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Forming students' linguistic and cultural competence in academic
translation and interpretation studies

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Abstract

The paper deals with the issue of forming students' linguistic and cultural competence via the integration of courses in Linguistics and Culture Studies into the Bachelor's Programme in Translation and Interpretation Studies for undergraduate students. To grant a well-grounded inference the authors have built a model that discovers the peculiarities of integrative linguistic and cultural approach to teaching the soon-to-be translators and interpreters, the ones who do not only speak several languages fluently but demonstrate complete awareness of their cultural background. A number of fundamental research reports referred to in the article have proved that the core concept of Linguistics and Culture Studies integration lies in the axiological and semantic properties of the language and culture coded in Art as a cultural activity. The authors outline the structural components of the integrative competence-building model and provide teachers with technologies that determine the proper students' learning outcomes in academic Translation and Interpretation Studies. The model is being successfully realized within a cluster of courses in Country and Culture Studies as well as in English Oral and Written Speech Practice classes at the Faculty of Translation and Interpretation Studies and World Cultural Heritage (Kazan Federal University, Russian Federation). Thus the report reveals the results of the research that is unique for its theoretical approach and supported by twenty years of practice and observations of the authors in the academic environment. The students' performance analysis and the findings yield the conclusion that the integrative and interactive model appears crucial for building the students' professional skills and awareness of social and cultural significance of their vocation.

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Keywords: linguistic and cultural competence, multicultural personality, axiological and semantic properties, integrative and interactive model

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1. Introduction

In today's multicultural world, when the importance of learning a foreign language as a means of communication is increasing, the issue of forming a linguistic and cultural competence of the soon-to-be translators/ interpreters has become particularly relevant as it is not enough to be a fluent in a foreign language. It is important to comprehend the mentality and culture of the people speaking the language to overcome the cultural barrier generated by the national peculiarities of the communicators and to be ready for professional and personal communication with representatives of other countries.

Modern multicultural world sets a challenging and important mission for an interpreter, i.e. to act as an ambassador of culture and provide understanding between parties in an intercultural dialogue. However, the main difficulty in such a matter is the mentality of the author of the original text and the translator/interpreter that may not fully coincide since they are based on each person's knowledge and views of life. Therefore, the translator/interpreter must be able to freely navigate information and semantic, semiotic, symbolic and axiological multicultural environment. To do this, they must overcome the boundaries of narrow professional linguistic thinking and develop a system of cultural thinking on the basis of which linguistic and cultural competence is formed.

The 20-year-old teaching experience in delivering academic courses

in Linguistics and Culture Studies has revealed that the level of general cultural awareness of undergraduate student-interpreters is considerably low. The majority of students do not possess deep background knowledge, or the ability to adequately decode concrete manifestations of cultural meanings and symbols of cultural artefacts, or detect implicit social and regulatory meanings encoded in translation end products; they do not possess basic cultural concepts and are not able to competently and adequately interpret them or disclose their contents and highlight the main features; they know little about both the etiquette of their motherland and a foreign country; they do not have the required practical skills to communicate on a personal and intercultural levels. They have a poor command of non-verbal forms of communication; they have not developed visual-shaped, associative, or systemic cultural thinking. The level of general cultural knowledge and competencies is low; they tend to express emotions about the recognition and not the content of a work of art; evaluation is often trivial in nature; they have difficulty in establishing the associativeshaped relationship between the native and foreign languages; they are not always competent in making judgments about the spiritual and moral values of the world and national and regional cultural heritage; they are reluctant to deal with various works of art and have little interest thereto.

All the above said allows us to conclude the existence of contradictions between the requirements of modern society, educational system and personal development, professional competence of a translator/interpreter, and lack of interest in the process.

Thus there arises a problem of how to meet the demand of society and train competent translators/interpreters that will be capable of intercultural communication in modern multicultural society and will be fully aware of the social and cultural importance of their profession.

