

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF FUTURE TRANSLATORS STUDYING GERMAN AFTER ENGLISH

### *O DESENVOLVIMENTO DA COMPETÊNCIA COMUNICATIVA INTERCULTURAL DE FUTUROS TRADUTORES QUE ESTUDAM ALEMÃO APÓS O INGLÊS*

### *EL DESARROLLO DE LA COMPETENCIA COMUNICATIVA INTERCULTURAL DE FUTUROS TRADUCTORES QUE ESTUDEN ALEMÁN E INGLÉS*

Elena KUROCHKINA<sup>1</sup>  
Zara Dautovna MAKAZIEVA<sup>2</sup>  
Tatiana Sergeevna MARKOVA<sup>3</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this paper is to develop a methodology for the improvement of intercultural communicative competence for future translators studying German after English. The paper analyzes modern European documents on language education where communicative competence is determined through its inextricable link with plurilingual and pluricultural competencies. The authors propose methods for the formation of intercultural competence and clarify the goals of intercultural training of future translators. The paper concludes that in the practice of teaching German after English, one should adhere to the principles of learning a second foreign language based on materials that reflect the cultural realities of the country of the target language; taking into account the experience of students' interaction with native speakers; motivating students' interest in learning German after English; stimulating cognitive activity through solving conceptional and communicative tasks that simulate intercultural communication; using professionally-oriented assignments.

**KEYWORDS:** Plurilingualism. Pluriculturalism. German as a second foreign language. Intercultural Competence.

**RESUMO:** *O objetivo do artigo é desenvolver uma metodologia para o aprimoramento da competência comunicativa intercultural para futuros tradutores que estudam alemão depois do inglês. O artigo analisa documentos europeus modernos sobre educação de línguas, em que a competência comunicativa é determinada por meio de sua ligação inextricável com as competências plurilíngues e pluriculturais. As autoras propõem métodos para a formação da competência intercultural e esclarecem os objetivos da formação intercultural dos futuros tradutores. O artigo conclui que, na prática do ensino de alemão depois do inglês, deve-se aderir aos princípios de aprendizagem de uma segunda língua estrangeira com base em materiais que reflitam as realidades culturais do país da língua-alvo; levar em consideração a*

<sup>1</sup> Military University of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, Moscow – Russia; Moscow Aviation Institute (National Research University), Moscow – Russia. Link Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4082-8553>. E-mail: [helen.newmail@yandex.ru](mailto:helen.newmail@yandex.ru)

<sup>2</sup> Chechen State University named after Akhmat Abdulkhamidovich Kadyrov, Grozny – Russia. Link Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5128-8900>. E-mail: [z.d.makazieva@mail.ru](mailto:z.d.makazieva@mail.ru)

<sup>3</sup> Russian State Social University, Moscow – Russia. Link Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7837-7439>. E-mail: [markowats@mail.ru](mailto:markowats@mail.ru)

*experiência de interação dos alunos com falantes nativos; motivar o interesse dos alunos em aprender alemão depois do inglês; estimular a atividade cognitiva por meio da resolução de tarefas conceituais e comunicativas que simulam a comunicação intercultural; usando atribuições orientadas profissionalmente.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Plurilinguismo. Pluriculturalismo. Alemão como segunda língua estrangeira. Competência intercultural.*

**RESUMEN:** *El propósito del artículo es desarrollar una metodología para la mejora de la competencia comunicativa intercultural para futuros traductores que estudien alemán después del inglés. El artículo analiza documentos europeos modernos sobre educación lingüística en los que la competencia comunicativa se determina a través de su vínculo indisoluble con las competencias plurilingües y pluriculturales. Los autores proponen métodos para la formación de la competencia intercultural y aclaran los objetivos de la formación intercultural de los futuros traductores. El documento concluye que en la práctica de enseñar alemán después del inglés, uno debe adherirse a los principios de aprender un segundo idioma extranjero basado en materiales que reflejan las realidades culturales del país del idioma de destino; teniendo en cuenta la experiencia de interacción de los estudiantes con hablantes nativos; motivar el interés de los estudiantes en aprender alemán después del inglés; estimular la actividad cognitiva mediante la resolución de tareas conceptuales y comunicativas que simulen la comunicación intercultural; utilizando asignaciones de orientación profesional.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Plurilingüismo. Pluriculturalismo. Alemán como segunda lengua extranjera. Competencia intercultural.*

## Introduction

At present, everyone is required to know one or two foreign languages (FL), which can significantly help the successful integration of a person into international cooperation in the fields of economic activity and business, culture, education, and research. The importance of the course on plurilingualism and multiculturalism is growing rapidly in the context of globalization and is acquiring new importance (CHANKOVA *et al.*, 2021; NIKONOVA; ZALUTSKAYA, 2021).

