Multiculturalism as a pedagogical phenomenon and educational strategy

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Abstract. The task of intercultural lingua-didactics is to find ways and approaches to building of constructive dialogue in multicultural world. This sphere of science needs successful communication, help in finding common language by the representatives of different nationalities and confessions, developing the feeling of belonging to wider than just one culture community. Multicultural lingua-didactics can be a tool of prevention and solution of conflicts because it facilitates realization of human rights, helps to build multicultural dialogue on the base of mutual respect.

Introduction

Ability to look on the world from outside can be developed if a man realizes himself as a representative of that mentality and that culture which have become for him the attributes of his motherland. That is why the study of national languages and cultures is a fact of modern ethno-communication. Globalization influenced education system and often is considered as an effect of interdependency in the world, a kind of shortening of time and space. Socially significant cultural practice becomes significant in this respect and university cultural model of education system integrates customs, values, cognitive and communicative skills of students oriented to successful learning [1].

New competences of a teacher of foreign language

Trends in modern education have determined necessity of mastering new competences by a foreign language teacher: socio-cultural., ethno-psychological, ethno-culturological. What must a teacher know about his students in the framework of these competences? Let us look at some examples relying on ancient commandment of Socrates "cognize yourself" which is realized only through cognition of surrounding world - cognize the world.

Notions *intercultural education, intercultural communication, intercultural training* have become wide-spread since 80s of our century when it people understood that studying foreign language is not an end in itself. Even if during interview students explain the choice of English language by practical necessity, Italian and French - by the beauty of language - still they want to get acquainted with culture manifested in this language. That is why in pedagogical science since 80s of XX intercultural communication is considered as the main task and leading principle of teaching all

disciplines. This approach has become especially important for lingua-didactics. [2].

Practice of intercultural communication showed that knowledge of language can not guarantee success of the communication act. Contacts of the representatives of different cultures become more complex and less efficient because of a number of differences of ethno-cultural character. The reasons can vary greatly. Differences in non-verbal components of communication when people speak the same language but belong to different cultures result in wrong interpretation of feelings, intentions and motives of the partners in communication [3].

Intercultural lingua-didactics must become the basis of modern global education and strive for the following **goals**:

- to underline cultural differences and similarity of different nations and cultures;

- to teach children and young men to interact with cultural divercity and diversification in society, give them necessary skills, knowledge and attitude towards acquiring of this ability (skills of intercultural communication and solving conflicts, intuitive understanding of work in multicultural society, analysis of one's own cultural values, standards and norms etc.);

-to stimulate tolerance, mutual respect and understanding, openness for separate persons and the group of persons with different cultural, ethnic, national and religious historiest;

-to share opinions of other people, understand those who have another vision of the world;

-to struggle against racism, xenophobia, discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes;

-to simplify communication between those who think that diversity of cultures is a threat and those who believe that it is a benefit;

-to infuse teachers with additional professional skills for most efficient work in classes and schools where cultures and ethnoses mix.

-to facilitate democratic management of cultural diversity, recognition of the benefits of co-existence of differences.

Let us consider key terms of intercultural lingua-didactics:

a) intercultural communication

In the context of this study it will be interesting to consider the interpretation of the notion "intercultural communication". Probably, the birth of intercultural communication as a discipline dates back to 1954 when a book by education Hall and D. Trager was published in which the authors for the first time proposed term *intercultural communication* which in their opinion denoted special area of human relations. Later key ideas of intercultural communication were developed in the book by E. Hall *The Silent Language* where the author showed close relationship between culture and communication. Hall arrived at conclusion about necessity to teach culture (if culture is studied it means that it can be taught). Thus, Hall was the first who proposed to make intercultural communication not only the subject of scientific research but independent university discipline. Later great contribution into development of intercultural communication was made by anthropologists, linguists, psychologists and sociologists. In the focus of all those scientists there are issues of communication and cultural diversity.

Intercultural communication is a special kind of communication realized in conditions of so great differences in communication competences of the participators determined by culture that these differences can influence greatly the success or failure of communication event. Communication competence is understood as knowledge of symbol systems used in communication, the rules of their functioning and the principles of communication interaction. Intercultural communication is characterized by the use in the contact between the participators of special language variants and discursive strategies different from those which are used by them in communication inside the same culture. Common term *intercultural communication* usually corresponds to studying of some specific phenomenon in two or more cultures and has additional meaning of comparing communication competences of the associating representatives of different cultures [4].

It is common approach to differ external and internal cultural communication. Theories, mainly qualitative ones, which analyze important aspects and particularities of communication practices inside

different cultural communities are called internal cultural communication. This is necessary knowledge to understand the origin of obstacles which appear when the interlocutors belonging to those different communities start communication, and in exceptional case, dialogue.

