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ENHANCING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH MEDIA-BASED LEARNING

APRIMORANDO A COMPETÊNCIA INTERCULTURAL NO ENSINO
SUPERIOR POR MEIO DA APRENDIZAGEM BASEADA EM MÍDIA

MEJORANDO LA COMPETENCIA INTERCULTURAL EN LA
EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR A TRAVÉS DEL APRENDIZAJE BASADO
EN MEDIOS

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ABSTRACT: The article examines the development of intercultural compe-
tence in higher education students, emphasizing the role of media edu-
cation in this process. Globalization and social change demand alterna-
tives to traditional teaching methods. The study identifies key stages in
intercultural development—denial, defense, acceptance, adaptation, and
integration—and evaluates the effectiveness of media-based educational
technologies. Using analytical, experimental, and statistical methods, a
positive correlation was found between frequent use of media education
tools and student performance. The findings underscore the importance
of broadly integrating media education into higher education to foster in-
tercultural competence.

KEYWORDS: Media education tools. Video lessons. Communication. Inter-
cultural competence. Cross-cultural skills.

RESUMO: O artigo examina a formação da competência intercultural em estudantes do ensino superior, ressaltando o papel da mídia-educação nesse processo. A globalização e as mudanças sociais exigem a superação das limitações das metodologias tradicionais. O estudo identifica as etapas do desenvolvimento intercultural — negação, defesa, aceitação, adaptação e integração — e avalia a eficácia das tecnologias educacionais baseadas em mídia. Por meio de métodos analíticos, experimentais e estatísticos, constatou-se uma correlação positiva entre o uso frequente dessas ferramentas e o desempenho dos estudantes. Os resultados destacam a importância da integração ampla da mídia-educação no ensino superior para promover competências interculturais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ferramentas de educação sobre mídia. Aulas em vídeo. Comunicação. Competência intercultural. Competências interculturais.

RESUMEN: El artículo examina la formación de la competencia intercultural en estudiantes de educación superior, destacando el papel de la educomunicación en este proceso. La globalización y los cambios sociales exigen superar las limitaciones de los métodos tradicionales de enseñanza. El estudio identifica etapas clave del desarrollo intercultural —negación, defensa, aceptación, adaptación e integración— y evalúa la eficacia de las tecnologías educativas basadas en medios. A través de métodos analíticos, experimentales y estadísticos, se constató una correlación positiva entre el uso frecuente de herramientas de educomunicación y el rendimiento estudiantil. Los resultados refuerzan la importancia de integrar ampliamente la educomunicación en la educación superior para fomentar la competencia intercultural.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Herramientas de educación mediática. Lecciones de vídeo. Comunicación. Competencia intercultural. Habilidades interculturales..

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INTRODUCTION

With the growing pressure of integration and globalization, intercultural interaction takes on a new context in terms of global interaction and requires adjustments to the relevant competencies in the learning process. Understanding the cultural and customary characteristics of potential partners comes to the fore, actively influencing not only the processes of cross-cultural interaction but also economic cooperation.

Modern higher education institutions that have an established traditional methodology of education are experiencing active dynamics of requirements for the competencies necessary for students, determined by the requirements of the international labor market and the level of competitive advantages of specialists. This necessitates the transformation of the approach to education based on the priority of developing cross-cultural skills and competencies, which leads to the upgrade of curricula, integration of innovative approaches, and educational tools.

The above-mentioned dynamics of social requirements for the upgrade of the educational process force scientists and leading teachers to find new methods of forming sustainable intercultural competencies in the higher education environment that will allow graduates to be effectively realized in their professional activities and demonstrate a high level of competitiveness in the international labor market. The effectiveness of cross-cultural skills development also determines the rating of a higher education institution, positioning its evolutionary development in a complementary way to the requirements of modern society. In order to develop students' intercultural competence skills, teachers must first master them, which poses a challenge in the modern higher education environment. All this requires expanded scientific research on ways to integrate the basics of intercultural dialogue into the system of professional and personal development within the higher education environment.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the aspects of the development of students' intercultural competence and the potential of media education in this context.

