

## Intercultural Dimension in Teaching Language Courses in Higher School

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### ABSTRACT

The relevance of the study is based on the activation of various aspects of intercultural communication in multiethnic schools in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia); the theme selection is determined by the practical need to develop intercultural competence in students and undergraduates. Refinement of scientific knowledge about the specifics, specification of the content of intercultural competence components in students and undergraduates in the multicultural and multilingual environment in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is a pedagogical social contract. The results of this study are of interest for specialists, educators; they expand the opportunities to assess the situation of organizing coherent, continuous work on the formation of intercultural competence in students; these include the problems of preservation and revitalization of languages and cultures of the Arctic peoples: national culture and philology; problems of interaction and functioning of languages and literature in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia); cognitive linguistics and the problem of linguistic consciousness, communication theories (intercultural communication).

### KEYWORDS

Intercultural communication, multi-ethnic schools, multilingual environment, the Arctic peoples; the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)

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### Introduction

Today, two large-scale, at first glance, linguistic processes are occurring simultaneously - language globalization and localization. In the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) particularly fast changes are currently occurring in the period of general convergence of cultures, the instantaneous exchange of information with the whole world, and at the same time, the self-affirmation and self-determination of ethnic groups, and peoples of the Republic and the Russian Federation. The paper considers the changes in the field of intercultural communication in the Republic.

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The rationale of the research is dictated by the need to determine the content and the form of the work on the formation of intercultural competence notion in students and undergraduates with regard to sociolinguistic, linguo-culturological data. The research results are of interest to specialists in the field of secondary and higher education.

The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is a large region of the Russian Federation. Its area is 3103 square kilometers; it is located in the northeastern part of the Asian continent. The representatives of more than 120 nationalities live, work and study in Yakutia. The language problem is solved here at the legislative level in favor of bilingualism and multilingualism. In the context of the Russian Federation, successful cross-cultural communication and mutual understanding require knowledge of not only the international communication language, but also of the culture, traditions, and mentality of the people, which confirms the relevance, the theoretical and practical significance of the study. Research of the Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University is undertaken in the priority research areas.

In the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) as a subject of the Russian Federation and the region with a positive 384-year-old historical and cultural experience of representatives of 120 nationalities living together, with a high level of inter-ethnic tolerance, stability and national reconciliation, serious scientific work is carried out on teaching intercultural communication language, the state language of the Russian Federation. The expansion of intercultural interaction scale between the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) and the Russian Federation peoples is promoted by the students' inclusion in the information and communication process; the educative process in schools and universities of the Republic is carried out in a bicultural and multilingual educational environment.

An academician of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), 'Institute of Humanitarian Research and Problems of Indigenous Peoples of the North,' Peter A. Sleptsov believes that 'in the matter of school, it is really possible to optimize the basic and specify the variative models of language training in the context of bilingualism and multilingualism.' Today, the language education problems are brought to the level of the government; one may talk of the state-constituting role of the Russian language in the Russian Federation and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). According to Peter A. Sleptsov, 'People of XXI century are simply doomed to bilingualism and multilingualism. Bilingualism in our time is not only the social and historical necessity, it has the juristic, legal basis, since the Russian language is the state language of Russia and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), which is enshrined in law' (Sleptsov, 2008).

### **Goals and Hypothesis**

The goal of the research is to identify general trends in the formation of intercultural competence in students in the multicultural and multilingual environment the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

### **Methodological Framework**

The study has been undertaken as part of the methodology of sociolinguistics, pedagogy, methodology, and fundamental pedagogical works considering intercultural communication in terms of various aspects.

## Results

### *Regulatory framework of intercultural communication*

Analysis and review of the regulatory framework has shown that certain provisions of Federal Law 'On Education in the Russian Federation' of 29.12.2012 No.273-FZ, 'National Doctrine of Education in the Russian Federation' (2000), education development strategies in the Russian Federation for the period until 2025, Federal Law No.53-FZ (as amended by Federal Law of 05.05.2014, No.101-FZ), 'On the State Language of the Russian Federation', the Law of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) of 16.10.1992 No.1170-X11 (as amended by Law of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) are consistent with the goals and objectives of teaching intercultural communication.