Important problem in the framework of intercultural communication is so called **contact hypothesis** to be tested in accordance with which direct interaction of the representatives of different groups reduces ethno-centrism and stereo-typism of values and opinions, creates climate of mutual understanding and trust and in such a way helps to improve relations between groups. In spite of seeming clearness and persuasion of this hypothesis the problem is much more complex. The whole set of special studies (M Sheriff, 1966; R. Minard, 1952; S. W. Kook, 1962) show that not all contacts between the representatives of different groups exactly and directly lead to improvement of relations. In some cases initial strain in inter-ethnic relations, lack of information about each other, negative mindsets, ethnocentrism and prejudice can result in quite opposite effect - increase in antagonism and hostility.

Thus, we shall identify **key principles of intercultural communication** [5]:

1. The principle of cultural respect:

- respect to all participants of intercultural communication regardless of their culture and ideas;

-respect for individual cultural ideas of the interlocutors (those which do not contradict to universal moral and ethic norms).

-respect for collective cultural ideas and social frameworks which are usual in the interlocutor's country.

-you should not conflict with above mentioned universal moral principles and norms;

-you should not suppress cultural freedom of the interlocutor;

-to accept principle when key rights of individual dominate over social framework (nation, organization, caste etc.)

Principle of equality of communicative chances

Every participator of the dialogue must refuse from his communication advantages if they can underestimate the significance of the interlocutor.

- it is necessary to refuse from the advantages produced by surplus inequality between collective cultural wealth of societies and groups;

- it is necessary to refuse from the advantages due to which inequality in cultural heritage of the interlocutor will be manifested very intensely

- it is necessary to refuse from the advantages produced by other inequalities which can

influence the process of communication (prestige of the country, social wealth)

Principle of long-term endurance of the results of intercultural dialogue

- after finishing of intercultural dialogue every interlocutor must stay with more or less equal number of advantages over his partner, but they can not be equal to zero;

-the rule of calculation of the total sum of advantages in intercultural dialogue: if X gets 3 but looses 2 then the sum of advantages is equal to 1; if X gets 1 and his interlocutor also gets 1 then total sum is equal to 2.

The effect of intercultural dialogue is appearance of "individual" and "social" wealth [6].

b) intercultural dialogue

"Life is based on communication" (B. Bodenhamer and M Hall). It means that all process of interaction between people will inevitably acquire the features of dialogue. "Dialogue precedes the language and creates it" (Lotman). "Art is intrinsically dialogue-like" (M. Buber). "To be in consciousness, to think means to be in dialogue mode" (A. Dobrovitch). "Process of creative work by its nature is dialogue-like" (G. Ya. Bush) who broadens his position to the concept of human way of life seeing in dialogue "consideration of a partner as a part of himself and in such a way broadening of one's own individuality".

Intercultural dialogue is specific form of intercultural communication which positively and in balanced way meets the purposes of all interlocutors; it is open and respectful exchange of opinions between separate people and groups of people belonging to different cultures; it allows to understand better the perception of the world by every man.

Interpersonal and intercultural dialogue are aspects of interaction which determine the necessity of targeted communication and ability for consolidated activity in which the other will not be alien, and different will not be a stranger. Dialogue determines the character of human interactions it integrates the pictures of the world of different people and ethnoses when both interlocutors are striving to percept the other not as *he* but as a part of *I,* looking at the world with his eyes, understanding his system of values and priorities. *The other* must not change the system of opinions any more; he will not be alien if his striving for dialogue is principal for him.

Dialogue of personalities, dialogue of nations, dialogue of cultural - the aspects of interaction based on dialogue-like readiness, intention for constructive communication and ability

to communicate, hear and be heard, speak and be perceived. It is known that the main thing in dialogue is not what has been said but what is heard, perceived, what becomes knowledge of the interlocutor. Therefore, modern dialogue - both interpersonal and intercultural – is ability to interact in appropriate way.

In order to realize dialogue the participators must be ready for it. First of all, they must feel themselves potential interlocutors, i.e. in regard to the representatives of different nations and cultures it means that mutual tolerance, wish to see and understand the other person, but as the other, not as alien person, respect for values, priorities, views of the other. Besides that, dialogue is not an utterance addressed to nowhere but exchange of feelings and thoughts which is impossible if the interlocutors do not possess communication culture and ability to speak and listen. Thus, intercultural dialogue originates on the base of regulation with moral categories and communication skills and abilities [7].

On the 4th of December, 2007 European Commission presented initiative: *2008 is an European year of intercultural dialogue.*

EU Commissioner in charge of the issues of education, cultural and youth, Jan Figel, pointed out that "new initiative will give us effective opportunity to find ways of improvement of our intercultural dialogue and our intercultural interrelations. To support this initiative we chose the slogan: *Together in Diversity*".

The purpose of the initiative: *2008 is an European year of intercultural dialogue* was strengthening of mutual understanding and improvement of co-existence of the people of different cultures in EU. The initiative attracted attention of European community to the benefits of cultural diversity and in the same time facilitated the strengthening of the feeling of identity with pan-European culture.

