Enhancement of Academic Performance through Developing Cross-Cultural Communicative Competence: A Case Study of Students Majoring in Economics

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ABSTRACT

Background. The article questions the possibility to increase the level of foreign language command through developing cross-cultural communicative competence (CCC) in students of non-linguistic universities. Despite extensive literature on intercultural communication, there are obviously gaps in investigating the way it can and should be built and the potential impact it may have towards students' academic performance in general.

Purpose. The paper aims to find out the possible correlation between the level of CCC formation and a command of a foreign language in general. To pursue the goal, an in-depth research into the CCC structure was carried out and the idea to simultaneously develop all its components was proposed.

Method. The paper reports on the results of the mixed-method research aimed at gathering the data and evaluating them both qualitatively and quantitatively. Senior students of the Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia, were selected and divided into the control and experimental groups with the subsequent training on the pre-designed curricula, with a primary focus on developing all the components of the CCC in the latter. To assess their performance, the method of experimental verification, self- and peer evaluation, educational observation, questioning method were employed. In-depth data analysis and verification provided post-active phase of the experiment conducted.

Results. The results of the carried-out experiments, first, proved the hypothetical assumptions on the efficiency of developing all the four CCC simultaneously and, second, showed that the targeted CCC development contributes to improving foreign language acquisition in general, which is supported by the increase in 5 out of 6 didactic units of the final testing where the experimental group participants surpassed the students in the control group.

Conclusion. The study provides evidence for the impact CCC development has on the linguistic communicative competence. The devised methodology can be borrowed and customized for teaching foreign languages to university students and, in particular for developing intrinsic motivation through CCC. Further, future research should address particular components of the CCC.

KEYWORDS

cross-cultural communicative competence (CCC), cross-cultural communication, academic performance

INTRODUCTION

In the continuously developing educational settings with geopolitical relations and values recalibrated and new challenges arising, good awareness of cultural conventions and global tolerance is actual as never before (Tikhonova et al., 2021). That is why, developing cross-cultural communicative competence (CCC) is within the most necessary set of skills to be acquired for successful implemen-

tation of business and professional activities (Johnson, 2006; Martin, 2015; Liao, 2020; Bagiyan et al., 2021), starting with doing a degree (Gierke, 2018; Liao, 2020).

So, nowadays delivery of cross-cultural education in a modern University should become a focal point. It can prepare graduates for multicultural environment where they will be able to effectively interact with representatives of other cultures, develop the ability of cultural self-determination, and establish value orientations for themselves in relation to their own culture (Deardorff, 2006a) and the "other" communities (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2011). In addition, building CCC contributes to the development of a modern democratic state, which is characterized by tolerance of views and opinions, recognition and development of cultural pluralism in society, and equal opportunities for all citizens. Announced as a commitment back in 1994 by UNESCO in Geneva, multicultural education is likely to pave the way for acknowledging individuals of different societies and sexes, "encourage convergence of ideas" to strengthen brotherhood and solidarity, increase the ability to overcome conflicts and "promote peacefulness in the minds of students" (Zamroni et al., 2021, p. 598).

The issues related to CCC as an essential element of successful activity in the professional sphere are being widely discussed nowadays. This is due to a number of factors: firstly, the need for a more detailed study of approaches to teaching students, taking into account cross-cultural differences between communicants, the volume of background knowledge, communication topics, situational conditions in which the interaction is carried out (Andreyeva et al., 2015); secondly, the importance of studying the way semantic content of information is transmitted within cross-cultural communication between students belonging to different cultures and languages (Rasmussen et al., 2015); thirdly, the importance of cultural knowledge that specialists need for an adequate and maximum complete interpretation of received information in specific situations of communication with speakers of another language and a different culture (Menuzane, 2021).

To avoid terminological confusion, based on the available literature, we consider the cross-cultural competence, intercultural competence and multicultural competence as complete synonyms without any difference in meanings. Out of these three, the basic concept for the current study is supposed to be cross-cultural communicative competence (CCC), though we rest on investigations of others devoted to either of these three.

In this study, we went beyond the existing experience and focused on the correlations of CCC development and acquiring a foreign language rather than enhancement of intercultural relations. In order to pursue this goal, we explored the impact CCC has on the overall level of the foreign language proficiency. Presumably, we expected the direct correlation between the two. Thus, to approach the problem we had to identify the key elements of CCC in order to devise the way it can be comprehensively developed. The study rests on the elaborations of the previous research, though it expands and reframes the existing concepts to structure CCC as a product of any intellectual activity thus underpinning the integrity of developing language capabilities and a communication competence in intercultural context. For this reason, an entirely new, praxeological, criterion was added to the widely-recognized CCC framework.

