Intercultural competence of personality while teaching foreign languages

Competencia intercultural de la personalidad al enseñar idiomas extranjeros

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Contents

ABSTRACT:

The paper substantiates the importance of the development of intercultural competence while teaching foreign languages. The theoretical and practical problems connected with the necessity for intercultural education of representatives of different ethnic groups have been identified. Based on scientific and pedagogical literature analysis, a concept "intercultural competence of personality while teaching foreign languages" has been specified; its structural components (value-based, cognitive, activity, and cultural) have been determined. The article proves the efficiency of the methods developed for intercultural competence formedness in the process of teaching foreign languages

Keywords: intercultural competence, intercultural communication, competence paradigm, components of intercultural competence

RESUMEN:

El artículo demuestra la importancia de desarrollar la competencia intercultural de una persona en la enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros. Se determinan los problemas teóricos y prácticos relacionados con la necesidad de educación intercultural de representantes de diferentes grupos étnicos. Sobre la base del análisis de la literatura científica y pedagógica, se determina la esencia del concepto de "competencia intercultural de una persona en el estudio de lenguas extranjeras", se determinan sus componentes estructurales: valor cognitivo, efectivo y cultural. Se ha desarrollado el método de formación de competencias interculturales y se ha demostrado su eficacia en el proceso de enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras.

Palabras clave: competencia intercultural, comunicación intercultural, paradigma de competencia, componentes de la competencia intercultural.

1. Introduction

World globalization processes affect the relations between different ethnic communities, increasing the role of intercultural communication as a component of harmonious

coexistence of states and individuals in the modern world. Geopolitical changes cause certain transformation of economic, political, scientific and educational spaces and draw attention to the formation of a personality who is aware of his / her belonging to world culture, is ready to perceive other culture and represent his / her own one, and is capable of tolerant and successful coexistence in all life spheres. The diversity of languages and cultures is a valuable source of knowledge, personal development, as well as self-fulfillment is a background of personality's full development during his / her life. Thus, the study of other peoples' existence, their sociocultural differences, and language as a cultural code of any nation becomes essential.

The necessity to implement intercultural education is justified by strengthening the demographic movement of representatives of different nationalities. Entering the world of culture requires the study of the behavioural features of other society representatives, and the analysis, and identification of norms that govern interpersonal relations. Therefore, the shaping of a new society is impossible without shaping of a communication culture, which involves deep insight into the culture of other countries, familiarization with other people's values. In modern life, intercultural communication is the most vulnerable field of relations in multicultural society, since it involves the process of communicative interaction between representatives of different nationalities, accompanied by linguistic-cultural information exchange, resulting in moral, value-based, and mutual enrichment of each communication participant.

Global integration changes lead to alterations in the education area, in which the important requirements are as follows: training of a competitive expert, equipped with the competencies (knowledge and skills) necessary for lifelong problem solving, intercultural cooperation widening, and cultural values exchange. Activation of international contacts in the education sector, significance of communication between nations necessitated foreign languages learning and boosted the interest in intercultural communication. Its ultimate goal is to achieve mutual understanding and establish relations between individuals belonging to different national and cultural communities. Language is a part of the culture of any nation; hence the communication process involves a certain discrepancy in perception or information transmission, which is connected with incorrect interpreting of the behaviour of representatives of other cultures. Taking into account all the above, the knowledge of language system, the speech behaviour of native speakers, sociocultural information and ability to use them in specific situations are becoming particularly relevant in the communication process.

Consequently, knowledge of intercultural communication basics in teaching foreign languages is an essential condition for mastering a language system, comprehensive functioning in a new sociocultural environment and formation of a personality, ready for international mobility needs.

The aim of the paper is to substantiate both theoretical and practical problems connected with the necessity to implement intercultural education of representatives of different nationalities while teaching foreign languages.

2. Methodology

New social demands for personality full development attract attention of numerous scientists (V. Andrushchenko, M. Byram, N. Galskova, N. Gez, G. Hofstede, P. Kaikkonen, V. Khymynets, A. Kozak, I. Safonova, etc.) to the components of education aimed at the formation of competencies, necessary for effective social and professional activities, the integral parts of which are mobility, independence, constructiveness, and readiness for intercultural interaction. The approval of the competence-based educational paradigm involves the formation of a personality, capable of using the acquired knowledge, skills in non-standard situations, self-improvement, fast adaptation to new conditions, and awareness of his / her belonging to native and global cultures (Andrushchenko, 2006).

