subjects of the educational cycle is reflected in the content of academic and test materials, in teaching complexes of subjects realized by the staff of department of foreign languages and teaching methods. The high level of facilities of the department, the widespread use of technical training in the classroom, involvement of all students into interactive business communication (university websites, department website, staff websites, the use of official organizations websites, social networks enabled to provide constant feedback, search and timely inclusion of the main and extra materials in the educational process and self-education (Papernaya et al., 2015: 73).

The necessity for creating a system of self-educational activity led to the need to update the self-education systems in educational institutions (Galustov, 2013: 18). Specially equipped media university laboratories were actively used for independent cognitive activity of students in the development of cross-cultural communication. The main content of self-independent work using information technologies in teaching a foreign language is to fulfill a variety of tasks connected with the search of information on the Internet.

For self-study reports and presentations on cross-cultural communication in a foreign language, students learn to use the materials of specialized websites, which contain feature articles and conduct the discussion of topical issues of modern science. They also learned to use modern search engines, to choose keywords for optimal search results.

One of the types of tasks performed by the students was individual reading of articles on cross-cultural communication. The primary objective of this type of educational activity is to teach students to read the texts on their specialty, to understand them and to extract profession-related information. Individual reading is extensive reading, which requires the

ability to read independently a large amount of text at high speed, while focusing on the content. To perform tasks on individual students' reading it is necessary to select the required volume of texts on their specialty. These must be authentic scientific articles published in the last decade. It is quite difficult to find these articles in printed form, but today there is a great source of information – the Internet, where one can find the latest scientific publications on any specialty. All the leading scientific journals have online versions, where one can come across with articles and reviews posted. Students, however, should possess proficiency in information search skills in the global network, the ability to select keywords, to evaluate carefully the results of the search, which we taught the students specifically, counseling and directing self-independent work.

The use of electronic sources for self-study homework on a foreign language and cross-cultural communication is a necessary requirement, since in today's world, an expert in any field of knowledge can not do without reference to Internet resources. The creative approach to foreign language information processing manifested in the use of a personal computer.

The results of scientific research and academic research assignments were presented by the students in the form of research papers on topics related to cross-cultural communication and publications. Joint creative innovative activity of teachers and students is clearly visible in the joint research projects, grants, active inclusion of students in master classes, “university Saturdays”, competitions for schoolchildren and students of vocational schools. At the same time we consider the prospects for further creative joint activities on the formation of cross-cultural communication. Students from abroad successfully study at our university. It is becoming a tradition for our students to visit the UK, the USA, China and other countries. This gives the students new possibilities in the development of cross-cultural communication, an opportunity to get acquainted with a foreign language culture while some of them do practical training abroad.

In addition, a variety of practical training enables to continue the process of formation of cross-cultural communication. Students of pedagogy-oriented courses work in general education organizations, including children's health organizations and institutions of supplementary education. In these circumstances, an exceptional prospect for innovative creative activity of future specialists is presented. The students not only gave lessons related to cross-cultural communication but also combined problems of cross-cultural communication with the problem of environment protection extracurricular activities. For example, in one of the schools a holiday dedicated to Earth Day was organized in which schoolchildren of 8-11 forms took part. We have defined the purpose of the holiday:

- increasing students' interest in learning English;

- enriching students' vocabulary on the theme "Ecology";
- disclosing children's creative abilities;
- forming ecological outlook;
- developing students' responsibility for nature.

This festival is unique in the way that it synthesizes the interdisciplinary connections between the English language, geography and biology, gives the prerequisites not only to improve their English language skills, but also to form the emotionally-valuable relation to the nature and its riches.

The anchormen spoke about the event after which the Earth Day began to be celebrated. The song "Save the Tiger" was performed in English very emotionally. At the festival the participants told about the Earth's past in English and in Russian. Poems about the beauty of the Earth, the nature of Balaam and Krasnodar territory were recited. The final poem «I meant to do my work today» (I thought to do all things) was focused on the ability to notice and admire the wonderful nature (Ibragimova, 2015: 17). Such holidays enable to form a positive attitude towards nature, the desire to take care of it, to join the general cultural process for the preservation of Earth resources.

The activities undertaken by students had a positive impact on their culture, helped broaden their outlook and express their abilities. Due to the fact that these forms of work were performed in English, pupils' knowledge improved and their vocabulary was enriched. In the future, they can take part in competitions in the English language. The assistance of the city's schools was significant for the formation of students' cross-cultural communication. Thus, for example, in summer Russian-British camp at school №7 was organized which was visited by students and teachers from the UK. Joint companionship, fun activities contributed to the integration of students from both countries in the process of formation of cross-cultural communication and mutual understanding.

The opportunity for professional organization of leisure activities for students was crucial for formation of cross-cultural communication. Students from abroad present national holidays and traditions in their scenic activities in which the students from Turkmenistan are especially active demonstrating excellent costumes and dances. Students from Uzbekistan, Armenia, China and other countries are eager to share with Russian students the cultural traditions of their countries. Future specialists are involved into polylogue of different cultures, participate not only in national celebrations but also in festivals of other countries and professional education will enable the students to work creatively.

Technology planning phase is associated both with tradition and innovation processes in the development of students' cross-cultural communication. At this stage long-term development plans of the university, curricula, training programs and facilities, educational work plans of faculties and departments, tutors' plans are drawn up and implemented and the activities in different directions, including the formation of cross-cultural communication of the future specialists are mandatory. The general requirements for the plans compilation are fulfilled with the creative approach.

Thus, innovative activity on the formation of cross-cultural communication in the educational environment of pedagogical university can successfully be carried out in the implementation of technological and creative approach on the part of all participants of the educational process. A variety of forms of work with students, the technology of their training enables the development of cross-cultural communication on a fairly successful scale.

3. CONCLUSION

We consider innovative activity in the formation of cross-cultural communication on the following criteria: the scale of the reforming the university or its structural units. Our educational institution was given university status, the foreign students were enrolled. Masters and postgraduate courses, not only in educational, but also in linguistic programs are organized. An important criterion is the degree of the depth of the reforming carried out, for example, the creation of complex "vocational school-higher education establishment", work is underway to create a complex "school-higher education establishment". New textbooks, educational programs, multimedia textbooks are introduced. The widespread introduction of the up-to-date technologies into holistic pedagogical process of the higher education establishment is implemented, which allows to establishing cultural cooperation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors confirm that the data do not contain any conflict of interest.

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