Thus, the research questions we address by our paper can be formulated as below:

(1) What are the components of cross-cultural communicative competence?

(2) Does teaching targeted at developing cross-cultural communicative competence lead to progress of all its elements?

(3) Can development of cross-cultural competence have an impact on overall academic performance in terms of learning a foreign language?

Hypothetically, it was assumed that targeted teaching students in the area of intercultural communication is most likely to lead to the overall increase as well as the progress in each separate element within it. Whether it can positively influence a student's foreign language capabilities was a much more controversial issue and we were quite tentative to state our hypothesis about its positive impact.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research Focus

Developing cross-cultural competence has repeatedly been studied in scientific literature. Primarily, authors elaborate on the generalized and empirically derived definitions of the key concept(s) (Gierke et al., 2018; Liao & Thomas, 2020); actively discuss its constituents and build its frameworks and competency areas, mostly for exploratory and applicable purposes (Byram et al., 2001, Gay, 2001; Deardorff, 2006b, Rasmussen et al., 2015, Barzykowski et al., 2019) or focus on the role culture plays in building CCC (Marxsen, 2007; Kramsch, 2008; Schaetti et al., 2009; Piasecka, 2011).

The importance of the link between theory and practice, which contributes to the applied nature of the research into intercultural competence, is identified as one of the key directions. So, the investigation of the paradigms of intercultural communication and their possible application in the learning process are studied by Bleszynska (2008), who claims intercultural education is a necessary part of any modern school, and Aririguzoh (2022) whose elaborations

stem from the necessity to improve cross-cultural communications through building inter-cultural competences.

Above that, a number of authors focus on the ways CCC can be developed in different professional fields, which corresponds to the main goal of the given research aimed at students of a multidisciplinary University providing higher professional education (Andreyeva et al., 2015; Bennett, 2009; Hammer, 2009; Jackson, 2009; O'Brien, 2019; Sehlaoui, 2001). A lot of investigations summarize on the ways intercultural communicative competence is developed in instructors rather than learners (Bickley et al., 2014; Chernova, 2018).

Terminology Issues

Despite the extensive literature on general issues of intercultural communication and communicative competences as they are, much less attention is paid to the area of intercultural (cross-cultural) communicative competence (Bickley et al., 2014, p. 138). This must be the main reason why there does not appear to be consensus on what exactly cross-cultural competence is (Gierke, 2018). The given paper seeks to fill in this niche as the meaning of CCC needs be clarified before it is measured and further conclusions are made (Deardroff, 2006b). To avoid confusion, first of all, a line of demarcation should be drawn between intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence. The former is applied to using a mother tongue in interactions with people from a different culture whereas the latter means doing so in a foreign language (Byram, 1997). Secondly, a decision should be taken whether the author borrows the predominant, fundamentally theoretical definition of the concept under investigation (Spitsrberg, 2009, Deardroff, 2006a) or accepts the empirically driven meaning (Gierke, 2018).

Considering the practical focus of this study, there seems to be more advantages to the meaning embedded in the empirically valid definitions. So, communicative competence can be understood as "the ability to function effectively in another culture" (Johnson, 2006, p. 527). Bickley *et al*. refer to Adult ESL Curriculum Framework, which defines it as an "ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in English within a culture diverse society" (Bickley et al., 2014, p.138). Tallen (2010) defines CCC as a systemic unity that integrates personal, cultural and professional characteristics and components.

An even more pragmatic approach is taken by the methodologists. Thus, Merrifield et al. (2008), studying cross-cultural communicative competence, consider it as an ability to act in a situation of uncertainty; Brown & Terrell (2000) regard it as the willingness of a specialist to be engaged in certain activities. According to Peart (2019), cross-cultural communicative competence is a combination of interconnected personal qualities (knowledge, abilities, skills, ways of working) defined in relation to certain intercultural processes, and necessary for high-quality academic professional activity.

CCC Inventory and Measurement

To be able to do a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the level CCC is developed in students, the full potential of its constituents should be revealed and described. One of the recognized structural frameworks of CCC was proposed by Byram and Zarate (Byram & Zarate, 1996) and adopted by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR 2001). According to this model design, in the frameworks of foreign language education, there can be found four dimensions known under the French titles: "saviors" – knowledge of Self and Others, "savoir comprendre" – skills of interpreting and relating, "savoir être" – intercultural beliefs and attitudes, "savoir faire / apprendre" – skills of discovery and interaction (Byram & Zarate, 1996, 11).