In our opinion, one of the solutions to the problem is to introduce a model that will reflect the specifics of an integrative approach to the linguistic and cultural development of a multicultural language personality. It will help create integrative space for academic courses related to linguistic and cultural studies and develop a holistic and systemic vision of the world of an interpreter. Consequently, their level of linguistic and cultural competence will allow to successfully and flexibly adapt to the modern multicultural world.

To achieve this goal we have introduced a model that will develop the linguistic and cultural competence of a translator/interpreter in a single linguistic and cultural communicative educational process in the system of higher

education.

The goal of this study is to design a model aimed at the formation of linguistic and cultural competence of a translator/interpreter in a single linguistic, social and cultural communicative educational process and university.

The following methods were used: analysis of the issue based on the study of philosophical, linguistic, psychological and educational, cultural, sociological, methodological literature, the analysis of curricula and textbooks, federal state educational standards of higher professional education, summarizing of our own experience, pedagogical supervision, cultural research practices (structural and functional, dialectical, semiotic, comparative, typological, system, etc.).

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2. Theoretical Basis

The linguistic and cultural competence of students is formed by integrating linguistic and cultural academic courses that reveal the relationship and interaction of the national and foreign language culture. The basis of the formation of a linguistic and cultural competence of a translator/interpreter is presented by a linguistic and cultural approach.

The linguistic and cultural approach is a set of methodological components aimed at the social and cultural training of a translator/interpreter, the formation of the unity and integrity of his/her common cultural, special and professional competences based on the totality of knowledge and skills and their effective application in practice, as well as relevant professional and personal qualities of the future translator/interpreter, his/her value orientations, abilities to self-determination and self-expression in culture.

In the proposed model, the core of linguistic (presented by such courses as “Fundamentals of Linguistics”, “Practical course of a foreign language”, “Lexicology”, “History of the target language”, “Country Studies Through Language”) and cultural (“Cultural Studies”, “World Art Culture”) integration should become the valuesemantic and semantic-symbolic features of the language and culture encoded in the art as a cultural activity. All this contributes to self-cognition and understanding of the world through culture that is based on spiritual and moral experience of generations and helps navigate in modern multicultural society and adapt in a rapidly changing world.

The educational indicators of such a personality are formed by means of his/her consistent linguistic and cultural thinking and the level of the value and semantic skills.

In the context of our study, we define linguistic and cultural competence of a translator/interpreter as a system of knowledge about culture embodied in a specific national language, as well as a set of general, special and professional skills aimed at the formation of an all-rounded personality of a translator/interpreter and determining his/her maturity in linguistic and cultural communication activities, understanding of the mentality of peoples and national languages, ability to detect and decode the values and cultural meanings that people put into their creations and actions in the form of symbolic forms, giving them semiotic interpretation as well as an instrumental ability to use it all in practice showing the degree of their spirituality, creative personality, intellectual and emotional wealth, socialization and awareness of culture.

Linguistic and cultural competence consists of the following components: cognitive (getting knowledge); valueorientated (relation to activity); communication and activity (development and implementation of communicative qualities of a person); emotional and motivational component (motivation for creative activity).

The projected model includes the following structural components: theoretical and methodological; goal determining; informative; technological, criterion-evaluation.

Theoretical and methodological component. The theoretical basis of the model is constituted by fundamental provisions of cultural linguistics and semiotics developed in the works of Russian and foreign scientists (F. De Saussure, R. Jakobson, R. Barthes, G. Gadamer, M. Heidegger, N. Chomsky, K. Jaspers, V. Gumboldt, A. Potebnya); ideas and positions expressed in the writings of experts who develop the problem of integration of culture and a foreign language (I. Bim, N. Passov, S. Ter-Minasova, V. Furmanova, etc.); research aimed at the development of methods of teaching a foreign language with a culture studies component (V. Oshchepkova, A. Bogomolova, P. Sysoeva, etc.); competence approach, (V. Baydenko, I. Zimnyaya, A. Khutorskoy, etc.); dialogue of cultures and pedagogical dialogue (M. Bakhtin, M. Kagan, etc.).

