

The Place of Cross-Cultural Communication in the University Students’ Language Training

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The intensification of migration processes, that have continued from the early 2000s to the present day, leads to significant changes in the demographic, economic, social, and linguistic landscape of the world. Geopolitical conflicts and economic instability cause an increase in the number of international students in host countries, requiring universities to allocate additional resources for students’ language training and adaptation.

The paper aims to consider some of the ways in which this process can be facilitated and accelerated.

The necessity for the rapid expansion of language courses and the development of specialized programs aimed at the accelerated acquisition of the language of instruction and social adaptation of students poses a significant challenge to the Ukrainian education system. The increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in the learning environment demands more flexible, individualized foreign language teaching methods capable of addressing the variety of language proficiency levels and the cultural characteristics of students. The psychological stress experienced by migrant students, stemming both from the language barrier itself and from broader social difficulties, complicates their adaptation to the local academic environment and its teaching methods [5, p. 59].

In such a situation, the identification and implementation of modern methods of cultural engagement in the educational process become particularly relevant. These methods can assist international students in overcoming gaps in fundamental cultural concepts and prevent academic apathy, alienation, or hostility.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary primarily to identify points of intercultural tension within the group of international students. These points will likely include

discrepancies between grammatical categories in the native and target languages, the absence of certain unique ethno-cultural concepts in the target language, divergences in ethical norms and forms of politeness, differences in gender, intergenerational, and teacher-student role behaviors, mismatches in religious norms and prohibitions, variations in the meanings of acts of nonverbal communication, differences in the evaluation of important historical events, and contrasting local cultural perspectives on them.

Efforts to bridge cross-cultural gaps should proceed along two directions. Firstly, understanding differences in the axiological and semiotic frameworks of other linguistic communities should become a key resource for teaching staff in resolving intercultural disagreements within the educational environment. Recognizing distinctions between “monochrome” and “polychrome” cultures [3, p. 41–55], with their differing emphases on temporal perception, will aid the gradual inculcation in international students of local notions of punctuality and deadlines. Mastery of hierarchical and status categories accepted in other cultures will help select appropriate self-presentation strategies. Knowledge of the balance between individualistic and collectivist worldviews within an ethnic group will enable the selection of the most effective teaching practices. Familiarity with specifics of nonverbal and paraverbal signals will preserve the value of personal physical and emotional space for all participants in the educational process, reducing the risk of misunderstandings and conflicts.

Secondly, increased attention to intercultural components should extend to the content of language courses and their teaching methodology [4]. The use of pedagogical materials and techniques from other ethnolinguistic communities, improvement of language competency assessment systems through the inclusion of intercultural testing blocks, and adherence to a cultural neutrality concept in classes with a gradual emphasis on local elements will facilitate the smooth immersion of migrant students into the local cultural and linguistic reality without inducing cultural shock.

The use of multimedia and interactive technologies can facilitate the language learning process while taking intercultural contradictions into account [1]. Creating adaptive content that is clear and relevant to students from different countries, engaging the maximum number of perceptual modalities (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, digital), can ease the assimilation of complex topics, increase engagement levels, and enhance learners' personal motivation [2, p. 77–83]. The application of pronunciation trainers (Forvo, BBC Learning English, Rachel's English), digital platforms for presentations (Microsoft PowerPoint, Google Slides, Canva, Prezi), video tools (Screencastify, iSpring Suite), interactive whiteboards (Miro, Jamboard), and exercises (WordWall, Quizlet, Kahoot! Live Worksheets), with an emphasis on cultural diversity, will make the material more illustrative and varied. Developing a multicultural virtual learning environment, multilingual electronic libraries (such as Gutenberg Project, Internet Archive, Bilinguator, Gallica), using test databases (Online Test Pad, ClassMarker, LearningApps, Quizizz), and translation programs (Google Translate, DeepL, Reverso) will facilitate foreign students' access to knowledge and ensure their effective preparation for the educational process.

The use of VR platforms (ImmerseMe, Mondly VR, Language Lab VR, Noun Town Language Learning) allows immersive communicative situations to be simulated, helping students practice language and professional skills in conditions closely resembling real life. Incorporating exercises based on current local press, marketplaces, and government websites into practical lessons will accelerate assimilation into the information environment of the host country. Employing the case method will enable addressing real intercultural challenges in specific contexts, developing critical thinking and practical skills. Business games and projects will support the development of communication and intercultural competencies and foster cultural empathy. The application of blended learning methods (video lessons, online tests, virtual classrooms) will enable students to independently regulate the pace and timing of their studies while optimizing related costs.

Implementing tutoring and mentoring programs involving senior students (similar to the Buddy System) and utilizing specialized applications and platforms (MLI, iTalki, Cambridge Mentor) with the participation of migrant students in the everyday social life of the university will accelerate the acquisition of behavioral norms, academic requirements, and cultural preferences of the host country. Participation in mixed, intergroup educational projects will contribute to expanding social networks, enhancing emotional resilience, and increasing the personal adaptive potential of students.

Thus, intercultural communication can be regarded as a fundamental component of foreign language teaching to international students, requiring, in a contemporary context, the comprehensive use of modern multimedia resources, practice-oriented approaches, interactive learning forms, and attention to global cultural diversity. Implementing this vision of intercultural communication creates conditions for a significant improvement in language teaching materials for international students, aids them in overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers, and reduces intercultural tensions within groups.

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