In later studies the Byrame's model was accepted as "prominently influential" (Munezane, 2021), though it has been subject to critical revisions and reconsiderations, e.g. Hoff introduced to it the new 'savoir s'engager' component derived from the postulate that "disharmony and conflict are recognized as potential aspects of the intercultural dialogue in Byram's model" (Hoff, 2014). Consequently, the study vector shifted to constructing more complex models by integrating multidimensional variables often verified by surveying experiment participants. Thus, the model suggested by Arasaratnam et al. (2011) identifies experience, listening skills, positive attitudes toward people from other cultures, motivation to interact with people from other cultures, and ability to empathize as "variables contributing to ICC". Munezane (2021) proposed the nine-factor theoretical model of ICC based on "openness to experience, interdependent self-construal, ethnocentrism, willingness to communicate, motivation to introduce one's culture, constructive conflict resolution, motivation to engage in intercultural communication, confidence in intercultural interaction". Zamroni et al. (2021) test 4 factors: cultural awareness, understanding of own and other cultures, cultural competence and cultural encounter. They collected data by questionnaires and apply MANOVA test to process and cross compare the findings.

The available evidence is enough to see the corresponding relations between the approaches taken, e.g. knowledge of Self and Others is alternatively treated as declarative knowledge while skills of discovery and interaction is understood to be an ability to learn. What these models lack is, however, the bridge between intercultural interactions and the foreign language learning environment. This paper seeks to consider CCC as a tool to enhance general linguistic competences, that is why we are going to expand the existing inventory and reframe it to adjust to our specific needs.

According to the cognitive, effective, behavioral etc. components integrated into the CCC model researchers deploy a wide variety of appropriate tools including surveys, interviews, questionnaires etc. to assess to what degree each or all of them are developed (Johnson, 2006; Rasmussen, 2015;

Munezane, 2021). For example, it can be a survey with questions roughly grouped according to the "cultural awareness, understanding of own and Others' cultures, cultural competence and cultural encounter" (Zamroni et al., 2021; Munezane, 2021). There are, however, papers which dismiss the possibility for administered evaluation sessions and insist on the continuous forms of measuring the level for intercultural communicative competence (Lussier et al., 2007), but commonly they are outnumbered by the quantitative studies.

The exploration of the previous research provided solid background for devising and further implementation of our own CCC structural framework based on the organization of the foreign language learning process and measuring the degree it is formed in students. Additionally, the study fills the gap in previous research by building a bridge between intercultural education and overall communicative competence. Correlations between language learning and intercultural competence promotion have been a subject of earlier research marked with a diversity in focus. For instance, Starkey's study explored the tension between persistent traditions of teaching English and language learning policies that promote intercultural competence (Starkey, 2007); Tran et al. (2018) pursued a goal most similar to the one stated by this research and built a model of integrating intercultural competence into teaching English in the Vietnamese context, though did not particularly focus on the direct correlation between the students' gains and developing an intercultural communicative competence in them. East et al. (2022) report on a series of empirical research to prioritize the development of intercultural communicative competence in foreign language education as a tool part of intercultural citizenship, but not vice versa. So, to our knowledge, no attempt has been made to immediately trace if the CCC development can be a good venue for enhancing foreign language competences, and the given research seeks to contribute to this area of investigation.

METHOD

Participants

The population of the research consisted of 87 first year students (49 female, 38 male, aged 18-21 y.o., the mean is 22,68 y.o.) of the Faculty of Economics of the National Research University "Higher School of Economics". According to the placement English test, 92 students were assessed to have B2 level of English mastery, 87 people out of them agreed to participate in the study, 5 refused for different reasons. Before the experiment they were explained the main goals and objectives of the experiment and divided into two groups: the experimental and control ones. For technical convenience, each of the groups was subdivided into two subgroups without any difference in the course content and its delivery. Their participation and the group choice was absolutely voluntary. 12,6 % of the participants - 11 people - were ready to join either of the groups, 43 students expressed their intention to join the experimental group and 33 preferred to study in the control group.

Data Collection and Analysis

Structural Frameworks- Pre-Active Experiment

Based on the earlier attempts to propose the structural frameworks of CCC, we identified four our own criteria. In order to do that, we followed the main principles of any general form of intellectual activity, which, as we suppose, may enrich our understanding of the skill set this type of communicative competence contains. Thus, in our view, the main criteria related to the development of intercultural communicative competence include: *epistemological criterion,* which helps to determine the level of communicatively valuable knowledge; *praxiological criterion*, as a manifestation of the complex of necessary skills and abilities, as well as the communicative qualities of the individual and the nature of communication; *motivational-axiological criterion*, which characterizes the formation of communicative motivation and value relations; and the *reflexive criterion*, which is represented in the level of students' interest in the issues of optimal communication, self-control, and the desire for self-improvement based on the analysis of their own outcomes. These criteria of the CCC formation are implemented through the relevant indicators presented in table 1.