Literature Review

The intensification of the relevance of intercultural competencies in the environment of social interaction leads to an increase in scientific interest in this issue. In particular, modern scientists, such as Reis et al. (2021) and Sinambela et al. (2020), offer the latest solutions within the framework of modern pedagogical approaches to the formation of linguistic and cultural competencies of modern graduates of higher education institutions.

The phenomenon of intercultural competence in the modern scientific field does not have an unambiguous definition and is determined by the generally accepted meaning of

building a concept of effective interaction in a cross-cultural format. In particular, Deardorff (2020) characterizes the phenomenon of intercultural skills as a set of knowledge and skills that are closely related to the main cultural determinants of certain communities. The researchers insist that intercultural interaction efforts should be aimed at reaching a compromise in the interaction between different people, leveling out differences (Baird & Parayitam, 2019; Contini & Pica-Smith, 2017; Kryvoshein et al., 2022).

Leask (2020) analyzes the phenomenon of intercultural competence as a component of the general competence of a modern specialist, which synergizes tolerance skills, communication, social competencies, and language skills. The author emphasizes the need for students to develop certain universals within the studied category: skills of cooperation and communication interaction, empathy, tolerance, and openness to new knowledge.

Schmidmeier et al. (2020), based on many years of research on intercultural interaction in closed groups—companies with multicultural staff, identify the main components of developed intercultural competence: communication, continuous learning, effective interaction, consideration of cultural differentiation, and mediation of cultural determinants. In continuation, Papanastasiou et al. (2019) found that researchers often use synonyms to define competence, in particular, learning, knowledge, multiculturalism, and intercultural education. They note that these skills have a common goal in multicultural societies, which is typical in the context of the European community with active migration processes. The researchers emphasize the need to ensure mutual respect, regardless of cultural differentiation, as well as to establish effective communication between individuals with radically different views.

Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva (2020) actualize the differences between the phenomena of multiculturalism and interculturalism, insisting on the public-political basis of the latter and the personal basis of the former. At the same time, scientists define intercultural competence as a form of relations between representatives of different cultures, which are most clearly expressed in team and partnership interaction between foreign partners.

Dzwigol et al. (2020), Dias et al. (2020) position creative thinking as a method of forming sustainable linguistic and cultural skills in students. According to the scientists, it is creativity that makes it possible to generate fundamentally new solutions to atypical problems. A creative worldview promotes students' openness to innovation, stimulates the need to master intercultural knowledge, which, in synergy, forms the basis of effective intercultural interaction.

Contemporary researchers Cebrián et al. (2020) investigate the effectiveness of forming mixed intercultural classes in the context of developing cross-cultural interaction skills and implementing effective teamwork. In addition, in the time of active digital development, the problem of the feasibility of integrating modern information and communication solutions to intensify the development of professional skills arises. In this context, the publications of O'Dowd and Dooly (2020), Gorski et al. (2023), Skakovska and Kotyk (2020) are valuable,

focusing on aspects of the positive impact of virtual learning. The latter involves the active involvement of media education, in particular, with the authors considering options for its use within linguistic curricula at universities and business schools. In continuation, O'Dowd and Dooly (2020), Shadiev et al. (2023) argue that the potential of modern social media significantly expands the intercultural vector of society's development. Scientists are exploring the pedagogical possibilities of using drones to obtain direct video footage to enhance the content of visualizing intercultural interaction.

Moschetti and Verger (2020) position digital tools as the foundation for effective improvement of the learning process at various levels of education, emphasizing the challenges and risks of global transformation of education, degradation of social skills, and negative consequences for health and cognition. Rahman and Watanobe (2023) analyze the potential of media education in the context of developing engagement and motivation among learners, critical thinking, creative abilities, and stimulation. According to the researchers, the formation of sustainable competencies and skills for continuous self-improvement requires an adequate methodological foundation and resource support for innovative education, which may pose a certain problem. Gizaw and Tessema (2020) see a direct link between the development of educational institutions and the level of innovation provision and technology transfer. Researchers think that immersive learning has a lot of potential. At the same time, Supriani et al. (2022) consider it necessary to develop a practice-oriented concept of learning that allows for the uniform formation of the necessary foundation for intercultural competence—verbal and communication skills, creativity, critical thinking skills, and logical thinking—by incorporating modern interactive technologies into educational programs. Hackett et al. (2023) highlight the influence of the media field on the cognitive sphere of learners in educational strategies. The author emphasizes the need to involve reflection and the development of information and digital competence.