### *Intercultural communication in multiethnic schools in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)*

Linguistic goals of modern education system of the Republic are reduced to multilingualism and multicultural, understanding and harmony among different linguistic and cultural groups. The society also recognizes the expansion of the state-constituting and consolidating function of the Russian language, which serves as a government policy conductor through the texts of laws, constitutional documents, etc. Without the linguistic component, modern human's knowledge cannot be of a fundamental nature in all the fields of science and in certain subjects, as language is the main medium of instruction and thinking development tool.

The language situation specificity in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), where there are two state (Russian and Sakha) languages, five official (Evenk, Even, Yukaghir, Chukchi, Dolgan) languages, causes the attitude to a linguistic identity development in the context of preparation for intercultural communication. According to the 2013 census, the population base in the Republic amounted to 955,580 people: 390,671 Russian, 34,633 Ukrainians, 10,000 Tatars, 891 Chinese with permanent residence (Ivanova, 2012). It is worth mentioning that there are no precise data on residents' sociology in terms of peoples' representatives of the Caucasus, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, working and living in cities and uluses (regions) of the Republic. Under these conditions, multilingual multicultural environment is formed, that is determined by permanent economic and political cooperation with representatives of foreign-language countries, everyday communication between Sakha and Russian-speaking, English-speaking people.

Currently, there are concepts of not only a 'linguistic identity,' but also of a 'speech identity', that realize themselves in communication, choose a strategy and tactics of communication, the phrasing means repertoire.

'The concept of renewal and development of national schools in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)' (Zhirkov, 1993) in due time helped to ensure the



triune task of intercultural education in the schools of the Republic. It contributed to transferring to the younger generation the wealth of language and culture of the native people, the experience of life, traditions, and spiritual and moral values; it enriched with the culture of the peoples living together, introduced children to the world culture values, i.e. the synthesis of the best achievements of different nations' cultures.

Due to globalization processes in the world and the intense development and changes in the Russian educational space, an urgent need arose for additions and modifications of the Concept by E.P. Zhirkov (1993). 'Being aware of the social contract with the society, and a full-fledged need to change pedagogical approaches to the liberal arts education, the authoring team of the Research Institute of national schools of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) has developed the 'Concept of school language education in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)' (Vasilyeva and Bryzgalova, 2001), which proclaimed the ideas of forming and developing the linguistic identity of students, integration at the level of the content and the structure of interrelated language disciplines: the Russian and the Sakha peoples' language, Evenk, Even, Chukchi, the Yukaghir languages and literatures, all the foreign languages studied. The holistic system of language education in the schools of the Republic consisted of the above-listed components and was focused on the intercultural dimension of language acquisition.

The main principles and directions of the Concept conformed to the provisions of the UNESCO project 'Towards the Culture of Peace' by UNESCO and developed the UNESCO Concept of linguistic diversity and continuous multilingual education, as well as preservation and development of minority languages. The authorship of the basic framework for teaching Russian as both a state language and a language of interethnic communication of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in the Yakut schools allows selecting and denoting two aspects in the principles of 'linguistic sovereignty of an individual and the dialectical unity of three principles: national, federal, and global, providing for a student's self-perception as a citizen of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the Russian Federation, and a subject of the world civilization'. The studies of E.P. Nikiforova, and L.P. Borisova, 'Language education policy in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)' (2015), 'Problems of teaching the Russian language in a multicultural environment (Nikiforova et al., 2016) are of undeniable interest in the context of the problem under consideration.