For support of the initiative European Commission also presented special web-sight (www.dialogue2008.eu) devoted to development of intercultural dialogue in EU. It already contains information about more than 500 stakeholders and organizations which operate in the sphere of intercultural dialogue.

c) intercultural education

Term *intercultural education* was used in scientific literature even in 80s of XX century (Hohman) (1983), Reiter and Dodenhoft (1988), Friesenhann (1988) and others. Though until now the meaning of this term has been rather vague. After falling of iron curtain participators of the conference in Budapest (1993) declared the struggle against universal standardization as the main task of

intercultural education. "In this respect education must provide new opportunities in the interrelations of ethnic groups and cultures ... It is important to teach to deal with individuality of foreign culture so that the first meeting with it would not be seen as a threat to some separate culture but as a kind of enrichment". In preamble of the UNESCO Code it is stated that "for protection of human dignity it is necessary to spread culture and education among all people on the base of justice, freedom and peace; that is why all nations are imposed with sacred obligation which must be realized in the spirit of mutual cooperation".

Issue of intercultural education is urgent today more than ever. We can prove it with statistical data. Global Education Digest 2006, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics shows that the number of students studying abroad in 2004 has increased by 41% in comparison with 1999 - 1,75 and 2,5 million accordingly. The most expensive variants are the USA (23% of all students studying abroad), Great Britain (12%), Germany (11%), France (10%), Australia (7%) and Japan (5%).

The most mobile students are Africans who live to the south of Sahara. But the reason is very simple - insufficient number of universities and low level of education. UNESCO statistics shows that at average every 16th student from these countries goes abroad for getting higher education (5.6%) while the students of North America prefer to stay at home: at average only one from 250 students leaves the country (0,4%) in the framework of the post-secondary education [8].

China is the leader by the number of the students leaving for foreign universities: the share of them in total number of foreign students is 14%. The Chinese people prefer the USA, Japan and Great Britain. Share of students from the countries of Northern Europe is 17%, from South and Western Asia - 8%. As for Russia, in 2004 there were 34 473 Russian students abroad who studied at foreign universities. 11 462 of them chose Germany, 5532 - the USA, 2597 - France, 1878 - Great Britain.

Such close cooperation in the sphere of education necessitates the compliance with the principle of equality of cultures and language. Today school and university perform the function of special social institution which in addition must become communication center.

Intercultural education is more than just education for migrants and ethnic minorities. Organization of teaching programs and education options intended for their specific education needs is not a complete task of intercultural education. It also means that initial purpose of intercultural education is not improvement of the results of students from immigrant communities and ethnic minorities. The purpose of intercultural education is to guarantee equal opportunities in education for every man and for every group of persons and to form society organized in accordance with the principles of democracy and cultural pluralism [9].

Often intercultural communications in education sphere result in so called educational shock. Like cultural shock, it is emotional experience but in this case it is related to learning. Educational shock is combination of frustration, embarrassment and concern - when students face unknown methods of learning and teaching and the situations considered by them as strange, ambiguous, contradictory. The results of studies show that most important factors of educational shock are often related to the experience of work and learning among multi-cultural groups. In international and multi-cultural university educational shock must be managed. There must be strategies which take into account different "cultures of learning and education" and clearly define expectations, roles of teachers and students, norms, estimates, useful communication styles. This is necessary not only for solving of specific problems but also for adequate assessment of diversity of cultures [10].

d) intercultural pedagogics

Intercultural pedagogics is a science about specially organized targeted and systematic activity aimed for formation of a man able for active participation in intercultural communication who must feel comfortable in multicultural society. Intercultural pedagogics defines contents, forms and methods of education and training in conditions of multicultural society. Key categories of intercultural pedagogics are as follows: formation of tolerant personality, multicultural education and training [11]. This concept is called *Auslaenderpaedagogik* in Germany (universities of Cologne, Vienna, Dortmund and others perform elaborated work in this respect) and intended to prove that multicultural of Europe is not a transition phase (we live in single world space) and, accordingly, means intercultural orientation of university disciplines. Some federal lands of Germany establish their own education plans on intercultural communication, to be more exact, their existing plans and materials change in some ways. The essence of these changes is to infuse students with respectful attitude both towards foreign language and the system of values characteristic for the speaker of this language, based on the principle of equality of different cultures. European Council in 1984 formed its own recommendations regarding professional training of a foreign language teacher in intercultural context which must be followed by the states - members of this organization:

multiculturalism as pedagogical phenomenon suggests understanding it as phenomenon of the united Europe, analysis of the opportunities of its realization in professional training of foreign language teacher. Thus, a teacher of a foreign language is not just an engineer of language system but a "coach" developing some skills and abilities, he is intermediary between cultures [12]. He must constantly look for opportunities for intercultural training in the context of his discipline and build his knowledge accordingly. Such organization of education process facilitates formation and development of the student's personality. Necessity to solve non-standard tasks both in the process of studying and in further professional activity demands heuristic thinking, creativity, quick response, purposefulness, initiative in solution of problems. While considering cultural differences we must rely on the principle of equality of all human cultures (Lutz Getze). Ethnocentrism - a feeling of superiority of one's own language and culture - must be suppressed. The task of teacher is to infuse students with objective, free from prejudice and tolerant attitude to foreign culture [13]. Teacher must ignite curiosity in a student to learn foreign culture and take into account opportunities of interaction, mutual penetration and contribution of cultures.

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