At the same time, despite the relevance of the topic, there is a lack of specific recommendations for the integration of practical pedagogical solutions in this area.

METHODS

The experimental pedagogical study involved the differentiation of all participants (60 university students) into three groups. All students were taught using different pedagogical methodologies. Students were randomly selected into three groups of 20 students each.

The study was designed to guarantee the principles of anonymity of respondents' personal data and pedagogical ethics. The first group was defined as a control group, which was taught according to the traditional methodology, without innovative means of education. The

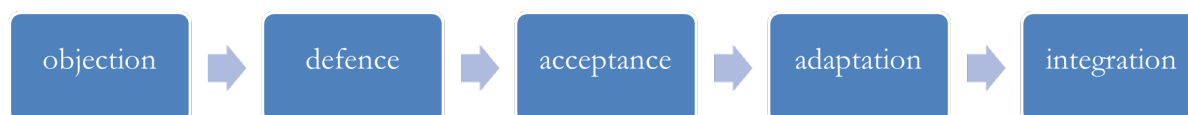
second group was made up of students who, along with traditional methodological recommendations and a theoretical and practical course, were provided with access to short targeted media videos. In the third group, the curriculum provided for the active integration of media education elements, including the independent creation of video presentations on the topics studied.

The effectiveness of each of the studied training programs was evaluated using test material (95 questions) with unambiguous answers. The results of the tests were presented in a graphical format in the form of diagrams and included a comparison between the results of the three groups. The statistical tool used was Student's t-test.

RESULTS

The growing role of international cooperation leads to additional requirements for the transformation of the higher education system. A modern specialist, among other things, must have well-developed intercultural thinking and cross-cultural competencies. This actualizes the search for practical methodological approaches to the development of intercultural skills within the higher education environment. Active migration processes since the 1980s have actualized the concept of interculturalism, which has evolved through a number of stages (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Evolution of intercultural competence



Source: compiled by Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva (2020).

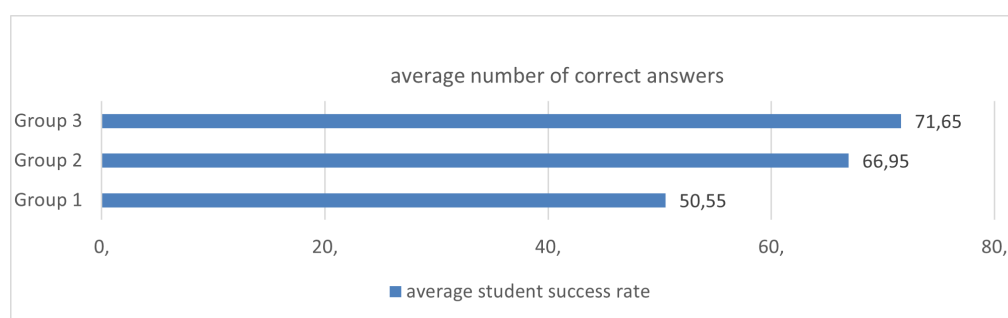
The initial stage of denial leads to the perception of the new culture as an incomprehensible and illogical phenomenon. Today, a similar reaction is typical for children who have emigrated without prior familiarization with another culture. The stage of protection determines the comparison of one's own culture with others and its subsequent defense, with the subsequent increase in motivation to understand the customs and traditions of another culture. The empathy stage includes the development of understanding of another culture, tolerance to its individual manifestations, and the prioritization of these processes. Finally, the stage of adaptation transitions into the stage of integration, which involves incorporating foreign cultural values into one's own culture, laying the foundation for the active development of a multicultural worldview.

The stages of acceptance and adaptation determine behavior in the context of tolerant perception of foreign cultures, which forms the prerequisites for human rights and the

development of a modern democratic society. The adaptation stage, however, has the most significant functionality for establishing effective intercultural cooperation. In this context, group and project work, virtual joint international online events are effective methods (Reis et al., 2021). In general, it is advisable to distinguish the main methods of this concept: the use of videos (used in Group 2 during the experiment) and the use of video presentations (used in Group 3 during the experiment). Group 1 was the control group.