In the broadest sense, plurilingualism is understood as the ability of a person to use several FL at different levels of proficiency and to carry out various activities, depending on one's needs. The number of languages is specified by the Council of Europe as "two foreign and native", and English continues to lead in the list of languages that are most often studied by Europeans. Other "main" European languages (French, German, Spanish, and Italian) lag significantly behind in the number of students (PREECE; MARSHALL, 2020). Plurilingualism is also understood as an increase in the number of languages used by Europeans for international communication (COSTE; SIMON, 2009). In the social aspect, plurilingualism, therefore,

concerns the use of many FL by representatives of different peoples to implement intercultural (IC) cooperation. Individual plurilingualism or multilingualism means a certain person's knowledge of more than one FL, which increases their chances of employment and participation in the social life of international society (TYURIKOV *et al.*, 2021; SIDOROV *et al.*, 2020).

The authors of the updated Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (2020) have prioritized the concept of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). In the CEFR, the importance of ICC is based on the combination of pluricultural and plurilingual competencies, which implies "the ability of a person to use pluralistic linguistic and cultural resources to meet the needs of communication and interaction with representatives of other countries, as well as constantly enrich these resources" (MARSHALL; MOORE, 2018). The CEFR (2020) defines descriptors for combined pluricultural and plurilingual competencies for each level of language acquisition and offers numerous examples of curricula that make it possible to form these competencies.

### **Review of current research**

The introduction of the concept of ICC in FL education fell at the turn of the century when in the 1990s numerous ICC models emerged. According to one of the first models of the ICC, created by M. Byram and G. Zarate, the ICC includes theoretical knowledge, practical skills and knowledge, values and appropriate behavior, as well as "knowledge as cultural awareness", which is considered the most significant component of the ICC (BYRAM; ZARATE, 1994). Subsequently, the ICC model created by M. Byram and G. Zarate was developed and formed the basis of the basic documents of the Council of Europe, in particular the CEFR.

At the beginning of the 21st century, researchers focused on defining the model of IC communication between representatives of different cultures in a multilingual business and educational environment (DEARDOFF, 2006; PREECE, 2010). In these models, learning is seen as "the joint study of languages and cultures", it occurs in the practice of intercultural communication and is stimulated by it. Although knowledge in these models also plays a significant role, the named researchers put the affective component in the first positions in the structure of the ICC. This component includes respect for another culture/other cultures, openness or willingness to learn about another culture/other cultures, lack of bias towards them, openness to social contacts (DEARDOFF, 2006), as well as flexibility, sense of humor,

patience, openness, interest, empathy, tolerance to ambiguities, the ability to refrain from expressing opinions (PREECE, 2010).

Researchers (OLIVEIRA; AANCA, 2009) define a competent participant in IC communication through knowledge and (correct) understanding of an FL culture in conjunction with the readiness and ability to use the FL. Researchers (OLIVEIRA; AANCA, 2009; SIDOROV *et al.*, 2020; SAVINA *et al.*, 2020) define the body of knowledge and skills using such components as: 1) knowledge about the features of social processes and social institutions in one's country and the country of the interlocutor (knowledge of the specifics of countries); 2) knowledge of common reasons that lead to a misunderstanding of interlocutors of different cultural origins (theory of intercultural communication); 3) the ability to be an equal partner with representatives of another culture, including the ability to be critical of the values that are inherent in one's native culture; 4) the ability to correctly apply the rules of politeness and standards of verbal and non-verbal behavior; 5) the ability to apply the standard norms of oral communication and respond to changes in the style of communication; 6) the ability to apply the standard norms of written communication, be aware of changes in the style of communication and respond to them; 7) the ability to understand the subtext from the speech of the interlocutors, its true meaning (metacommunication); and 8) the ability to settle misunderstandings in the interpretation of facts/phenomena (mediation).

An analysis of the above works allows us to formulate our understanding of the ICC. ICC is the ability of an individual to apply one's own linguistic, sociolinguistic, discursive, strategic, socio-cultural, and social competence effectively and adequately in the FL when interacting with representatives of other cultures.

Researchers are actively involved in the problems of studying a second foreign language (SFL). As noted by E. Piccardo (2013), the study of a new FL does not start from scratch, but the proficiency of a previously learned language is constantly expanding and deepening with the study of new FL.