The goal determining component is aimed at covering cross-cutting objectives and targets, the development of motivation for personal and professional growth of a translator/interpreter, his/her self-determination in culture when the level of competence will allow to successfully and flexibly adapt to the modern multicultural world,

integrate into the national and world culture, build willingness and ability to take part in an intercultural dialogue.

Content-related component. The integrated contents of linguistic and cultural courses focus on human values and the values of national cultures as a way of integrating general cultural and professional knowledge in order to eliminate its fragmentation as well as ethno-cultural and professional identity of an individual.

This integration implies the allocation of the following semantic units:

a) traditional household and ceremonial culture

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b) every day and formal etiquette;
c) art and the dialogue of cultures in art;
d) cultural components with a typically national flavour, national character;
e) “national world views” reflecting specifics of world perception and national mentality of representatives of a

certain culture.

The linguistic and cultural course includes mythologized cultural and linguistic units based on a myth or archetype (e.g., within the courses “World Art Culture” and “Cultural Studies” the following issues are discussed:

x

mythological beliefs of the Celts in monuments of art;

x

pagan symbols in the art of Britain (5–11cc.) and Ancient Russia; symbols of Bulgar and Celtic art, etc.);

x

symbols, stereotypes, standards (e.g., paintings by Bruegel, Bosch, Picasso and others help decipher the

symbolic nature of the language);

x

images as an important linguistic entity which contains basic information about the connection of words and culture. For example, students should identify elements of the English mentality and English character in the works of William Hogarth, Reynolds, Gainsborough;

x

etiquette – a set of specific for the culture rules of behaviour

that meet certain social roles (e.g., the course "Cultural Studies" deals with such elements of intercultural communication as manners and etiquette including verbal and body languages, nonverbal communication and national mentality that determine the behaviour of representatives of different cultures, character, values, traditions and customs reflected in the culture and the language).

x

concepts as objects of emotions (they are not only reflected about but are also experienced). For example, such emotional concepts as sadness, grief, love, joy, hope, and craving in different languages and cultures (many of them do not have exact equivalents in English and their conceptual content is specified by a nation) reveal the values of cultures; concepts of British, Russian, and Tatar mentality: home, family, traditions, freedom, sense of humour, etc. When considering the concepts of "water", "sun", "moon", the symboli. meaning of water, solar and lunar signs in different cultures on the basis of the language of art is pointed out.

x

content components enriched by value-semantic components and basic values of different cultures aimed at identifying the reasons for the dialogue of cultures; All this provides a comprehensive, systematic view of culture as a world of artefacts, values and meanings, the world of signs and symbols.

The technological component of the model provides for the selection of methods facilitating learning the material aimed at the formation of linguistic and cultural competence of the soon-to-be translator/interpreter that have been tested by us in the long-term practice of teaching linguistic and cultural courses.

One of the major methods of forming linguistic and cultural competence of students in academic environment within the above-mentioned courses that contribute to self-expression and self-development and the importance of which is difficult to overestimate is the method of projects.

A special role is given to such interdisciplinary projects as "Culture of the Renaissance and the Phenomenon of Shakespeare". Issues associated with the analysis of the core values of the culture of the Renaissance, a new understanding of the world and man reflected in art and literature, problems raised in Shakespeare's dramas, and others are put forward in the project.

To do a project, students work in teams and choose a topic for research and a mini-project in accordance with their interests: 1. Renaissance in England. Outstanding humanists. 2. Secrets and mysteries of Shakespeare. 3. Philosophy of Shakespeare's plays. 4. Humanists' ideas in Shakespeare's texts. 5. Shakespeare and Montaigne: two minds. 6. England after Shakespeare (17th century). 7. Shakespeare in cinema. 8. Shakespeare in the visual arts and music. 9. Shakespeare on the stages of Kazan theatres: Past and Present.

