

Textbook: Focus on Students' National Identity

Students' Strategies for Cognition: Organizing Culture-Oriented Information in Textbook

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Abstract

The informational dimension of the multicultural world transforms the context of intercultural socialization of an individual, which presupposes the formation of a person in a multicultural society who owns various ways of constructing intercultural dialogue. There is a special requirement for the development of didactic tools that help a person to master effective methods of intercultural interaction in the global information environment. Strategies for achieving intercultural dialogue using the potential of the information environment surrounding a person come to the fore. The purpose of the article is to determine the information and cognitive strategies that students at a linguistic university could apply working culturally specific material of a foreign language textbook, aimed at intercultural socialization of a person striving to achieve understanding in the conditions of intercultural dialogue. The authors substantiate the structure of a foreign language textbook, designed for preparing students at a linguistic university for "dialogue comprehension". They present three stages of working with culture-oriented material: orientation in the case-study of intercultural interaction, making a reasonable decision to comply cultural and conceptual pictures of the world, transfer of dialogue contexts into intercultural interaction. The article describes the strategies of information and cognitive activity of an individual built in the textbook in the situation of "person – person" and "person – object" intercultural interaction. That provides the possibility for an individual to reach understanding in the process of a dialogue. A set of case-studies, communicative-dialogue and culturally creative didactic practices is aimed at mastering by students the strategies of working with culture-oriented material of a foreign language textbook.

Keywords: dialogue comprehension, information and cognitive strategies.

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Introduction

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New information concepts are gradually being built into the process of global socialization of an individual (Wang, Rammeyer-Mueller, Liu & Li, 2014; Byrd, 2016; Dexter, Lavigne & de la Garza, 2016), one of the aspects of which is intercultural socialization. As never before, the intercultural sociogenesis of an individual is influenced by global information flows that create the effect of cultural identity in global society (Chen & Zhang, 2010; Clothier, 2005). This identity arises when a person enters various real and virtual communities, consisting of representatives of different cultural environments. In a situation of penetration into various cultural and informational contexts, an individual tries to identify himself and implement new ways of self-expression. A spontaneous and sometimes unconscious intercultural narrative actualizes a personality model, on the one hand, sufficiently self-determined, on the other, capable of effectively interacting with representatives of different cultures to achieve intercultural dialogue. The conceptual dialogue between different cultural positions, cultural values, and views, which implies the achievement of a dialogue comprehension between the cultural and conceptual pictures of the world on the basis of the intellectual and moral activity of an individual, becomes a specific core, the skeleton of modern intercultural interaction.

Enough works are devoted to various aspects of the formation of a personality capable of intercultural interaction (Igbino, 2011; Fuentes, 2016; Fantini, 2018, 2019, 2020 etc.). Research on this issue is manifested in various models of personality development in the multicultural world (Karaulov, 1987; Elizarova, 2005; Chen & Bond, 2010). Intercultural communicative competence, which allows a person to go beyond his own culture and acquire the qualities of a mediator of cultures, without losing his own cultural identity, is distinguished as a result and target basis of the teaching process (Elizarova, 2005). This definition clearly differentiates the process of intercultural socialization of an individual, which simultaneously combines cultural self-determination and the process of perception of other cultural-conceptual pictures of the world (Al-Araki, 2015).

Under the influence of anthropological dominance of modern theory and practice, the educational process is deeply personal in nature and reflects the general readiness of a person for intercultural interaction, which is his intrinsic trait. Indeed, the achievement of intercultural understanding begins in the essence of an individual, in which there is a search for ways of conceptual dialogue between interacting cultures, determining ways of their possible compliance, conveying the meaning of dialogue combinations to participants in intercultural interaction and constructing the dialogue of cultures.