B.L. Smith and E.A. Peterson (2012) consider the adaptation of general didactic principles of teaching an FL to teaching an SFL as an important prerequisite for learning German after English. The first principle (the principle of awareness in learning) provides for the improvement of the assimilation of knowledge about the language based on a conscious comparison of the native language, the first FL and the SFL, and a conscious approach to assessing the effectiveness of one's language learning strategies. The second principle emphasizes the importance of "understanding" as the first step in the assimilation of linguistic knowledge, which incessantly continues through the processing of information about the new

language (perception, integration, comparison with the previous language, etc.). In teaching practice, this principle is implemented, for example, when working with similar/parallel texts on two studied languages when building "bridges of understanding" between linguistic means (vocabulary and grammar) of the two languages. The third principle concerns the orientation of educational materials towards novelty, that is, the prevention of repetition of topics in the manuals on the first FL and the SFL. In addition, the opportunity to study and compare languages and cultures independently, to formulate, for example, grammatical rules based on the processing of many of the provided examples, is important. From this point of view, it is fundamental to use parallel texts written in two FL, which will contribute to better and more conscious assimilation of the language. The last of the principles concerns a significant saving of time on explaining linguistic phenomena that are similar/analogous in the two languages and their more careful handling in the context of a new language (SMITH; PETERSON, 2012).

The hypothesis of the study: the successful teaching of German after English depends on pedagogical conditions, including the creation of an artificial language environment, the methodological competence of teachers, an adequate definition of the future professional needs of translators, considering the experience of studying a previous FL, the general educational and cultural level of students.

Objectives of the study:

1. To determine the pedagogical conditions for teaching German after English;
2. Based on pedagogical conditions, to describe the methods of teaching German after English;
3. Based on the pedagogical conditions and the methods corresponding to them, to determine the principles of teaching German after English.

The paper consists of an introduction, a review of the literature, methods of the study, results of the study, their discussion, and conclusion.

## **Methods**

To achieve the goal set in the study, we have defined a mixed set of theoretical and empirical research methods:

- The theoretical methods (analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization) are used for the study of academic literature on the state of the research problem;
- The expert survey method is used to determine the pedagogical conditions for teaching German after English.

At the first stage of the study, the sources of information necessary for the implementation of the research goal were selected: papers published in journals included into the Scopus and Web of Science citation bases, and conference presentations made by researchers from different countries containing conceptual provisions on the formation of intercultural competence in the study of an FL and learning methods for an SFL in the context of plurilingual education (21 sources).

At the second stage of the study, we conducted an expert survey (by e-mail) to determine the pedagogical conditions for teaching the German language after English and their subsequent ranking.

The selection criteria for experts (35 people) were at least 3 papers on this topic published in journals included in the Scopus or Web of Science citation bases or at least 10 years of experience in teaching an FL.

At the third stage of the study, the collected information was analyzed, with the interpretation of the results obtained.

#### *The procedure and tools used for the study*

The experts were asked questions from a pre-compiled questionnaire, which included questions regarding expert opinion on the pedagogical conditions of teaching German after English. All participants had been warned about the purpose of the survey and the planning of the researchers to publish the results of the study in a summary form.

#### *Statistical analysis*

The study used numerical calculation methods with the Microsoft Excel software, with the help of which the percentage of expert references and the ranks of the pedagogical conditions for teaching the German language after English were calculated.

## **Results**

According to experts, if we are talking about the assimilation of the SFL and the corresponding ICC, then they suggest taking into account, firstly, the psycholinguistic patterns of mastering the FL based on the knowledge of the native language and FL, secondly, the relationship and/or differences of the studied FL and cultures, and thirdly, the target level of proficiency in the SFL, which may differ from the level of proficiency in the first FL, and, therefore, require the organization of more intensive work in the classroom and outside it.

All of these factors should correspond to a specific contingent of students, namely: their professional needs (linguist/not a linguist, linguist specializing as a university teacher/school teacher/translator), acquired linguistic erudition, and education of students in strategies for studying FL.

In the case of teaching future translators who study German after English, the choice of language teaching methods, according to experts, depends on the following conditions (Table 1).

**Table 1** – Pedagogical conditions for teaching German after English

| No | Condition  | %*  | Rank |
|----|--|-----|------|
| 1  | Successful creation of an artificial language environment, which, in turn, depends on the linguistic competence of teachers and the formation of their ICC. The best option is the teacher's linguistic competence not only in the SFL but also in the first FL which their students study, which will significantly improve the teacher's ability to compare two languages consciously. | 83% | 1    |
| 2  | Methodological competence of teachers in the choice of adequate methods/techniques for the formation of ICC among students, which makes it possible to consider the advantages and/or interference of learning the German language after English (kinship of languages, differences in speech cultures) during teaching.   | 77% | 2    |
| 3  | Adequate identification of the future professional needs in the IC activities of translators and the corresponding content of the ICC  | 71% | 3    |
| 4  | Considering the peculiarities of the learning style, the experience of studying the previous FL, the general educational and cultural level of future translators.   | 69% | 4    |

Note: compiled based on the expert survey, \*percentage of expert references.

