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KEY THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN MODERN WESTERN PEDAGOGY

The article gives a broad outline of a variety of approaches to defining intercultural competence in modern Western pedagogy. The author highlights the issue of developing philology students' intercultural competence as an important factor in training future specialists in the globalizing polycultural world as well as determines the role of integration of language and culture, thus emphasizing its impact on intercultural competence.

Key words: communication, competence, culture, intercultural competence, globalization.

В статье освещена концепция межкультурной компетенции в современной западной педагогике. Автор рассматривает проблему развития межкультурной компетенции студентов-филологов как важного фактора подготовки будущих специалистов в условиях поликультурности мира и определяет роль интеграции языка и культуры и ее влияние на межкультурную компетенцию.

Ключевые слова: коммуникация, компетенция, культура, межкультурная компетенция, глобализация.

Institutions of higher education in Ukraine face many challenges at the beginning of the twenty-first century including the tasks of remaining intellectually and culturally viable in a rapidly changing world, preparing students to vie competitively in the global marketplace, and staying abreast of the electronic deluge of information and globalized knowledge. The internationalization of higher education has become one possible response to such challenges. Yet the specification of anticipated outcomes of internationalization is often general and vague, with goals stated broadly that the institution will become internationalized or that a goal is to graduate cross-culturally competent students or global citizens without giving further meaning to these phrases. This research seeks to give a broad outline of such a complex phenomenon as intercultural competence and at a minimum to contribute to a general discussion around importance for higher educational establishments to have qualified specialists who are capable to interact freely with those from other cultures, thus taking "a closer look at learning goals, course content, pedagogy, campus life, enrollment pattern, and institutional policies and practices to get a more complete picture of their success" [4, p.9].

There is little doubt that the most established definitions of intercultural communication come from works by American and European scholars (Havelock, Hasler, Flew, McIntyre, Schofield, Toby, Lustig, Koester and others) and a variety of well-known concepts and models of the competence in question (intercultural learning, training and development, etc.) are Western theoretical constructs (Byram, Bowden, Marton, Bloom, Hastings, Madaus, Fantini, Hannerz and others). Given the fact that a starting point of debates on intercultural competence, its origin and nature is mostly reflected in theories and research results of Anglo-Saxon, mainly U.S. American and European orientation, this study has been undertaken to address one of the most essential issue – defining the notion of intercultural competence, its role in teaching foreign languages and determining its components or factors as key elements of specialists' education by highlighting a Western perspective only.

Intercultural competence refers to the real world in which we live and act, the one created by us and recreated daily. For the given purpose of the article it is reasonable to employ the "expanded" idea of culture that became prevalent in the 1970s and according to which culture must be understood within the overall context of human interaction. Scholars and writers have frequently conceived of culture either as an iceberg or as an onion [4, p. 71]. What both metaphors convey is that culture consists of both a visible and experienceable part and invisible, but nevertheless also an essential part. Like an onion culture may include an outer layer of what people primarily associate with culture: the visible reality of behavior, clothes, food, language, housing, etc. (explicit culture) as well as hidden layers containing the norms and values a society holds (normative layer) and deeper layers of basic assumption and world views (implicit culture). Since Ulf Hannerz and others formulated the ideas of culture as flux and the idea that cultures are open, dynamic and constantly changing entities or practices, many leading figures in social theory and cultural studies in the 1990s increasingly relinquished the viewpoint that culture can be understood as a closed and static, island-like entity [7, p.13]. In addition to it, internationalization and globalization processes have shown that locality, group and culture exist as one unit.

The question of what exactly intercultural competence is has been debated by experts for decades. In its broadest sense, it can be defined following Fantini as "a complex of abilities needed to perform *effectively* and *appropriately* when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" [9, p. 12]. Another broad definition determines intercultural competence as the ability to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations; it is supported by specific attitudes and affective features, intercultural knowledge, skills and reflection [6, p. 68]. Both definitions are abstract and general covering all fields of action in professional praxis (in international management, intercultural counseling or intercultural education in school and college, for example) and more private contexts. In particular, they correspond with the prevalent versions of intercultural competence in western research which refer to

intercultural competence as consisting of a combination of affective, behavioural and cognitive factors. Both of these broad definitions should serve as a useful basis for the following article as well as a pragmatic starting point for further theoretical analyses.