Implementing the principles of the Concept has been confirmed by a positive experience of introducing multilingual education in the Republican lyceum, the Republican experimental boarding school 'Arktika' in Neryungri with advanced learning in subjects of humanitarian and cultural cycles for children of the low-numbered peoples of the North; the Sakha-Canadian center that distributes the experience of intercultural education in schools. Children of indigenous low-numbered peoples living in the metropolitan city (Yakutsk) are given the opportunity to study at secondary school No.38 at the Sakha-Canadian center specializing in foreign languages and native languages of peoples of the North. The school is the basis for multilingualism propaganda, dissemination of intercultural education experience for students of different nationalities. The

operation in the Republic of such schools as Sakha-Canadian, Sakha-French (Khamagatta village, Namsky ulus), Sakha-Belgian (Kepteni village, Ust-Aldansky ulus), Sakha-Korean (Yakutsk), Sakha-German (Yakutsk) assures that children's specialized education using the techniques of different countries, in-depth study of the languages and cultures of different countries in the context of intercultural communication, teaching special courses and extracurricular activities in various areas are essential in the upbringing of a modern citizen of the world, capable of dialogue, open, respecting and appreciating the native, Russian, and the culture of foreign countries, prepared for intercultural communication.

Teaching multilinguism in the context of intercultural communication is the foundation for all-round development of linguistic identity in the modern context. The study of intercultural communication problems suggests that in the majority of schools in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the curriculum is focused on the English language study to the disadvantage of other foreign languages. The area of German and French studies in secondary schools has significantly narrowed. Classical languages, such as Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Hindi, Latin, are hardly taught in schools. Since the 2000s, in schools of Yakutsk and some uluses Oriental languages have been studied: Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Certainly, learning the said languages would encourage the attitude to the development and self-development of an individual in the context of preparation for intercultural communication. The social contract with the modern society for the formation and development of a linguistic identity, capable of creative activity in the culture polylogue requires an educational activity to provide support to students and undergraduates in their natural desire to know, to communicate, and to be armed with rational ways to master them.

The issues of intercultural communication are closely connected with the process of dialogue between cultures. Currently, the concept of dialogue is stepping over the narrow bounds of language courses, and is applied in teaching practice and theory in a broad context; it promotes socialization of an individual. In the course of dialogue between cultures, the tolerance principle is introduced into the school practice. In the Russian-speaking schools, the Yakut language and the national culture of the peoples living in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) are studied. With the support of the Government, the adult population attends courses on spoken Yakut, the second state language, which serves as an indicator of the formation and development of not only national-Russian, but also Russian-national bilingualism in the Republic. Learning guides for foreigners, who are beginners in the Sakha language, for the elementary and advanced level of instruction in the Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, are developed and published. The university professors, post-graduates, graduate students, students attend evening courses in English, German, French; they receive certificates. If desired, students attend electives in the Polish, Chinese, and Korean languages. Upon the 'Teacher education' training program by the profiles 'Russian language and literature', 'Russian and Foreign Languages' of the Faculty of Philology at the NEFU, undergraduates study the subjects that enhance professional knowledge in the field of intercultural communication: 'Introduction to the interpretation and translation studies'



(English, Russian, Yakut language); 'Comparative typology of languages', etc. The university executive staff and members of the Language Policy Council under the President of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) understand the role of translation in the multicultural and multilingual Republic; the appearance of the fax, modem, satellite communications, Internet possibilities require consideration and public support for new translation sectors, intercultural translation activities. The translation functions as a variety of international and intercultural communication are expanding; translators are required not only to be bilingual or multilingual, but also bicultural and multicultural. Translation activities can also educate readers who would engage in dialogue with characters from the works of many nations, perceiving the linguistic diversity, or government officials, employees, thinking creatively in several languages and entering freely into intercultural communication.