Source: Devised by the authors

## Discussion

Speaking about the creation of an artificial linguistic environment, experts note that in the conditions of plurilingualism and multicultural education, the formation of the ICC occurs like a person's mastery of a new FL. Besides, the ICC of students of the SFL is a complex multicultural and plurilingual competence, which consists of proficiency in several languages and different cultural experiences.

The function of the universal means of IC communication today is performed by the English language. In comparison, other European languages are studied and used very limitedly. As for the German language, as a native language, it has a strong position in Central Europe, since it is official in several states, accounting for 23% of citizens of all EU countries.

German is increasingly being studied as an SFL, but students start learning it later, for less time, and do not achieve a high level of mastery compared to the first FL. Taking this into account, language teaching methodologists (SMITH; PETERSON, 2012; KLEBER *et al.*, 2010) turned to the study and development of conceptual approaches to the study of the second and subsequent FLs based on a communicative approach.

The conclusions about the need to compare and contrast FL during their study are supported by many researchers who speak about the advantages of learning German after English. Thus, F. Kleber *et al.* compared the representations of communicative and pragmatic functions in a speech in German and English and highlighted significant differences related to the expression of functions such as request, demand, reproach, gratitude, greeting, and ending a conversation, argumentation, and disagreement, and the like (KLEBER *et al.*, 2010). Thus, the reliance on the comparison of communicative behavior in the native, German and English linguistic cultures seems to be necessary, since it can help to determine effective approaches to teaching IC communication.

Let us consider how the formation of the ICC takes place. Its successful formation does not happen by itself, automatically. S. Preece (2010), for example, defines the informal and formal ways of forming the ICC, where the first way consists of gaining experience of IC communication in daily communication with representatives of different cultures. This method does not guarantee the formation of the ICC since the IC experience is not always adequately understood and assimilated. Experts prefer the second, formal method, which assumes a deliberately planned process of mastering ICC, organized through the recreation of typical situations and contexts of IC communication during training (Preece, 2010). Consequently, the skill of IC communication, like any other speech skill, should be developed systematically and purposefully, using appropriate educational methods.

Although the best way to form ICC is considered to be immersion in a real language environment (DEARDOFF, 2006), conclusions similar to the above come from researchers who study the impact of international internships on the formation of ICC. As noted by S. Marshall and D. Moore (2018), the ICC of different students develops in different ways: some students have a significant improvement in the ICC in general or in certain sub-competencies, while their classmates' degree of progress is not satisfactory. Moreover, the development of some sub-competencies remains unchanged in almost all students. Thus, the need to develop methods through which the ICC can be effectively developed seems to be urgent.

Let us turn to the experience of higher education in Germany, which is distinguished by a high level of internationalization. For a better adaptation of international students to the IC



context, universities have introduced special courses and project-based training. Dedicated courses in IC communication are included in the programs of many study programs; in addition to linguists, future doctors, engineers, and enterprise managers acquire an ICC. Along with formal ICC teaching, students have the opportunity to develop their ICC while studying for one semester at a foreign partner university (MADER; CAMERER, 2010).

A sign of the times is that from mastering the facts on the history, geography, customs of the country of the target language, most of the methodologists propose to move on to mastering pragmatic means of broadcasting, developing a critical attitude towards one's own culture and foreign-language cultures (PREECE; MARSHALL, 2020; COSTE; SIMON, 2009; PREECE, 2010).

Western teachers include intercultural training, projects (OLIVEIRA; AANCA, 2009), role-playing games (PREECE, 2010), quests, workshops, as well as the use of games aimed at forming multicultural teams through modeling dialogic communication between two or more participants (PREECE; MARSHALL, 2020).

These methods help students to successfully adapt to multicultural learning in the context of a modern university. Such IC communication, as noted by D. Coste and D.L. Simon (2009), is mainly reproduced in such forms as IC interaction in everyday life, the implementation of oral/written academic communication, and conversation on topics related to one's main area of study/specialization, which can be considered from a theoretical and/or practical point of view in the classroom (COSTE; SIMON, 2009).