Didactic Potential of CCC Components

Our hypothetical views suggested the necessity to simultaneously develop all the four aspects of the CCC identified. In our opinion, such an approach would allow to fully attain the high levels of the skills necessary to successfully communicate with people from other cultures. Let us describe in more detail each of the criteria.

As seen from Table 1, among the indicators of the epistemological criterion of CCC, are the level of demonstrating a set of communicatively valuable knowledge, as well as its consistency and completeness. The level of mastery of the norms and conventions can reveal through different activities.

The praxeological criterion revealed itself through such indicators as the use of communication means, the degree of mastery of intercultural communicative skills and strategies, the degree of their variability, the degree of manifestation of individual communicative qualities and the preferred communication style.

The need to identify the motivational-axiological criterion was due to the fact that, like others, the CCC is formed under the influence of the person's attitudes, motives and inter-

Table 1

Criteria and Indicators of Intercultural Communicative Competence Formation

Criteria	Indicators
Epistemological	the level acquisition of cross-cultural communicative knowledge; its consistency and completeness
Praxeological	the degree of mastery of CCC skills, strategies and means of communication; their range; the degree of CCC qualities manifestation in behavior; communication style.
Motivational and axiological analysis	the level of CCC motivation development; the level of formation of the attitude to communication as a value; the - degree of desire to master cross-cultural communicative competence; the level of cognitive interest.
Reflexive	the degree of involvement and initiative; sufficiently developed ability to conduct self-analysis and ability to exercise self-control; the level of eagerness to improve themselves.

ests. The indicators of this criterion are: the level and type of the attitude to CCC as a value, the degree of students ' desire to form the competence under study, the level of cognitive interest to intercultural interactions and the desire to be able to successfully communicate with representatives of different cultures.

The reflexive criterion is characterized by a student's attitude to the activities described by such indicators as degree of activity and initiative, both in the educational and intercultural communicative activity, its self-awareness, the ability to exercise self-control, awareness of the need for self-improvement. Accordingly, the above-mentioned indicators, such as the quality and degree of manifestation in their totality, give grounds to assign students to a particular group of the CCC formation in accordance with their level of development.

All levels have close interrelations, since each of them acts as a certain condition for the transition to the next stage, that is, the final result of mastering the previous level. All the outcomes gained this way make up "reference points" that allow to observe CCC formation in students and coordinate it, thereby managing the process under study.

Grouping Participants

When considering the formation of the CCC degree in learners, it is necessary to rely on several levels of activity development, namely: 1) the level of familiarity and awareness revealed through recognition of realities; 2) the level of reproduction, i.e. reproduction of information; 3) the level of productive activity; 4) the level of productive activity on any set of objects by independently constructing the program of activity. Thus, the degree of manifestation of the student's ability and readiness in this study, elementary, limited, sufficient and advanced levels of CCC formation were identified.

The basic level is characterized by the minimal volume of random knowledge, a low level of communicative skill formation, an aggressive style of communication, rigidity, lack of understanding practical significance of the generated competence in professional activities and in life in general, poor motivation, absence or shortage of reflexive attitude

to the learning activities, unwillingness to take responsibility for the result of their own educational activities.

The limited level is characterized by the following indicators: the total minor amount of knowledge at a sufficiently low degree of consistency, weak demonstration of communicative skills, a limited set of communication strategies, low interest in developing intercultural communicative competence, as well as low awareness of its significance, insufficient need in self-improvement, poorly developed reflective skills and self-control.

The sufficient level is represented by the presence of a sufficient amount of solid knowledge, which is of a systematic nature, an optimal level of mastery of communication skills and strategies, a sufficient degree of their range, in most cases, the manifestation of communicatively valuable personal qualities, a sufficient level of positive motivation, the ability to control, analyze and regulate their own activities, the vividly expressed desire for self-improvement.

An advanced level of cross-cultural communicative competence can be determined in the presence of profound knowledge, self-determination, a clear focus on achieving high results in future professional activities, a confident command of communication skills and strategies, a high degree of their variety and their fluent usage in relevant communication situations, sorting more complex and professionally oriented communicative tasks, a cooperative style of communication, a strong attitude to self-realization and constant self-improvement, self-initiative in mastering communicative competence, with a high level of reflection and self-control. The final assessment was carried out by using observation, questioning, testing and experts' continuous assessment. The indicators are presented in Table 2 General Characteristics of CCC levels.