The readiness and ability of an individual to carry out a conceptual dialogue of cultures and mediation activities in various socio-cultural contexts (that is, activities aimed at bringing the two poles closer through a process of two-way change) are identified as a priority in personality development in the updated version

of the document “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment” (2018). The document states that readiness for intercultural dialogue consists of the individual's mastery of a whole repertoire of strategies for mediation at the conceptual, textual, and communicative levels.

Contemporary informational and civilizational contexts make it possible to look differently at the existing content of the personality model of an individual who participates in intercultural interaction. At least three main lines of construction of this model become obvious. Firstly, it is necessary to analyze the issues of intercultural socialization of a person by means of a specially modeled content of culture-oriented materials of a foreign language textbook, consistently reflecting the trajectory of socialization: from the development of a nationally specific identity of a person to becoming him as a mediator of dialogue comprehension. Secondly, it is necessary to determine the specifics of the individual's actions aimed at “dialogue comprehension” – the process and result of information and cognitive activity carried out in the mind of an individual. A comprehensive repertoire of information and cognitive strategies that a person possesses in finding, decoding, coding dialog meanings, as well as their transfer to the process of intercultural interaction, acquires special significance in the situation of achieving dialogue comprehension. Thirdly, at the level of textbook materials, it is required to consider didactic practices aimed at changing the cognitive attitude of a person to culturally related information in terms of focusing on the conscious perception of information and cognitive strategies for achieving dialogue comprehension in the individual and intercultural environment.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of this article is to present technologies for working with culture-oriented material of a foreign language textbook as a space for intercultural socialization of a student's personality. In the course of such work, a teacher develops special information and cognitive strategies that are necessary for a graduate of a linguistic university – a mediator of dialogue understanding.

Literature review

The solution of didactic tasks is based on the proposition that intercultural socialization is the process of a person's entry into the system of global multicultural interaction, during which culturally significant values, norms and patterns of life in the multicultural world are mastered, including effective strategies of information and cognitive activity. The result of intercultural socialization is considered as *the activity of the subject of intercultural interaction, capable and ready to act as an intermediary between cultures, to*

support the principles of cultural and linguistic diversity in an informational multicultural society. As a representative of a multicultural society, a person masters several positions:

- 1) position “*Me in a cultural group*”, reflecting the process of cognition of the culture of the native group and ethnocultural “maturation”;
- 2) position “*Me and a multicultural society*” – the self-perception by a representative of the national culture as a subject of intercultural relations, in which his own cultural identity is comprehended;
- 3) position “*Us and multicultural societies*”, including the acquisition of the role of a mediator between cultures and related strategies for achieving dialogue comprehension.

These positions are realized through traditional communicative *textual* practice (Bermus, 2013; Mikan & Lopez, 2017), or *discursive* practice, which has considerable differences in terms of the significance of extralinguistic factors in the dialogue of cultures, with an emphasis on the dialogue of consciousness, values and meanings (Flowerdew, 2012; Bonnafous, S., & Temmar, 2013). Both textual and discursive activities require the implementation of special cognitive ways of a person's behavior in a multicultural environment saturated with culturally *specific bytes of information*. A person should use strategies of quick orientation in a wide informational socio-cultural context of intercultural communication, strategies of search and determination of points of contact between various cultural and conceptual positions, as well as the use of adequate tools for achieving dialogue.

Methodology

The leading methodological basis within which this study is being conducted is *the intercultural paradigm*. E.G. Tareva, A.V. Schepilova, B.V. Tarev argue that “A wider view on the nature and objectives of the intercultural approach to teaching linguists presupposes displacement from the pedestal of the idea of ethnocentrism and culture-centrism in favor of cultural and ethnic equality (relativism), which provides the basis for dialogical type of human consciousness” (Tareva, Schepilova & Tarev 2017: 247).