Methods for analyzing critical situations and cases are especially effective. Their use ensures the development of the ability to adequately participate in IC contact through mastering the speech/language means necessary to resolve misunderstandings and establish a favorable atmosphere. D. Coste and D.L. Simon (2009) also demonstrate the effectiveness of attracting students to online group projects that simulate international collaboration. During the group execution of projects, teams are formed, and an awareness of the processes of building IC teams and debugging IC business relations emerges. Through verbal communication with students from other countries, project participants experience the features of verbal and non-verbal behavior of representatives of another culture in practice, learn to overcome IC misunderstandings, and, together, form their ICC.

The considered methods and techniques for the formation of ICC are used mainly during joint training of representatives of different languages and cultures or with the involvement of speakers of other languages and cultures (TEREKHOVA; ZUBOVA, 2020; GRIGORYEVA *et al.*, 2021; ZALUTSKAYA, 2021). The advantage of such educational cooperation, according

to experts, is that the formation of the ICC proceeds not only as formally organized by the teacher but also as informal, natural communication of students from different countries. In contrast to Western practices, the acquisition of an FL and foreign culture in the overwhelming majority of Russian universities occurs in monolingual collectives, that is, in an artificial FL environment, and as a result, it requires special attention to determine the goals, content, and methods of IC teaching.

Considering an adequate definition of the future professional needs of translators' activities in IC and the corresponding ICC content, the experts emphasize that IC training is of predominant importance for specialists preparing for professional activities in the field of international cooperation, such as linguists, translators, international relations professionals. Linguists and translators desperately need both a high level of proficiency in the first FL and the SFL and plurilingual and pluricultural competence in their inseparable unity. As A.J. Liddicoat, a translator is a kind of "double" linguistic personality and must learn to perceive an FL textual activity from the position of an FL linguistic socio-culture to then switch to the native language and sociocultural codes in their indissoluble unity, switching from the process of understanding to the activity of translation (LIDDICOAT, 2014). Therefore, in our opinion, the process of forming the ICC of translators is aimed at sensitizing the perception of reality by representatives of a foreign culture, as well as a readiness for changes in positions and attitudes (respect for specific culturally determined behavior, overcoming bias due to existing stereotypes, critical understanding of one's own cultural identity).

Let us consider modern interpretations of the goals of the formation of the ICC of translators. A.J. Liddicoat (2014) emphasizes the dependence of awareness of the peculiarities of the culture of other countries and the corresponding language on the development of a person's cognitive sphere and their metacognitive knowledge. On the one hand, as the researcher notes, the formation of such awareness is associated with the cognitive development of a person; on the other hand, future translators do not need to master the most comprehensive information about the country of the target language. Also, in our opinion, the presence of basic knowledge helps to understand exactly what similarities/differences between languages and cultures in contact can contribute to communicative success or failure, which, in turn, makes possible students' conscious and methodologically correct choices of strategies for enriching their knowledge in the future life (LIDDICOAT, 2014).

A. J. Liddicoat (2014) argues that the ICC of translators, unlike specialists in other spheres, cannot limit itself to the ability to behave following the acceptable conditions of a different cultural reality or to adapt to life in these conditions. IC training for translators should

focus on the cognitive operations of choosing adequate linguistic means to express ideas that are easily perceived by native speakers of their native language and culture, but which are difficult to understand for speakers of another language and culture and which can complicate the mediation process.

## **Conclusion**

Summing up, we note that in the practice of teaching German after English, one should adhere to the following principles:

- The study of SFL based on materials that reflect the cultural realities of Germany (local history or everyday life), a balanced selection of lexical units and grammar, which ensures the development of culture through mastering the language;

- A comprehensive consideration of the experience of interaction between students and native speakers (during their stay in Germany under the exchange program, using online oral or written communication) and reliance on such experience during the study of the specifics of the culturally conditioned communication of the study group's members;

- Motivating students' interest in learning German after English, encouraging students to rely on the first FL in terms of using already developed strategies for mastering the language, as well as developing new ones regarding mastering the German language itself;

- Stimulation of cognitive activity through the solution of mental and communicative tasks that simulate IC communication, since the knowledge and skills acquired independently, empirically, are stronger than those obtained in a finished state;

- The use of professionally oriented tasks that contribute to the development of the future translator as an intermediary or mediator in IC communication.

The results of the study have confirmed the hypothesis that the successful teaching of German after English depends on pedagogical conditions, including the creation of an artificial language environment, the methodological competence of teachers, an adequate definition of the future professional needs of translators, considering the experience of studying a previous FL, the general educational, and cultural level of students.

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