Procedure

Basically, the main goal of the study was achieved through pre-active (theoretical), active (experimental) and post-active (diagnostic) stages. Describing the first, theoretical, stage of the experiment, in order to create cross-cultural communicative competence, individually customized meth-

ods of targeted CCC development were devised and developed to be further incorporated into the course of English as a foreign language delivered in the experimental group of students. The course curriculum in this group included the following stages: general acquaintance with the culture of different countries of interest and language training (language learning; development of language skills through self-education; vocabulary acquisition; collection and study of information about the cultural identity of the different countries).

The second, experimental, stage of the study consisted in giving classes and administering tests and exams with participation of 87 second-year students of the National Research University "Higher School of Economics". The practical classes were supplemented with individual tutorials based on active and interactive learning as well as Internet projects and web-quests. The training process in the control group was based on conventional teaching in accordance with the requirements of nationally accepted professional training syllabus of higher education. At this stage of intercultural communicative competence formation, the tai-

lor-made methodology was introduced in the experimental group.

The development of intercultural competence was implemented under the conditions of enhancing students' motivation for intercultural communication (possible thanks to role-playing and simulations, raising awareness of different culture values, modelling success situations in foreign language classes); promoting students' self-reflexive positions in intercultural communication (developing critical thinking, problem-solving, project tasks, handling problems, free choice, accessible presentation of the material, supervised self-assessment, the "portfolio" method).

At the third, diagnostic, stage of the experimental study, rigorous analysis was carried out, methodological recommendations were developed for the use of various practical exercises and tasks in order to form CCC in students. This stage ran in two phases: measuring the degree of the CCC level (including the overall degree and its particular elements based on the structural frameworks) and comparing it against academic performance.

Table 2
General Characteristics of CCC Levels

Levels / Criteria	Elementary	Limited	Professionally sufficient	Advanced
Epistemological	Minimal amount and lack of systematic knowledge. General awareness of speech etiquette and forms of professional communication. Indifferent attitude to incoming data.	A small amount of knowledge; some attempt to systemize information. Basic understanding of basic speech etiquette; lack of ability to elicit information from the message received.	A sufficient amount of systematically organized knowledge. Basic concepts of speech etiquette. Some awareness of professional communication norms.	A significant amount of systemized knowledge. Profound erudition. Good awareness of professional communication manners. Good schemata. Ability to evaluate incoming information.
Praxeological	Inefficient use of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. Poor communication skills and a narrow range of communication strategies. Low level of tolerance, conflicting inclinations. Expressing ethnocentrism.	The intermediate proficiency in verbal and non-verbal strategies. A small range of communication strategies. Possible communication conflict inclinations. The communication style depends on the speaker's emotional state.	A wide range of developed communication skills. Extended range of strategies. Displaying tolerance, empathy, low conflict inclinations. Respect of values, conventions, and traditions of other cultures.	Confident possession of skills and abilities of effective interpersonal communication. An extended range of communicative strategies. Tolerant behavioral responses, empathy. Cooperative communication style.
Motivational and axiological analysis	Poor communication motivation. Lack of understanding the importance of communicative competence. Lack of desire to master it.	Insufficiently developed communicative motivation. Weak awareness of the communicative competence impact. An unstable desire to master it.	Developed communicative motivation. Engaged attitude towards CCC Sustainable pursuit of its development.	Well-developed motivation. Ability to demonstrate self-determination. Focus on achieving high results.
Reflexive	Passive position, lack of autonomy. Lack of self-control, self-reflection, self-regulation.	Communicative behavior matching the situation. Eagerness to exercise self-control, but insufficient development of reflexive skills.	Continuous mastering knowledge, skills and abilities. Strong analytical skills, self-regulation, self-control, reflexive attitude to learning outcomes.	Initiative to master the communicative competence. Developed self-regulation skills, a high level of reflection. Focus on personal and professional self-improvement.

Data Verification

All criteria were verified through statistical data processing. To summarize on the overall progress throughout the academic year, A.A.Rean's ranking method (Danilova *et al*., 2018) was used. On a special form, the parameters included in the expert assessment were reflected in a tabular form. The students taking part in the experiment ranked all the parameters, assigning them a specific number of points, according to the assumed degree of their importance, after which in the next column («I-concept ») these same parameters were ranked in relation to themselves. When analyzing the results obtained, the difference between the desired and real level of each parameter was made – (d), later squared (d^2). After that, the sum of squares (Σd^2) was calculated and the rank correlation coefficient was determined by the formula: $r = 1 - [6 \Sigma d^2 / n (n^2-1)]$, where n is the number of indicators used for ranking. Thus, the closer the correlation coefficient to 1 (from 0,7 to 1,0), the higher is the level of self-esteem, adequate self-assessment corresponds to a ratio of 0,4 to 0,6.