The main idea of the intercultural approach lies in the convergence of the processes of national-cultural self-determination with the simultaneous mastering of practices of intercultural dialogue in the process of intercultural socialization. Convergence (from the Latin “convergero” – getting closer, approaching) as a methodological principle of the humanities and natural sciences is revealed in the idea of a dialogue of various cognitive attitudes, in a strategic way of solving external and internal systemic problems based on the complementarity of certain positions of the subject (Troinikova, 2019). In the case of an intercultural

approach, the convergence strategy is implemented in the ideology of mutual coordination of culturally determined attitudes in the process of a dialogue of cultures.

To achieve a dialogue comprehension during intercultural communication, special didactic strategies for working with culture-oriented material of a foreign language textbook are required. To solve this problem, in this article we applied a set of theoretical and empirical research *methods*, including: theoretical and methodological analysis of scientific publications in the field of philology, psychology, psycholinguistics and didactics, analysis of our own pedagogical activities and the activities of colleagues, the method of modeling the content of scientific concept – intercultural socialization, the method of analyzing students' works finding difficulties that take place during their information and cognitive activities, the method of systematizing and concretizing the information and cognitive strategies of an individual in the case of achieving dialogue comprehension, the method of constructing adequate didactic practices.

Experimental work was organized at the Institute of Language and Literature, the Institute of Udmurt Philology, Finno-Ugric Studies and Journalism (Udmurt State University, Izhevsk, Russia), at the Izhevsk State Agricultural Academy (Izhevsk, Russia), at the Glazov State Pedagogical Institute (Glazov, Russia) and its branch in Izhevsk.

The research was carried out in three stages:

- at the first (preparatory) stage, we formulated actual contradictions in the intercultural language education of students, took into account modern problems of intercultural socialization of an individual, identified and updated informational realities, analyzed the current research in pedagogical theory and linguodidactic practice of the problem of intellectual and moral development of students;
- at the second (main) stage, we developed a program for achieving dialogue comprehension by means of a foreign language textbook, identified information and cognitive strategies for achieving dialogue comprehension in the course of student interaction with the culture-oriented content of a foreign language textbook, carried out the selection and organization of appropriate linguodidactic practices implemented in the textbook;
- at the third (final) stage, we systematized the results obtained, formulated conclusions and recommendations.

Results

In the modern information landscape of the multicultural world, objective *universal information and cognitive actions* are distinguished, which allow an individual to effectively interact with representatives of other cultures. After analyzing the work of researchers (Thornton, 2007; McBride, 2012; Flierl & Maybee, 2020; Schachter, 2020) dealing with the development of information literacy and development of intercultural competence, we identified a range of difficulties that a person faces in the process of intercultural interaction in the information society:

- insufficient experience of cognitive activity in polymodal information flows of intercultural interaction, where various information encoding tools are used - signs, symbols, words, numbers, sounds, and images;
- difficulties in identifying manipulative strategies during intercultural interaction, various types of distortion of culturally related information, actualization of false cultural stereotypes;
- unconscious consumption of information and insufficient comprehension of the socio-cultural context of interaction, limited tools for ensuring information security and for expressing oneself in the real and virtual multicultural world.

To determine the degree of validity of the data obtained, we analyzed student papers (146 people) submitted during the 2018-2019 academic year, in which it was required to demonstrate strategies for searching and processing culturally related information. The results of the data obtained are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Strategies for searching and processing culturally related information

Skills	The percentage of successful results
- to define socio-cultural markers of linguistic phenomena presented in various formats of information objects	23,3 %
- to identify find correlation lines of comparison and matching various manifestations of cultures in different types of information presented in the text (printed, audio-visual, Internet text)	17,8 %
- to classify the selected culturally marked information according to the key values of the interacting cultures	16,4%
- to evaluate culturally marked information for the potential of its use in a situation of matching of cultural positions	33,5 %

It follows from the table that students do not have a sufficient level of proficiency in strategies of:

- sociocultural search in less familiar or completely unfamiliar multicultural information environment;

- analysis and interpretation of cultural manifestations in a polycode information space;
- systematization of scattered culturally related information;
- assessing the potential of culturally related information.