The authors would like to draw attention to the problems and prospects of the translation activity development in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) and the consolidation of efforts by the members of the Language Policy Council, the university departments, humanitarian institutions for the implementation of the new translation functions in the Republic, determining the education scope. Translation is considered as the world's primary means of intercultural communication. In the multicultural and multilingual Republic, which uses migrant and rotational employees' labor, it is necessary to develop a new kind of translation, i.e. social translation, which will contribute to the harmonization of cross-cultural relations. In this respect there emerges a need for higher school training for social translators, mediators of intercultural and international communication. The full-fledged non-native language acquisition involves introduction to a new culture; the formation of students' cultural competence is of no small importance. The comprehension and definition of cultural competence in the language arts classes is based on the new learning guides in cultural linguistics and include materials that reflect the national culture characteristics: vocabulary and phraseology, proverbs, figurative and expressive means of language and speech, texts revealing the concepts of the native, Russian, and world cultures. In ordinary life, representatives of different nationalities enter into the sphere of intercultural relations. The Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University and schools can be regarded as the place where a tolerant personality, capable of entering freely into the dialogue of cultures, is formed. The international schools contribute to the intercultural competence formation in high school students and undergraduates. For example, in 2012, 9 schools operated in different uluses of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia): International Autumn School 'Dialogue of Cultures: psychological problems of the intercultural competence and tolerance development', 11 International Summer School 'The Crossroad of Cultures', International Summer School for foreign students 'Summer in Siberia', International Summer School 'Live Culture on permafrost (DAAD, Germany)'.

The student union 'NEFU International' affords an opportunity of intercultural international communication among students from China, Mongolia, South Korea, Southeast Asia, India, etc. Including the ethnic and aesthetic components in the scope of work is very important; an indispensable

contribution thereto is made by the scientists who laid the foundations for cultural linguistics, linguistic and cultural studies, cognitive linguistics, intercultural communication (Vorobiev, 1997; Boldyrev 2002; Sternin, 1996; Maslova, 2001; Ter-Minasova 2000; Zalevskaya, 1996; Bondyрева and Kolesov, 2003; Prokhorov, 1998; Sayakhova 2014, and other scholars). Linguoculturological approach has been widely implemented in the regional schools of the Russian Federation, including in Yakutia. This approach is related to an allowance for the students' native languages. New anthropocentric approaches to linguistic research and the focus on training as a phenomenon of culture, the foundations of forming the students' linguistic identity and thinking, the consideration of the people's mentality require a spacious approach to the role of the students' native language. For linguo-didactic purposes, specialists in comparative typological studies are faced with the task of making a comparison not only at the level of describing languages and their systems, but it is also required, in our opinion, to implement them on the background of linguistic world-images, spheres of concepts, linguoculturological, cognitive, and associative fields and concepts. The famous works in Yakutia by Professor M.M. Fomin 'Comparative Grammar of the English, Russian, Yakut languages'; Professor V.M. Anisimov 'Scientific foundations of the Russian language teaching in primary classes of the Yakut school', Professor E.N. Dmitriyeva 'Comparative Grammar of the Yakut and the Russian languages.' Part 1 'Phonetics and Morphology' should be revised, corrected and supplemented in the future, taking into account the realia of the cultures, symbols, the figurative system.

Scientific interest in the problems of intercultural communication has increased in Germany: the problems of acculturation, migration, the relationship between people of different nationalities, the aspects of perception, behavior by virtue of language differences (Kämper-van den Boogaart et al., 2008).

The leadership in Russian philology belongs to the Faculty of Foreign Languages in the Moscow State University; works by S.G. Ter-Minasova (2000), T.G. Grushevitskaya, V.D. Popkov, A.P. Sadokhin, (2002); the aspects of psychology and cognitive linguistics in the works of A.N. Bodalev (1996), S.K. Bondyрева, D.V. Kolesov (2003) are considered foundational. In linguo-didactic terms, the works by L.G. Sayakhova, I.A. Novikova, V.I. Matis, and others are concerned with cross-cultural communication. There is a new type of learning guide by V.V. Vorobiev, L.G. Sayakhova 'The Russian language in the dialogue of cultures' (2006), which addresses the problems of intercultural communication. A competent linguistic identity seems capable of intercultural communication: 'The current stage of the civilization development requires a qualitatively new commitment to language education, aimed at the standards of intercultural communication training...' (Sayakhova, 2014). Reference sources, the dictionary 'Concepts of the Russian culture in intercultural communication' by L.G. Sayakhova contribute to mastering the rules of intercultural communication.