RESULTS

Measuring the Communicative Competence

In order to ensure the correspondence of the test and the structural frameworks of the CCC, we designed the tasks in strict compliance with each criterion recognized. Thus, in order to identify the characteristics of the communicative competence level achieved by the students according to the epistemological criterion, it is necessary to determine the degree of their development of knowledge that plays a significant role in the formation of communicative abilities.

The control task offered to students of both the experimental (EG) and control (CG) groups, was targeted at checking the degree of cultural awareness and the level of knowledge in most common traditions and conventions across cultures, including business etiquette, mostly through questions, both in the closed (multiple choice) and open formats.

Thus, it was found that the students of the EG coped with the material with the following results: excellent (26%) and good (43%) level of knowledge (in total 69%), while the indicators of the students of the CG were slightly lower: «excellent» – 20%, «good» – 27%, «satisfactory» – 48%, 2 students received unsatisfactory grades (12%). Below we will report how particular CCC criteria were considered and approached within the experiment.

Paraxeological Criterion

Regarding the *paraxeological* criterion, sessions based on role plays and problem solving through case studies were employed during the learning process (upon each unit completion) and then during the assessment session, which, in turn, was video recorded to provide for later evaluation by three independent experts. The task rested on most common gaffes and cultural misunderstandings.

Grades 0-3 were given for each indicator: 1) communicative task achievement by resolving the conflict or sorting the issue; 2) responding to the interlocutor's input; 3) taking into account the interlocutor's culture. The grades contributed to the students' overall assessment and level allocation.

Epistemological and Praxeological Criteria

Besides, in order to identify the characteristics of students' CCC according to *epistemological* and *praxeological* criteria, an expert assessment with the identification of indices (Hovanov et al., 2009), was used. It allowed to determine the level of communicative-valuable knowledge formation, skills and behavioral characteristics of students in both groups. Each relevant parameter was offered in 5 options in order to determine the degree of its severity in the student (from 1 to 5 points). The index was determined by the formula: $i = Ver / 4$, where «Ver» is the average score that the student received for a specific parameter, while the indices were correlated with the levels of formation of communicative competence in the following way: elementary – from 0,25 to 0,5; limited – from 0,51 to 0,75; sufficient – from 0,76 to 1; advanced – from 1,01 to 1,25. Conducting an expert assessment meant analyzing the outcomes and classroom observation of students' the practical activities during all classes. When analyzing the results, it was found that, compared with the CG, the students of the EG to a greater extent, demonstrate confidence in solving communication problems. They definitely possess the ability to establish contacts, both with the interlocutor and with the audience as a whole, to argue and logically build their opinion, while selecting appropriate speech means and responding to questions.

However, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that the use of nonverbal and paraverbal strategies by students, as well as the ability to change communication tactics in accordance with the communicative situation, leaves much to be desired. The reason for this is understood to be in the lack of communication practice. In this regard, personal communication is based on the achieved results. For example, according to the results of the study, out of the total number of students in both groups, only 7 people, which is about 10%, were able to achieve a sufficiently high level of competence formation according to the paraxeological criterion.

Motivational and Axiological Criteria

Speaking of the motivational and axiological criteria of the CCC, the complex of assessment procedures also included a multiple choice questionnaire designed in accordance with the R. Cattell's factor personality questionnaire (Cattell&Cattell, 1995), which was aimed at determining the motives and value orientations of students in the field under consid-

eration. The answer to the question posed in the questionnaire about the motives for CCC development among the students of the EG was «to become a professional specialist able to communicate with people from different countries», while in the CG this answer was chosen by only 28% of respondents. The dominant motives of EG students were: «to ensure a prosperous future in the field of professional activity» (83%), «to develop as a person» (70%). It is possible to conclude that EG students are focused on a personally significant result, which in turn indicates the coincidence of educational and cognitive activity with the pedagogical goal. When considering the prevailing motives of the students of the CG, the following answers were obtained: «meeting the learning requirements» and «successful study» (76% each), «avoiding unpleasant consequences» (64%), which indicate that the students of the CG are more focused on solving current problems and avoiding difficulties.

Almost all students who are members of the EG (92%) are aware of the importance of cross-cultural communication competence, both in their future profession and in later life in general, preferring tolerant behavior and a cooperative style of communication. The same opinion is shared by about 60% of the CG students.

