INTEGRATING MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY
INTO TEACHING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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ИНТЕГРИРОВАНИЕ МУЛЬТИМЕДИЙНЫХ ТЕХНОЛОГИЙ
В ПРОЦЕСС ОБУЧЕНИЯ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ

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Abstract. It is widely known that enhancement of the system of teaching foreign languages can be achieved by introducing progressive teaching methods as well as using modern teaching and information–communication technologies thus enabling them to access the achievements of the world civilization and globally available information resources, ensuring international collaboration and communication. Nowadays, culture is playing an important role in foreign language teaching and learning, therefore, a lot of researches have been done in this field in recent years. It has been recognized that a language is used as the main medium through which culture is expressed. It is believed that students are aware of language rules but are not always capable enough to use the language sufficiently as they do not have a sound knowledge of the target culture. Nevertheless, "pure information" is insight; while the development of people's cultural understanding leads them to better critical thinking. There are ample methodologies for developing learners' intercultural competence. The present study also seeks the ways of developing a model of blended learning course on intercultural communication.

Аннотация. Широко известно, что совершенствование системы обучения иностранным языкам может быть достигнуто путем внедрения прогрессивных методов обучения, а также с использованием современных технологий обучения и информационно-коммуникационных технологий, что позволяет им получить доступ к достижениям мировой цивилизации и глобально доступным информационным ресурсам, обеспечивая международное сотрудничество и общение. В настоящее время культура заняла важное место в преподавании и изучении иностранных языков, и в последние годы было сделано много исследований в этой области. Было признано, что язык используется в качестве основного средства выражения культуры. Считается, что студенты знают правила языка, но не всегда могут использовать язык в достаточной степени, так как они не полностью осведомлены о целевой культуре. Тем не менее, «чистая информация» полезна, но не помогает учащимся понять; в то время как развитие культурного сознания людей приводит их к лучшему критическому мышлению. Существует множество методик развития межкультурной компетенции учащихся. Таким образом, настоящее исследование направлено на разработку модели смешанного учебного курса по межкультурной коммуникации.

The phrases "intercultural communication" or "cross-cultural communication" have been widely used in many different disciplines since the 1950s, mostly as synonyms. The globalization process and the movement towards European cooperation have heightened the interest in the area and, as a result, intercultural communication has become an academic field of study. This independence seems to be confirmed by the extensive number of scholars, publications, conferences, dissertations, etc. that are devoted to intercultural communication research. The dispute arises when we have to quote its theories or methods, because this field has drawn on many other disciplines. However, these other perspectives are vital to a comprehensive analysis of intercultural communication. Thus, intercultural communication is a field of interdisciplinary research, accommodating different subject areas: anthropology, social psychology, sociology, communication studies and linguistics [1; 2, p. 9–12].

The term intercultural communication is defined as situated communication between the representatives of different linguistic and cultural origins. The following statement is derived from the fundamental definitions: communication is the active relationship between people through language, and intercultural means that this communicative relationship is between people of different cultural backgrounds where culture is the structured demonstration of human behavior in social life in frames of national or local context, for instance, political, linguistic, economic, institutional and professional [3, p. 39–49]. Intercultural communication is identified as both a concept and a competence. Intercultural competence is the dynamic possession by individuals of qualities which lead to effective intercultural communication. It can be defined in terms of three primary attributes: knowledge, skills and attitudes.

It is becoming increasingly frequent for language teachers to incorporate new teaching and learning approaches into their classroom practice, including the use of computer technology. Commonly known as Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) or sometimes called ILT (Information and Learning Technology), these technologies have been greatly influential in creating new opportunities for innovative teaching approaches, especially in language teaching. Indeed, many teachers are fast becoming aware of the potential for "interactive", language-in-use projects which have ITC as a key element of the teaching process. Innovative uses of Internet and other ICT tools can easily provide opportunities for collaborative language projects which focus on "using the language to learn the language" [4, p. 217]. Perhaps even more importantly, the new practices developing from the integration of Internet use in EFL or ESL classrooms is ushering in unexpected changes in language teaching objectives.

One such change is the need for a new understanding of communicative competence which includes interculturality. International collaborative projects which use Internet as the tool for communication are providing much wider opportunities for students to contact and communicate with other individuals outside of their own country. This entails learning communicative skills which may not have been the focus of language classes before the integration of such projects. For instance, many times the goals of language lessons deal with contexts within local arenas such as restaurants, offices or schools, however, international collaborative projects will necessarily require other types of communicative skills: intercultural communicative skills.

It may seem to be self-evident that an internationally collaborative ICT project will incorporate intercultural knowledge, awareness and communication skills as goals to be achieved during the project. However, it could be argued that there is a difference between intercultural knowledge (knowledge and understanding of other cultures) and intercultural communicative skills. Many Internet projects are designed for the exchange of different types of knowledge about the students' respective cultures. This allows for an increased understanding of the other culture; however, this is not necessarily the same as developing intercultural skills [5]. It is up to the teacher who is designing the task to decide if the development of intercultural communicative skills is an aim of the project and then to incorporate steps which will help develop such skills.

Virtual learning environments provide new and unique ways in which to convey cultural knowledge and develop intercultural communication skills. High-fidelity graphics, sound, and animation make it possible for them to simulate many tangible aspects of a specific culture, such as buildings, streets, art, dress, speech, gestures, and more. This enables the provision of more authentic computer-based practice environments than may otherwise be feasible using traditional live role-play and media-based approaches.

Within this study we conduct survey among the fourth-year students of World Languages University in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, within the Intercultural communication (IC) course. Needs analysis questionnaire (See Appendix 1) was conducted among students to reveal their desire of learning material and methods used by teachers.