The determining factor in today's context is the education, aimed at establishing the skills to use personal potential for solving social, professional and moral tasks, to expand intercultural cooperation, exchange cultural values, and apply knowledge of language and

culture for active dialogue between representatives of other nationalities. Thus, foreign language teaching in terms of competence paradigm of education provides a background for the formation of a cultural and linguistic personality, capable of effective intercultural communication; it also promotes intellectual and cultural development; self-improvement; shaping of vital competencies; and hence, the ability to respond immediately to dictates of times (Khymynets, 2010).

The effective language learning involves the necessity to analyze the conceptual model of a nation, taking into account its culture, focus on universal human values, development of cross-cultural worldview, laying the groundwork for awareness of individuality, peculiarities of a native language and the language being studied. This is exactly what the Theory of intercultural communication studies (Bakum, Palchykova, 2012).

In accordance with the National Strategy of the Development of Education in Ukraine, the key task of modern education is to ensure the development of a competent personality, who is aware of his / her belonging to both own nation and global civilization; realizes the realities and prospects of sociocultural dynamics; is capable of applying knowledge in non-standard situations; of making responsible decisions, acting quickly and reorienting himself / herself in a constantly changing interdependent world; can train qualified personnel; is able to professionally develop and master competitive technologies (National Strategy of the Development of Education in Ukraine for 2012-2021). The above can help to conclude that teaching of foreign languages in the context of the competence-based paradigm of education is focused on intercultural competence formation, which involves recognition of cultural diversity, acquisition of foreign language standards, ability to identify dissimilarities that may prevent from understanding while communicating with representatives of other cultures, construction of new behavior patterns according to the standards and values of different cultures.

Analysis of the definitions of the concept "intercultural competence" allows concluding that the term is considered by scientists as:

– the quality that helps a personality to fulfil himself / herself within a dialogue of cultures and adapt to the conditions of other culture, to successful and effective intercultural communication; joint activities and cooperation with culture-bearers (Galskova, Gez, 2007);

– the ability to differentiate various cultures, value-based systems, and relevant communication standards (Safonova, 2012);

– the person's integral property that means his / her readiness for intercultural contacts, the body of knowledge, visions about the essence of other cultures (language, traditions, values, art, behaviour), which provides a person with the opportunity for effective intercultural interaction (Kozak, 2013).

While analyzing the concept "intercultural competence", Zh. Horina focuses on the information about cultural phenomena and values and indicates that the term mentioned is formed as a result of the intercultural communication process and is by nature of a communicative interaction of personalities belonging to different cultures, different types of speech behaviour, and various customs and traditions. The scientist introduces the term "intercultural and communicative competence" and interprets it as: a) a personality's quality, characterized by a set of special knowledge, intercultural skills necessary to solve problems in the process of intercultural interaction; b) an ability to perform intercultural communication in a multicultural environment (Horina, 2010).

In view of this, "intercultural competence of personality while foreign languages teaching" is the ability to orient oneself in various types of cultures, value-based systems and communicative standards; implement knowledge within the dialogue of cultures; adapt to the conditions of other culture, joint activities and cooperation with representatives of other cultures; assess a communicative situation, and correlate communicative intentions with envisaged choice of the strategies, used in situations of intercultural contacts.

O. Novikova considers emotional, cognitive and processual components as structural elements of intercultural competence (Novikova, 2009). Positive perception of cultural diversity, readiness for cooperation and the feeling of intercultural communication

participants' emotional state are the features of the emotional component. The cognitive component takes into account knowledge of culture, history, national characteristics and their everyday implementation, rules of intercultural communication and methods of cultural analysis. The processual component consists of the strategies used in situations of intercultural contacts.

O. Leontovich differentiates the communicative, speech and cultural components in the structure of intercultural competence. They provide a set of skills to assess the communicative situation and correlate communicative intentions with the predictable choice of verbal and non-verbal means (Leontovych, 2002).

The development of intercultural competence is possible in terms of a combination of cognitive (knowledge and skills in language, profession, ways of communication, professional activities arrangement), cultural (understanding of world cultural, social, political phenomena; ability to compare one's own culture with other ones; readiness for dialogue), and motivational (motivation for self-development of intercultural knowledge, skills) spheres (Radul, 2015).