Throughout the literature, researchers and theoreticians use a myriad of terminology to discuss and describe intercultural competence including global competence, global citizenship, global literacy, global citizenship, cultural competence, cross-cultural competence, cross-cultural effectiveness, cross-cultural adjustment, international competence, intercultural effectiveness, intercultural sensitivity, cross-cultural adaptation, multicultural competence, trans-cultural competence, to name a few. From Kim's and Ruben's perspective the use of "intercultural" is preferable because "the term is not bounded by any specific cultural attributes" [10, P. 301]. Despite the fact that each alternative implies additional nuances one common feature in this variety of terms is obvious and it is related to the ability to step beyond one's own culture and function with other individuals from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Bowden and Marton have identified four possible approaches to competence: behaviourist (basic performance), additive (performance plus knowledge which is usually assessed separately from performance), integrative (in which performance and knowledge are integrated) and holistic (which involves holistic competence including the person's self-perception and views in the integrated performance and knowledge) [3, p.105-106]. Both researchers carefully consider competence in relation to one's work and outline a historical perspective that dates back to the 1960s and includes an initial focus on behavioural objectives exclusively within the workplace [1;2]. They state that "the basic principles and intentions of competency-based education have remained essentially unchanged since the 1960s" with a "focus on outcomes, greater workplace relevance, outcomes as observable competencies, assessments as judgments of competence, improved skills recognition" [3, p. 99]. According to Bowden and Marton,

competence includes the element of performance regardless of the approach used to view it.

There have been other attempts to determine the content of the term "competence". Velde and Svensson describe competence as "relational, interpretative, holistic, and contextual" emphasizing two perceptual modes of competence: "Competence in the first sense refers to sets of independent, observable units of behaviour in the workplace. Competence in the second sense refers to the capabilities of seeing and handling novel situations in powerful ways, capabilities that frequently integrate disciplinary and professional knowledge" [15, P. 327-114]. The latter definition was supported by Bowden and Marton who advocate the integration of "disciplinary and professional knowledge frameworks," stressing the importance of practical application of outcomes in the workplace and the need for students to experience "variation precisely because you cannot predict in advance what they will have to deal with as professionals" [3, p. 29]. Variation, defined as developing new ways of seeing situations and phenomena, involves discernment and experiencing variation in the present.

Some communication scholars, in particular Lustig and Koester, describe competence as a characteristic of the association between individuals, not an individual attribute. Their definition concurs with other scholars who stress the contextual element of competence and consider that competence is dependent on relationships and situations being ultimately a "social judgment that people make about others" [11, p. 64-65]. Lustig and Koester use the term "intercultural competence" to identify its three key elements: interpersonal and situational context, the degree of appropriateness and effectiveness of the interaction, and sufficient knowledge, motivations, and actions. Specifically, they emphasize that competence is predetermined by "the relationships and situations within which the communication occurs and that judgments of intercultural competence also depend on cultural expectations about the permitted behaviors that characterize the settings or situations within which people communicate [11, p. 65].

According to Byram's model intercultural competence is the key component including interdependent factors: attitudes and knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of interacting and discovering and critical cultural awareness. It should be noted that within the framework of his theory knowledge needed for interaction fall into two groups: the first one that comprises knowledge about social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country and the second one which refers to knowledge that is a precondition for successful interaction but it is not required automatically, being declarative one of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.

In Byram's opinion, skills are an inseparable part of intercultural competence too and are subdivided into the skills of interpreting and relating. The skills of interpreting form the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own. The intercultural speaker should be able to identify ethnocentric perspectives and pre-suppositions of documents and thus be able to mediate between conflicting interpretations. The relating category consists of the skills of discovery and interaction, which constitute the ability to acquire new knowledge of the culture and cultural practices [4, p. 52]. However, Pusch has identified three general skills leading to intercultural effectiveness: the ability to manage psychological stress, the ability to communicate effectively, and the ability to establish interpersonal relationships [13, P.207].

Critical cultural awareness is defined by Byram as an ability to evaluate critically on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries [4, p. 53]. Byram's model is a systemic approach aiming at a comprehensive description of what intercultural competence involves in order to facilitate its assessment. In the context of the definition of intercultural competence as the ability to communicate and interact with people of different cultures using a foreign language the researcher does not view native speakers as ideal for foreign language learners. Instead, he considers intercultural speakers who have intercultural communication capabilities to be ideal.