The main result of the project may be presented in various forms: a computer presentation on the basis of a mini-project or a project in general, performance "Travelling around Shakespeare's places", "Walking around

; a story in pictures from Stratford-upon-Avon; staging Shakespeare's plays; presentations and..Hampton Court

short films created by students after watching Shakespeare's plays. Their task is to attract the attention of their fellow students to the problems raised in a play, stimulate their interest and desire to visit the performance. At the end of the class, students vote for the play they would like to see. On Shakespeare's birthday students enter a Recitation Contest of Shakespeare's monologues and sonnets.

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This interdisciplinary project work ensures integrity of attitude and thinking, promotes self-cognition and understanding of the world through culture, develops culture of feelings, and equips students with moral and spiritual experience through the values embedded in culture thus preparing to develop professionally.

In addition to interdisciplinary projects, students do research, case study, creative, practice-oriented projects and projects-presentations on a variety of topics including those based on a comparative analysis of two or more cultures, for example:

Model of the universe and man in Norse mythology;

Etiquette as a cultural phenomenon (comparative analysis of etiquette of Britain and Russia).

Symbols of solar and lunar signs in Russian, British and Turkish cultures;

Semiotics of a church and mosque in the British and Russian public

mind at the example of Christ the Savior
Cathedral, St. Paul's Cathedral and the Church of St. Sophia;

Features of etiquette of the Russians, Tatars and British;

National features of intercultural business communication;

Introduction, presentation, calling by a title in the business
etiquette of the Russians, Tatars, British and
Americans. Basics and specifics;

Features of the North American, British and European business
cultures and their reflection in communicative
behaviour;

Role of a doll in Russian and British cultures;

Specificity of the British and Japanese intercultural dialogue in
the context of globalization;

Symbols and body language in communicative behaviour of the
Russians, Tatars, British;

Language of Islamic art and its specificity in the Volga Region,
etc.

The following activities can be suggested: linguistic and cultural
games and quizzes, reporting at students'
scientific conferences, theatrical performances, creation of a
movie, workshops for creating dolls, videos, tourist
leaflets, routes and excursions made by the students themselves,
etc.

Dramatization games keep students' experience up to date, develop
their emotional and intellectual potential,
and form competences. The characteristic feature of this method is
that by dramatizing what has been read or seen
we use graphic and expressive means such as facial expressions,
gestures, postures, body mobility, voice
intonation that contribute to the development of significant
creative competences, improvisation and organizational
abilities important in the future career.

In role play students choose and act out different social roles
according to their own plot. Students take up roles
of interpreters representing different cultures, managers of firms,
corporations, diplomatic officials, flight
attendants and others. This kind of game encourages reflective
processes when changing roles, contributes to the
formation of linguistic and cultural competence on the basis of
emotional and cognitive involvement in the game
and the necessity to be creative; it also helps develop imagination
while modelling a particular language
personality and acquire communicative experience.

Method of associations of natural and secondary languages (language of art). The idea of this method lies in building subjective linguistic associations when dealing with works of art. This method is based on "synchronising" the communication of characters in works of art.

Method of perception of works of art with your eyes closed ("close your eyes to see"). By describing a picture and perceiving it by ear (a kind of "listening") students create their own image which is then compared with the original one. This comparison helps not to look at but see a painting by being attentive to every detail, so to speak, "read" the picture as a text comprehending its values and meaning.

Methods of case studies is also widely used. They are presented by composition workshops that use common challenges of some courses in integration, e.g. "Reflection of communicative values in different cultures", etc.; debate seminars ("System of values of the Russians and the British"); multimedia lectures in the Hermitage-Kazan centre ("England through the eyes of Russian travellers", "Charles Cameron in Russia", "Catherine II and British artists", etc.) that, by means of doing assignments to the lectures, help to establish associative-shaped relation between the natural and secondary languages to identify the structure and content of the concepts included in the diversity of their senses, comprehend the symbolic dimension of culture; method of research portfolio that develops the ability to work with different sources of information on an academic or scientific topic; fiction,

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Internet sources on the subject, programmes of TV Channel "Culture"
– "Artificial selection", "Gingerbread

, etc. (e.g., "Russian and English ball as a Cultural..House", "The Power of a fact", "Academy", "Perfect Ear

Phenomenon", etc.), distance excursions to the museums of the target language, dramatizations, and many others.