Discussions

The identified problems indicate the difficulty of achieving dialogue comprehension in the process of intercultural interaction and, consequently, the need for a specially developed culturally related material, with its didactical orientation in a foreign language textbook. The process of achieving dialogue comprehension is a complex informational and cognitive activity of a person to perceive the meaning of the uttered speech in a semantically complex environment. Within the environment, we can see the interaction of very sophisticated and complicated culturally conditioned world views. In such a situation, the individual is faced with the need to consider many types of culture-related knowledge, socio-cultural experience and to choose culturally adequate objects that “joint” the ideas of the dialog.

Thus, the process of achieving dialogue comprehension can be considered as a complex information and cognitive task, built into the dialogue matrix “*person – object*” or “*person – person*”. Objects are texts (monocultural or intercultural) containing elements of a cultural-conceptual picture of the world, cultural codes, and cultural scripts. Person – person interaction occurs in a communicative situation of a dialogical or monological character. Dialogue comprehension is provided by the functioning of a well-coordinated ensemble of strategies and operations at levels reflecting the individual's readiness for intercultural interaction (Table 2).

Table 2. Strategies and operations of dialogue comprehension (Troinikova, 2019)

Level	Strategies and operations
<i>motivation level</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strategy of perception and recognition of culturally related information units; - strategy for selection of relevant cultural information
<i>cognitive level</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strategies of semantic analysis of culture related information; - strategies of transformation (expansion or reduction) and interpretation of culture related information; - strategies for supplementing culture related information using various sources of information, including the Internet
<i>personal level</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strategies for using culture related information in educational and practical situations; - strategies for the conventional interpretation of cultural and linguistic phenomena and culturally determined actions; - strategies for the development of spiritual and moral resources and their implementation in achieving dialogue comprehension;

	- strategies of reflexive activity
<i>activity level</i>	- a strategy for using culture related knowledge, skills and experience in cooperation with representatives of various cultural and linguistic communities; - strategy of cultural and linguistic mediation in the process of interaction between native and other cultures; - strategy of mastering an individual mediation style and self-development in a multicultural world

Based on the above provisions, we have designed a culture-oriented content of the material of a foreign language textbook, aimed at the student's consistent comprehension of his cultural identity and the development of ways to achieve dialogue comprehension in a situation of intercultural interaction. Work with such material is split into interrelated and sequential stages.

Stage 1 is the objective “zero stage” of the intercultural potential of an individual, characterized by inattention to cultural differences. At this stage, the organization of culture-oriented textbook materials should be aimed at forming *sensitivity to linguistic and cultural information units*, reflecting the peculiarities of the diversity of conceptual pictures of the world, during comprehension of the cultural polyphony and cultural diversity of the surrounding reality. The content of culture-oriented materials of the textbook can be conditionally united by the topic “*Cultural lenses*”, since the main emphasis is on understanding that each culture sees the world around it in its own way, has its own culturally determined attitude to the rhythm of life, nature, health, beauty, in its own way perceives representatives of another culture.

Stage 2 is aimed at expanding and deepening the sphere of *cultural self-determination of the student's personality* during enrichment of national-specific awareness about *the native* culture. The development of cultural self-awareness is facilitated by the development of the value orientations of the native culture, understanding of its norms and standards of behavior, during interaction with texts or communicative situations of the textbook that have a monocultural orientation. At this stage, particular importance is attached to the development of a mechanism for determining the place of the native culture in the spectrum of other cultures. The content of culture-oriented materials is designated as “*My calling card*”, with such important coordinates for the cultural dimension as: “*My environment*”, “*My home*”, “*National everyday culture and food culture*”, “*National costume*”, etc., which allows students to better understand their culture and create its value-semantic profile, which can be operated in the process of creating dialog meanings.