The 'Institute of languages and cultures of the peoples of the North-East of the Russian Federation' undertakes a research on the Sakha language studies by foreign students, undergraduates, graduate students, new types of textbooks



and learning guides are developed. Professor S.K. Kolodeznikov is developing material, aimed at forming intercultural competence in foreigners, (Kolodeznikov, 2013, 2016)

### Discussion

Intercultural communication linguo-didactic studies in educational institutions of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) have been inadequately treated and investigated. In this regard, a need arises for a system of work on a holistic understanding of intercultural communication as the students' linguistic identity quality. It is critical to refine the scientific knowledge about the specifics, to elaborate the components' content and pedagogical tools for the rational implementation of the main intercultural communication provisions in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

Intercultural communication is characterized by the interest and language acquisition needs of people; the desire to develop harmonious, considerate relations with people of different nationalities; a focus on universal human values or cooperation; practical noble actions and examples in everyday life. In the multicultural and multilingual environment in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) the study and the research of new intercultural interaction aspects are important for multiethnic schools and the university; in secondary schools of Yakutsk No.9, No.5, No.17, No.33, and others, students of more than 50 nationalities are co-educated; foreign students study at the university.

Actualization of intercultural communication is confirmed by the multicultural multilingual environment in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the peoples of which represent Turkic, Slavic, Tungusic, and other ethnic groups. In intercultural communication training it is essential to follow the learner-centered, cognitive principle information processing is associated with; a language is considered as an integral part of the social and genetic memory of the people. The knowledge of the world, the concept, the conceptual picture of the world, the linguistic world-image are associated with the cognition principle. The linguoculturological principle is vital, which provides a more spacious approach to language as a spiritual wealth of the people. The native language consideration principle allows creating a linguistic identity, taking into account the mentality of the people, which allows grasping metaphors, symbols, the figurative language system. The principle of cultural congruence becomes one of the leading principles of the intercultural education renewed process; it has been introduced in the language teaching methods (the Russian, Sakha, foreign, Evenk, Even, Yukaghir, Chukchi, Dolgan languages). A tolerant attitude towards each other is brought up while holding international conferences and events aimed at promoting friendship among peoples and intercultural tolerance. As part of the 'Northern Forum' by an international non-profit organization, every year the Sakha National Gymnasium of Yakutsk city hosts international research and application conferences 'Philology. History. Culture' the students of 1 to 11 grades take part in; reports and presentations are prepared in three languages: Russian, English, Sakha. Anchorage city (Alaska) hosts the international Olympiad in Russian and English languages, its winners being awarded gold and silver medals. Intercultural communication is published



on the websites of the 'Northern Forum', and partner schools engage into intercultural communication, exchange of students' delegations; educational courses encourage overcoming cross-cultural difficulties. Tolerance is formed in the process of intercultural communication, where the sense of respect for people of different nationalities, their traditions, and cultural values is fostered.

### Conclusion

A comprehensive study of the intercultural communication problems in the modern context in the world is required; the formation of intercultural competence in students and pupils takes place with account of sociolinguistic conditions and of the multilingual, multicultural environment of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). Teachers must give the basics of intercultural communication in course of the educational process; familiarize with the basic concepts of intercultural communication; draw upon the conceptual system and research methods, having emerged recently, in their activity. The formation of intercultural competence is making significant allowances for the teachers' vocational training. In the curriculum structure in terms of modern Russian, foreign, native language studies; there is an obvious need for forming intercultural communication competence, which is the object of study for 'Intercultural Communication', a science that has developed relatively recently, its foundation being laid in cultural linguistics.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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