The results obtained during the experimental part of the research allowed to note a slight change in the motivational-axiological component of intercultural communicative competence of students in the CG, a positive trend which was only 18%, while in the EG, this figure stood at 40%.

Analysis

In order to clarify the characteristics of the students ' communicative competence according to the reflexive criterion, it was necessary to check the results of the delayed subjective self-assessment in terms of cross-cultural literacy and evaluating students' "own perceptions of the value systems of different cultures" (Skopinskaja, 2009). Some of the proposed assessment tools here would be the so-called "culture logs" or portfolios where students record their progress in CCC at regular intervals and "portfolios" which are used to keep records (Lussier et al., 2007). Reflexive essays, personal observations, self-audio and video recordings were employed in both groups and assessed based on evaluation grids.

The results of the experiment showed that the majority of students of the EG (65%) had adequate self-assessment, for 5 students (29%) it was quite low and in 3 people (18%) – much too high. Among the students of the CG, 12 people (71%) rated themselves fairly adequately, 3 (18%) became the owners of low self-esteem, and for 10 (59%) it was overestimated. It should be emphasized that only an adequate self-assessment indicates that the student has a reflexive attitude of students to their own communicative behavior and the result of educational and cognitive activity. A comparison of the results obtained with the expert assessment showed that the most successful students, which is about 30% in the EG and 16% in the CG, demonstrate a demanding attitude towards themselves as a subject of communication, but this indicator also demonstrates an increase in their own competence of these respondents. Generalization, analysis and comparison of empirical data obtained during the entire experiment revealed the achieved level of each student's communicative competence. The comparison of the initial and final levels was the basis for identifying the dynamics of the CCC formation among students (table 4).

After all, the results of all the tests were thoroughly analyzed and the average statistics were derived for both the control and experimental groups. The dynamics of the outcomes are presented in Table 4 Dynamics of the cross-communicative competence formation among students.

Thus, the results of the final test revealed a significant positive trend in the distribution of EG students according to the level of formation of intercultural communicative competence. The overall growth of all indicators in the CG indicates that the delivery of the State Educational Standard makes it possible to form the communicative competence in students.

Summing up on the overall results of the experiment, a comparative analysis of the findings of the input and final diagnostics achieved in both the experimental and control groups, give the basis to conclude that the developed model of the intercultural communicative competence formation in students is effectively implemented in practice.

To address the research questions about the correlation of the CCC and overall command of English skills, we conducted a language test aimed at assessing students' linguistic progress. The results demonstrated by the students of both groups, united by didactic units, are presented in Table 3 - Results of testing the students' learning gains in the English course.

The tasks used in the test were arranged in such a way as to identify the degree of the material acquisition by students. At the same time, the difference was only in the strategy of working with it, for example, a significant emphasis was placed on students' self-control in the EG. When comparing the results of this test, it was found that the students of the EG were much better able to master a number of program sections compared to the students of the CG, which is especially valuable in the field of solving problems of future professional activity.

It should be noted that the average score derived from the test in the EG was significantly higher than in the CG (83,5 and 68.0, respectively), which also indicates a greater efficiency of the proposed technology.

Through classroom observations, it was possible to report that those students who had high scores possessed a better-formed ability to organize their own educational activities for mastering their communicative competence. Quite indicative was the fact that all the students of the EG coped with the task within the allocated time period, while nine students of the CG did not succeed, which once again emphasized the lack of self-organization skills. Thus, the targeted work carried out by students on developing self-control during the learning process and the learning outcomes have a positive effect on their overall academic success in the EFL course.

DISCUSSION

The paper sought to identify the key structural elements within the CCC frameworks in order to devise the curriculum so that it could focus on each of them. A number of similar models previously offered by other authors have been analyzed. So, borrowing the main ideas and principles of the CCC structural frameworks (Skopinskaja, 2009; COE, 2020; Zamroni et al., 2021) we proposed our own model which partially coincides with the previously offered ones but is still different in terms of the elements identified and their values recalibrated. Thus, the epistemological criterion we identified can be considered an equivalent of the "sav-

iors" (Byram & Zarate, 1996), cultural awareness (Zamroni, 2021), motivational and cognitive criteria (Chernova, 2018). We, however, introduced the new, praxeological, criterion to be added to the CCC structural model driven by the same reason, i.e. to make it more transparent in terms of further measuring the level of CCC development in the classroom.

Besides, the study surveyed the way a training course may incorporate CCC development and investigate its correlation with the degree of general academic performance at mastering a foreign language. To our knowledge, it was the first attempt to trace the correlation between the level of CCC formed and fluency in a foreign language, the previous ones restricted themselves by evaluating just one of the CCC element (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2011).