The notion of intercultural competence is very important for ensuring the capabilities of individuals to deal with growing heterogeneity in a globalized word as it enables the intercultural speaker to act in different kinds of interaction: interaction in a foreign language with a native speaker, in a foreign language which serves as a lingua franca and with a foreigner in his or her own language. In their definition of intercultural competence Chen and Starosta stress that cross-culturally competent persons are those who can interact effectively and appropriately with people who have multilevel cultural identities [5, P.354] and participate in a debate about whether competence refers to "performance" or "knowledge" or whether it is an "inherent ability (trait)" or a "learned ability (state) [5, P.357]

Other scholars have termed competence as "the possession of the abilities required to manage a particular problem in a particular context" with the development of competence demonstrated by the range of contexts (and content areas within those contexts) in which the person works and the attributes and abilities needed in each of these contexts [8, p. 39-40] whereas Spitzberg and Cupach suggest that "fundamental competence" is "an individual's ability to adapt effectively to the surrounding environment over time to achieve goals" [14, P. 565]

Most researchers share Fantini's point of view in terms of intercultural competence and its four components which include: (a) awareness of one's own cultural worldview, (b) attitude towards cultural differences, (c) knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and (d) cross-cultural skills [10]. Nevertheless, Paige identifies the fifth constituent and uses the term "intercultural effectiveness" noting that the study of effectiveness has long been considered a major issue in the intercultural communication field. He concludes that intercultural effectiveness is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by six factors:

1) knowledge of target culture;

2) one's personal qualities (i.e., flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, sense of humor,

openness);

3) behavioral skills (i.e., communicative competence);

4) self-awareness (i.e., one's values and beliefs);

5) technical skills (i.e., ability to accomplish tasks);

6) situational factors (including clarity of expectations, psychological pressures, etc.) [12, P.257].

These definitions have cited some of the same general components of intercultural competence such as empathy, flexibility, cross-cultural awareness, and managing stress, while some definitions of intercultural competence specifically note other elements such as technical skills, foreign language proficiency, and situational factors. Other scholars have written that intercultural competence does not comprise individual traits but is rather the characteristic of the association between individuals and that no prescriptive set of characteristics guarantees competence in all intercultural situations

Intercultural competence is neither a static state nor the direct result of one discrete learning experience. Nor is intercultural competence acquired necessarily by visiting a foreign country or ad hoc through further education and training. If the assumption is correct that culture is constantly in flux, then individuals must learn and master the ability to deal with ongoing processes. The development of intercultural competence is thus complex and multidimensional and, depending on the intercultural situation, can take on a variety of forms.

The multidimensional and process-oriented nature of the development of intercultural competence can hardly be appended as a supplementary learning module to existing college curricula. Instead, it is necessary to examine to what extent intercultural competence as an educational goal can be established in curricula as they are currently structured. Since the development of intercultural competence cannot be offered by one discipline alone and it demands much more than what language learning or traditional cultural studies can supply, intercultural competence can and must be integrated into numerous aspects of conventional school and university education as well as its individual sub-competences must be developed through diverse forms of learning and at different levels.

Classical educational institutions can offer a continuity and a setting not only for conventional classroom learning but also for a broad range of other pedagogically guided learning experiences in which students can acquire and develop intercultural sub-competences, in particular those in the behavioral and affective areas which generally are acquired most effectively over longer periods of time and before reaching adulthood. Only when learners are offered diverse opportunities for appropriate intercultural interaction – be it through a change in their learning environment, interaction with people who hold different values, travel abroad, internships or other experimental learning measures – is it possible for intercultural competence in all its aspects to develop and be developed. The establishment of such innovative educational programs offers a wide field of potential activity.

In sum, this article explores a variety of approaches to intercultural competence and the best ways to define it. It is hoped that the study will serve as a springboard for further research not only on intercultural competence but also in assessing the specific impact of internationalization strategies on the development of students' intercultural competence in preparing them for the global workforce. Not only it is important for students to learn about other cultures but it is also essential to produce competent citizens to teach others about cultural views. With the current political situation around the world it is vital to recognize what one another has to offer politically, socially and culturally in the form of collaborative interaction.

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