Data indicates that participants have different views on useful content of the course. 63.8% choose verbal and nonverbal communication; 51.2% choose culture and communication; 49.5% choose interpersonal communication; 47.19% choose improving intercultural communicative competence; 38.9% choose social organization; 38.6% choose value and belief; 22.7% chose intercultural awareness and 11.3% choose cultural identity.

Data indicates that 26.26% students regard theories as the most difficult because they are theoretical and abstract, thus hard to understand; 19.1% think the differences between Eastern and Western culture is the most difficult; 16.31% think the course is not easy to learn due to the lack of practice in reality; 9.28% think the difficulty is caused by learners' personal knowledge and language efficiency.

These finding have some implications for teachers in what material to choose according students, and what methods to use.

Two questions were set to find out the commonly used teaching approaches in the course and students' perceptions of effective approaches. Five items were included to find out the answers. These items are: lecture, role play, group discussion, case analysis, and field work.

Findings indicate that there is a distance between the commonly used approaches and students' perception of effective approaches (Table). For example, 93.7% respondents identify lectures as commonly used method, while only 50.6% regard it as an effective approach. Role play and field work are less used but perceived effective by the students.

Table.

APPROACHES USED AND APPROACHES PERCEIVED EFFECTIVE

Item	Approaches used	Approaches perceived effective
Lectures	93.7%	49.10%
Role play	13%	38%
Group discussion	54.6%	53.2%
Case analysis	51.5%	67.8%
Field work	3.2%	34.9%
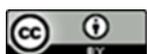
Five items are used to find out the perceived effective teaching techniques in the course, and what are actually used. Figure 5 and Figure 6 show the result respectively.

Data also indicates similar findings from this item. For example, video and movie watching takes 80.9% for perceived effective techniques, while only 45.6% indicate it is often used. Lecturing is also regarded less effective than it is taken.

The 9 items used for answers regarding effective teaching approaches and effective teaching techniques are what is often used in intercultural communication teaching course. Finding for these two have implications for teachers when choosing their methods and techniques.

To know students' motivation for learning the course and be adaptive to the students are important the results of questionnaire. To give respondents enough space for expressing their views, answers were drawn by open-end questions. 86.3% of the respondents wish this course could help them know cultures of other countries, and to compare cultural differences; 57.2% of the respondents wish they could have better communication with culturally different people with the help of this course; 34.2% respondents want to take the course because it is part of the curriculum, which indicates the passive attitudes of the students, and teachers should try to motivate students' interest in the course; 10.6% of the respondents wish the course could be helpful for their future study abroad; and 2.5% mentioned it is out of their interest.

Data also shows that students are concerned with application of what they have learned in classroom into practice. 78.6% mention that they very occasionally have chance to use what they have learned, while 14.9% students said they had never had any chance. This can partially explain why 16.31% of the students think "lack of practice" is one of the difficulties of the course. What can teachers do to balance theories and practice or help students develop their communicative competence is an issue for teachers.

To achieve these goals, first of all, teachers should help students to develop positive attitudes to the course. A passive attitude will decrease the effectiveness of the teaching. Let the students know that learning intercultural communication can help them to achieve cultural tolerance and behave properly in diverse cultural context, and to achieve cross-cultural understanding, i.e., awareness of their own culture as well as that of the target culture.

It is also important for students to know that intercultural communication not only refer to communication with English-speaking countries or the Western countries, it also means communication between nations, and ethnic groups.

To conclude, multimedia tools and learner-centered approach integrate theory with practice; increase independent-study should be undoubtedly implemented within the course.

In order to prove the importance and effectiveness of teaching intercultural communication via multimedia technologies in the linguistic university we have studied psychological aspect of intercultural communication and different courses in teaching intercultural communication, as well as pedagogical conditions of using multimedia technologies "Intercultural communication".

The purpose of experiment is to identify whether the course syllabus provides a good opportunity for teaching IC. Moreover, it is important for the researchers to collect data on the current level of intercultural knowledge and skills. The goal of experimental teaching is revealing the degree of efficacy of the created module content and multimedia means in development of intercultural communication. In the experimental stage we focus on proving the importance of electronic teaching material. Furthermore, it is important for us to check the entry and final indicators in the process of development of IC via blended learning format.

In this chapter, preparation for the experiment in frames of survey and needs analysis questionnaire is presented. In the first section of this chapter students' needs, interests and current

knowledge and skills are revealed and further methodical recommendations have been referred. To identify students' motivation for learning the course and be adaptive students were given the questionnaire containing both open-end and close-end questions. As a result, data shows that it is urgent for students to know that intercultural communication not only refers to communication with English-speaking countries or the Western countries, it also means communication between nations and ethnic groups.

Within this study it was proved that multimedia tools and learner-centered approach should be implemented, theory and practice should be integrated and independent-study should be increased.

Appendix 1

NEEDS ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Name_____

I.   Please put the tick to the line that you think is most preferable for the content of the course.

☐   Verbal and non-verbal communication
☐   Culture and communication
☐   Interpersonal communication
☐   Improving intercultural communicative competence
☐   Social organization
☐   Value and beliefs
☐   Intercultural awareness
☐   Cultural identity

II.   In your opinion, what challenges students may face during the course?

☐   Theoretical knowledge can be the most difficult part of the course, because_____
_____
_____
_____

☐   Comparative analysis of Eastern and Western cultures is the most challenging, because_____
_____
_____
_____

☐   Students will face challenges during the course due to the_____
_____
_____
_____

☐   Please write your opinion on why do you think the course of "Intercultural communication" should be taken?_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for your answers

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