Stage 3, within which the textbook organizes *the interaction of various cultural and conceptual pictures of the world*, is designed to support the student's personality *while mastering the ways of combining various forms of awareness in the native / regional and other culture*. This stage is aimed at forming the position of

a mediator of intercultural dialogue, since students learn to match different value positions, different standards of behavior, etc. The basic culture-oriented content at this stage includes such thematic blocks of the textbook as “*Cultural Heritage and Traditions*”, “*National Holidays*”, as they contain a certain parameter of the correlation of interacting conceptual and cultural pictures of the world.

Stage 4 contains the thematic blocks of the textbook that are associated with *the destruction of intercultural interaction, with the practice of absence or difficulty in achieving dialogue comprehension*. For this, the textbook has the topics “*We are different*”, “*Conflict vs consensus in the dialogue of cultures*”, “*Dispute, polemics, debate as a strategy of a dialogue*”. While mastering these topics, the student prepares for situations of “non-dialogue of cultures”. As the researchers state, to overcome the difficulties of understanding in non-dialogue context of communication, special knowledge, skills and qualities of a person are needed: knowledge of language units with a national-cultural component of meaning; knowledge of the parameters of the intercultural context of interaction between the native and other society; value attitudes of participants, historical and current cultural factors, etc.; skills to understand information by combining and comparing the native and other conceptual pictures of the world; skills to correlate the interlocutor’s speech with the goals and situation of intercultural communication; skills to recognize and understand the elements of culture in the interlocutor’s speech through the prism of his own picture of the world; skills to determine the peculiarities of an intercultural communicative situation in which a foreign language message is implemented; skills to identify the social status of the interlocutor, sociolinguistic features of his speech behaviour; skills to get out of situations of communicative failure (Tareva & Tarev, 2020, p. 1229).

As it can be seen from the stated above, the sequence of mastering the actions of the subject of intercultural interaction, leading to the achievement and subsequent mediation of dialogue comprehension, is presented by us as *a step-by-step information and cognitive program*. The result of the implementation of the information and cognitive program is the compression of the dialogue meaning and its mediation, that is, its transfer to persons participating in the intercultural interaction (if understanding this meaning is impossible due to linguistic, conceptual, cultural, or other barriers) as well as an active construction of dialogue relationships.

This program is presented as an algorithm of an individual's actions, and includes:

- 1) the stage of orientation in the conditions of intercultural interaction,
- 2) the stage of planning to achieve a dialogue meaning,

- 3) the stage of translation of the dialogue meaning into the process of intercultural interaction,
- 4) the stage of reflection on culture-based difficulties.

The stated stages of the information and cognitive program of actions to achieve dialogue comprehension, implemented in the structural and content configuration of a foreign language textbook, have led to the development of educational technology for teaching the achievement of dialogue comprehension. This technology includes a complex of *case-studies, communicative-dialogue, and cultural-creative didactic practices*.

Conclusion

The process of intercultural socialization is a sequential process of the formation of cultural identity and the development of the ability to live in a multicultural world while mastering the methods of information and cognitive activity in various cultural systems. In functional terms, intercultural socialization is designed to form the intellectual and moral qualities of a person, allowing him to effectively interact with others, to construct a dialogue between different cultural and linguistic worlds. Successful intercultural socialization orients the student's personality towards comprehending the entire diversity of the multicultural world. The leading role in the formation of the personality of the intercultural format is played by the purposeful formation of personality-forming tools for achieving dialogue understanding - information and cognitive strategies in the communicative and textual content of a foreign language textbook aimed at teaching intercultural interaction.

The material of the article can be useful in theoretical and practical terms for teachers of higher educational institutions, students of bachelor and master's programs, for specialists and heads of educational institutions in the system of English-language education, for centers for advanced training and retraining of teaching staff. It seems promising to expand the potential of the multicultural information space, represented in the textbook of a foreign language, as well as the development of scientific and methodological support for the formation of information and strategic readiness of an individual for intercultural interaction.

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