Thus, linguistic and cultural competence allows a future interpreter to become a conductor of spiritual values in the modern world.

The criterion-evaluative component involves determination of the criteria and levels of evaluation of the process of forming of linguistic and cultural competence of students.

In 2010–2015, in order to determine the level of students' linguistic and cultural competence, experiments were carried out that allowed to draw objective conclusions about the

effectiveness of the proposed model.

To evaluate the degree of linguistic and cultural competence a number of criteria (cognitive, emotional and motivational, value-oriented, communicative-activity) and levels of its formation (low, medium, high) were introduced.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Participants

The total number of participants in the experiment was represented by 263 undergraduate students of Kazan Federal University, Russia, of whom 258 participants were females and 5 males. The students' major is Linguistics specializing in Translation and Interpretation Studies. All of the respondents study English as a first foreign Language and two other European or Oriental languages. The age range of the students was from 18 to 20 years old. The participants varied greatly in terms of the length of their English learning experience. The mean years of their learning experience was 11.55 with a standard deviation 4.07 from the mean.

3.2. Monitoring technologies

We used the following monitoring technologies: monitoring, testing, project work, representation of concepts, problem solving, information and computer technology, terminology dictations, essays, games, hermeneutical methodology, analysis of the results of educational and professional activities.

The formation of linguistic and cultural competence was also checked on the basis of cultural texts that revealed the knowledge of lexical units and national cultural semantics and checked the level of understanding of a different culture. Diagnostic tests were used to identify the valuable relation to the culture of their own country and the countries of the target language, including tolerant attitude to the traditions and customs of the target language country.

4. Results and findings

The results of the experimental work suggest that the proposed model contributes to changes in the cognitive component, the ability to use the conceptual apparatus of cultural studies, theoretical and applied linguistics, translation studies, linguistics and intercultural communication theory for solving professional problems; knowledge of the realities of the culture of the studied languages and cultures of the region, in a tolerant attitude towards the foreign language culture. There have been positive changes in the emotional and motivational, valueoriented and communicative-activity component of the linguistic and cultural competence of the student, which

resulted in an effort to master the means of communication almost as a guarantee of a successful career, to use them to solve practical problems of communication demonstrating continued cooperation and interaction, the ability to be fluent with culturally-marked vocabulary in different situations of communication.

The final stage of the experiment involved a final diagnosis of the levels of formation of linguistic and cultural competence of students of the control and experimental groups. The obtained data suggest significant change in the formation of linguistic and cultural competence of students at the beginning and end of the experiment. By the end of the experiment there was an increase in the percentage of

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students with a “high” level of development of the competence (experimental group –43% compared with the control group – 16%).

Table 1. Levels of competence development

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
control group	41	47
experimental group	29	34

The presented analysis of the experimental results shows that the use of the model ensures the formation of cognitive, emotional and motivational, value-oriented and communicative-activity components of linguistic and cultural competence.

5. Conclusion

All the above said constitutes the scientific novelty of the research which is reflected in the introduction of a model based on the integration of linguistic and cultural disciplines, aimed at the formation of linguistic and cultural competence of a translator/interpreter in a single linguistic and cultural communicative educational process and in the system of higher education.

The model reflects the specifics of the implementation of linguistic and cultural approach to practical educational activity in training translators/interpreters, structural components of the model, requirements for the design of the content and substantive bases of integration of linguistic and cultural knowledge, the core of which is value-semantic and semantic-symbolic features of the language and culture encoded in art as a cultural activity.

There were highlighted the basic principles underlying the

integrative approach to the formation of linguistic and cultural competence of a soon-to-be translator/interpreter, as well as technologies aimed at its formation.

There were defined the content and structure of the linguistic and cultural competence formed in an integrative space of linguistic and cultural disciplines. The findings obtained over 2010–2015 in Kazan Federal University confirm their relevance and practical importance for the formation of a multicultural linguistic identity and linguistic and cultural competence of students in the learning process through the integration of linguistic and cultural disciplines.

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