The course “Fundamentals of International Communication” was similar for the three groups in terms of methodology, thematic content of the lecture, and practical material. The final test included sections covering theoretical knowledge and behavioral characteristics of students. Respondents’ answers were compared by group using Student’s t-test ($p < 0.05$). Groups ½ were characterized by Student’s t-test values of 5.53 and Reliability indicator, $p < 0.01$, groups 1/3 – 7.05 and $p < 0.01$, respectively, and groups 2/3 – 1.89 and 0.03. The average values are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Average indicators by group



Source: compiled by the author.

The worst results were found for group 1 (control group), which did not use media education tools in the learning process. The results of the other two groups differed significantly, which indicates the effectiveness of media learning tools for developing intercultural interaction skills through visualization, increasing students’ motivation, and their independence in learning. The best results are typical for group 3, where students were asked to prepare and present video presentations on their own. It is obvious that active involvement in media education contributes to the development of creativity, the ability to conduct qualitative research, selective analysis, and generalization.

Subsequently, Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the correlation between the intensity of media education integration and positive test answers in group 3. In this case, Spearman’s ranking coefficient was 0.79, with significance levels of $p < 0.01p$. These results determine a positive correlation between the studied variables.

The obtained results of the experiment represent a rather strong influence of modern educational media on the processes of developing students' intercultural interaction skills. It is worth noting that the effectiveness of innovative media increases with the number of presentations created by students. These methods are positioned as universal in the context of higher education applications, as they do not require excessive resources or additional efforts from teaching staff.

The limitations of the approach are due to resource and technical problems, and unequal access to infrastructure and technologies of various educational institutions and individual students. The study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards for research of this category. Also, the study is limited by the complexity and resource intensity of experimental verification of the theoretical results obtained in a wider range of educational institutions.

DISCUSSION

Today, the basis for the formation of cross-cultural interaction skills is seen as the formed tolerance, understanding, and empathy within the behavioral strategy towards another culture (Sinambela et al., 202). Media education has a significant potential due to its ability to intensify student engagement in learning and visualization of educational material, and the general availability of materials (Winoto, 2020).

The scientists (Haleem et al., 2022) consider videos as a resource and effective tool for media education. The authors emphasize the individualization of teaching approaches and the concretization of perception based on the professional orientation of students. Braslauskas (2021) pays special attention to the need to combine speaking, communication, and intercultural skills, presentation of the material, which is relevant for group 3 of our sample. In addition, the formation of intercultural skills is significantly influenced by group learning and the project profile of education (Burbules et al., 2020; Dzwigol et al., 2020).

Scientists (Hackett et al., 2023; Leask, 2020) identify international collaborative online learning projects as effective methods of media education that have a significant impact on the development of intercultural competencies, contributing to increased adaptability and mobility of students, and their motivation to further participate in exchange programs. According to Sierra-Huedo and Nevado-Llopis (2022), the number of higher education students participating in study or internships abroad is currently too low, despite active globalization processes. At the same time, scientists determine the effectiveness of studying in other countries by directly immersing themselves in the culture of another country. Some of the challenges of this process are stress and prolonged adaptation, and as a result, a possible decrease in motivation for promising intercultural interaction.

In view of the above, the formation of cross-cultural competence as a certain universal that accompanies the process of developing professional competence, language skills, and improving behavioral characteristics becomes a priority.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The current level of cross-cultural competencies among graduates of educational institutions indicates the low effectiveness of the traditional teaching methodology in this context, which necessitates the search for ways to improve this process. The study substantiates a significant correlation between the frequency of using media education tools and the number of correct answers of students in testing. The obtained results of the experiment represent a rather strong stimulating effect of modern media education tools.

It is worth noting that the effectiveness of innovative media increases with the number of presentations created by students. This method forms students' readiness to actively interact in the intercultural practical field, contributing to the increase of students' adaptability and mobility, and their motivation to further participate in exchange programs.

Future research directions include developing the potential of immersive educational environments to enhance intercultural competence in higher education. The potential practical application of the results obtained lies in involving them in the process of forming educational strategies for the development of intercultural competence in higher education, given the relevance of the processes of integration and globalization of learning.

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