It was revealed that the multi-sided formation of different CCC components yields quite good results. The findings obtained strongly support the hypothetical assumptions of the positive impact CCC development has on acquisition of a foreign language. It can be concluded that the conventional way of building CCC does not compare to the targeted development of its key criteria. So, both hypotheses were proved. To summarize, the customized course content and assessment tools were implemented and adjusted to the particular needs, that is, for evaluating individual aspects

Table 4

Dynamics of the Cross-Cultural Communicative Competence Development among Students, %

Groups	The control group			The experimental group		
Levels	The ascertaining stage	Control stage	Dynamics of the level	The ascertaining stage	Control stage	Dynamics of the level
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Elementary	31	17	- 14	32	8	- 24
Limited	48	45	+ 3	44	33	-11
Sufficient	21	34	+ 13	24	42	+ 18
Advanced	0	4	+ 4	0	17	+ 17

Table 3

Results of Testing the Students' Learning Gains in the English Course, %

Group Didactic units	CG	EG	Results compared
Vocabulary	74	72	-2
Grammar	59	64	+5
Speech etiquette	68	91	+23
Writing	67	82	+15
Reading	58	89	+31
Listening comprehension	61	69	+8

which bring about students' higher performance, in particular, in speech etiquette, writing and reading.

The advantages of the proposed methodology are demonstrated by establishing the relationship between the development of students' abilities, increased curiosity desire and ability to learn, as well as fostering moral qualities and values necessary for effective interaction with representatives of other cultures and nationalities. The results gathered do not contradict those obtained from studies that have been done by the other authors (Cavalheiro, 2015; Collier, 2015, Tzheva, 2021). The study has also revealed the way CCC can be used as a tool to enhance the linguistic skills and abilities as it made an attempt to investigate the correlation between the two, whereas the previous papers primarily focused on solely measuring the overall degree of its development (Deardorff, 2006b; Skopinskaja, 2009; Zamroni, 2021) or examined one of its components (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2011).

Though the authors countered some of the limitations in the previous studies on both building the CCC (or its analogy) framework and assessing its level in students studying a foreign language, it definitely has a number of constraints as well. So, the size of the research population speaks for the very preliminary conclusions to be made and should be significantly increased in the following studies. Though claimed above, the study also lacked profound comparison of evaluation and self-evaluation matrices in order to provide a fuller picture of the participants' outcomes and find out lurking indicators. Mismatches between different experts' evaluations and lack of rigorous unified assessment criteria are also likely to result in biased conclusions.

CONCLUSION

The given research pursued the aim of identifying the CCC components (pre-active stage), adhering the curriculum in the experimental group to focus on targeting them all while teaching English as a foreign language (active stage) and analyzing the correlation between the level of its formation and students' overall communicative competence.

The research was conducted by using a number of different techniques and tools. Thus, having examined the ways intercultural communicative competence is formed and the impact it has on a foreign language acquisition, we have concluded what exactly contributes to developing cross-cultural communicative competence among students.

In turn, the developed system of criteria makes it possible to identify the degree of competency level. The principles of building cross-cultural awareness determine the success of teaching intercultural communication. Its key principles, directions, stages and means of implementation turn out to be effective in terms of obtaining the necessary knowledge

by students, as well as mastering skills in the professional field.

Thus, cross-cultural communication forms special conditions for the development of not only each individual person, but also national-cultural groups that live in a diverse world. It should be recognized that CCC as a way of organizing society leads to the need to rethink the cultural integrity of its members, to abandon the notion that certain cultures can be stronger, dominant or less advanced. All this, undoubtedly, has a positive effect on the interaction of representatives of different ethnic backgrounds in all areas of human life.

IT should also be born in mind that, based on the provisional conclusion this study has arrived at, raising the CCC level can possibly be an effective tool in boosting the overall command of the foreign language the students are acquiring. Presumably, it can be explained by the intrinsic motivation growth, which is, in turn, caused by exposure to cultural reality of international communities, the so-called "feeling of authenticity".

The results of the study do not solve all the problematic issues of the formation of cross-cultural (intercultural) communicative competence in students, but they can serve as a basis for organizing further investigations. In the framework of future research, it is planned to identify correlations and their meanings between the established components of the intercultural communicative competence.

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None declared.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Natalia Guskova: Conceptualization; Funding acquisition; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Supervision; Validation; Writing-review and editing.

Elena Golubovskaya: Conceptualization; Funding acquisition; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Supervision; Validation; Writing-review and editing.

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