Taking into account the views of the scientists (N. Galskova, Zh. Horina, O. Leontovych, O. Novikova, S. Radul, I. Safonova), we conclude that intercultural competence has a hierarchical structure and covers sociocultural knowledge and abilities; skills to correlate and analyze elements of culture, language, communicative strategies; and experience in foreign language used for intercultural communication.

The basis of intercultural communication is a language (represents the nation's cultural code), culture (influences the peculiarities of a communication process) and a personality (a direct communication participant). Accordingly, intercultural competence can be presented by a combination of such components as value-based, cognitive, activity, and cultural.

The value-based component reflects the maturity of educational and cognitive, professional and social motives; the awareness of importance of intercultural interaction during personal and professional development; understanding of cultures equality through contrast and analysis. It involves awareness of:

– values of modern world cultures;

– value of intercultural communication for professional progress and personal development;

– connection between culture, people and personality's development – "a mediator of cultures";

– importance of tolerance while intercultural relationship building.

The cognitive component of intercultural competence contains a set of knowledge (language, culture, history, rules of etiquette, social and cultural standards) necessary for interaction with representatives of other cultures as well as knowledge of conflict prevention strategies in interpersonal and professional fields. The specified component includes:

– knowledge of specifics of nations' communicative behaviour;

– analysis and prevention from stereotyping of other culture and its bearers;

– knowledge of the language, culture, history for participating in the process of intercultural communication;

– knowledge of the system of values and standards for orientation in situations of intercultural communication and understanding the messages;

– study of the national culture content and awareness of its features.

The activity component involves the ability to apply communication strategies to prevent conflict situations differing from those, adopted within a particular culture and predetermine success or failure of the communication act. The component comprises the following skills:

– use of knowledge of the language, culture, and communication strategies in the process of intercultural communication;

– analysis and application of communication strategies to prevent conflict situations;

– modelling of monological and dialogical statements, taking into account cultural peculiarities of representatives of other nationalities;

– analysis and evaluation of intercultural interaction results.

The cultural component of intercultural competence includes knowledge of history, culture, social and political values of countries; awareness of the role of culture in the process of international communication. It contains:

– understanding of non-verbal means for correct message interpretation;

– use of foreign languages expressive means in the process of intercultural communication;

– use of knowledge of culture and values of other nations in the course of intercultural communication aimed at positive results achievement;

– positive perception of the differences in cultural values, standards of the representatives of other linguistic-cultural communities;

– ability to assess the compliance of a person's actions with universal human moral standards, to eliminate discrepancies between them.

The research took place in Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University, Donetsk National University of Economics and Trade named after Mykhailo Tugan-Baranovsky, and Open International University of Human Development "Ukraine". A total of 308 first- and second-year students with approximately the same performance level were involved in the study.

At the first stage the formedness level of intercultural competence of two compared groups was determined; the average percentage values of the number of students with reproductive, conscious and situational, active and creative levels of formation of the mentioned competence were identified; the difficulties a personality faces while foreign languages learning were found out.

At the second stage, a system of exercises based on competency-based approach was implemented, which promotes conscious acquirement of standards and rules of communicative behaviour for use in various types of intercultural speech activity; the effectiveness of the introduced methods concerning intercultural competence development was verified.

The third stage involved control tests and final questionnaire of the experiment participants in the experimental group (EG) and control group (CG); the results of EG students' educational activity in foreign languages were compared with the results of CG students; the dynamics of formedness levels of students' academic achievements on the basis of intercultural competence development was specified.

Determination of formedness levels of the value-based component of intercultural competence (reproductive, conscious and situational, active and creative) was carried out by means of a tolerance questionnaire by V. Magun, M. Zhamkochian, and M. Magura (Practical course on psychodiagnosis and tolerance research, 2003). The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify the varieties of tolerance: towards the representatives of other nations, cultures, and beliefs.

3. Results

According to the survey results 30.4 % of students of group one and 36.7 % of students of group two were diagnosed with the reproductive level of formedness of the value-based component. 58.9 % of students of group one and 56.7 % of students of group two demonstrated conscious and situational formedness level. Only 10.7 % of students of group one and 6.6 % of students of group two showed the active and creative level of the value-based component.

To define the formedness levels of the cognitive component of the students' intercultural competence, the authors used a test by Lin Van Dain and Sin Eng in A. Solodka's interpretation (Solodka, 2015) "Estimation of intercultural interaction efficiency and potential adaptability in cultural diversity". The test analyzes thinking strategies in intercultural cooperation, motivation to intercultural collaboration, attitude towards representatives of

other cultures, interaction efficiency and adaptation to a foreign cultural environment. The questions were divided into two blocks. The first one clarifies how a person feels in situations of intercultural communication; the second part determines the cooperation with the representatives of other cultures.

Students of group one (43.7 %) and students of group two (38.7 %) demonstrated satisfactory skills of intercultural interaction, which requires development of the ability to adapt and interact effectively in the cultural environment. Students of group one (43.7 %) and students of group two (42.0 %) showed knowledge of the rules of intercultural interaction at the conscious and situational level, which requires focusing on the interaction efficiency and improvement of adaptational capacity to other cultures. High level of motivation for effective intercultural interaction, established intercultural communication behavioural skills and appropriate level of knowledge of intercultural behaviour strategies were demonstrated by 12.6 % of students of group one and 19.3 % of students of group two.

To detect the formedness levels of the activity component of intercultural competence, the students were offered five tasks which involved sentence completion with the words / phrases from the given options to compile a coherent text; drawing up a dialogue by the sample and making up their own dialogue on pre-defined roles. According to the results, 21.7% of students completed the tasks with the maximum number of mistakes, while 13% made 2-5 mistakes. The analysis of the results showed that the majority of students do not have established skills of dialogical speech crafting in the proposed situation of communication; cannot achieve a communicative goal and do not take into account behavioural differences of other culture representatives while creating statements.

In group one the reproductive level of formedness of the activity component of intercultural competence was demonstrated by 24.7 % students, conscious and situational level – by 58.2 %, active and creative one – by 17.1 %. In group two, the reproductive level of formedness of the activity component of intercultural competence was demonstrated by 32.0 %students, conscious and situational level – by 56.0%, active and creative one – by 12.0 %.

The formedness levels of the cultural component of intercultural competence were determined according to a method "Detection of a level of cross-cultural competence" (Solodka, 2015). The questionnaire consists of nine statements with "Yes", "Possible" or "No" answers. This interview method made it possible to identify the respondents' motivation and interest in increasing their cultural awareness.

The obtained data showed that 30.4 % of students of group one and 34.0 % of students of group two took a minimal interest in acquainting with the peculiarities of other culture (reproductive level of the cultural component of intercultural competence). The majority of the students (58.2% from group one and 59.3 % from group two) were focused on using the communication scenarios identical to their native culture. The respondents reported that they would like to achieve mutual understanding with the interlocutor, but they did not know how to do it due to the lack of socio-cultural knowledge (conscious and reproductive level). Only 11.4 % of students of group one and 6.7% of students of group two expressed their willingness to change their behaviour for the one, typical for other culture, but they also pointed out the lack of cultural knowledge required to form the necessary style of interaction and achieve a success in different situations of intercultural communication (active and creative level).

Table 1 and figure 1 explain students distribution according to levels of formedness of intercultural competence components at stage one.

Table 1
Distribution of students according to formedness levels of intercultural competence components at the first stage of the experiment

| Components of	Compared	Levels		

intercultural competence	groups of students	Reproductive	Conscious and situational	Active and creative
		Percentage, %	Percentage, %	Percentage, %
Value-based	1 group	30.4	58.9	10.7
	2 group	36.7	56.7	6.6
Cognitive	1 group	43.7	43.7	12.6
	2 group	38.7	42.0	19.3
Activity	1 group	24.7	58.2	17.1
	2 group	32.0	56.0	12.0
Cultural	1 group	30.4	58.2	11.4
	2 group	34.0	59.3	6.7
Average value	1 group	32.3	54.8	13.0
	2 group	35.4	53.5	11.2

On average, in the context of group one, 32.3 % of the students showed the reproductive level of intercultural competence, 54.7 % of the students – conscious and situational level, 13.0 % – active and creative level. Regarding group two, 35.4 % of the students demonstrated the reproductive level of intercultural competence formedness, 53.5% – the conscious and situational level, and 11.1 % – the active and creative level. Distribution of the representatives of two groups according to their levels of the formed components of the competence has no principle difference.

Figure 1
Distribution of students according to formedness levels of intercultural
competence components at the first stage of the experiment

Intercultural competence. Stage one
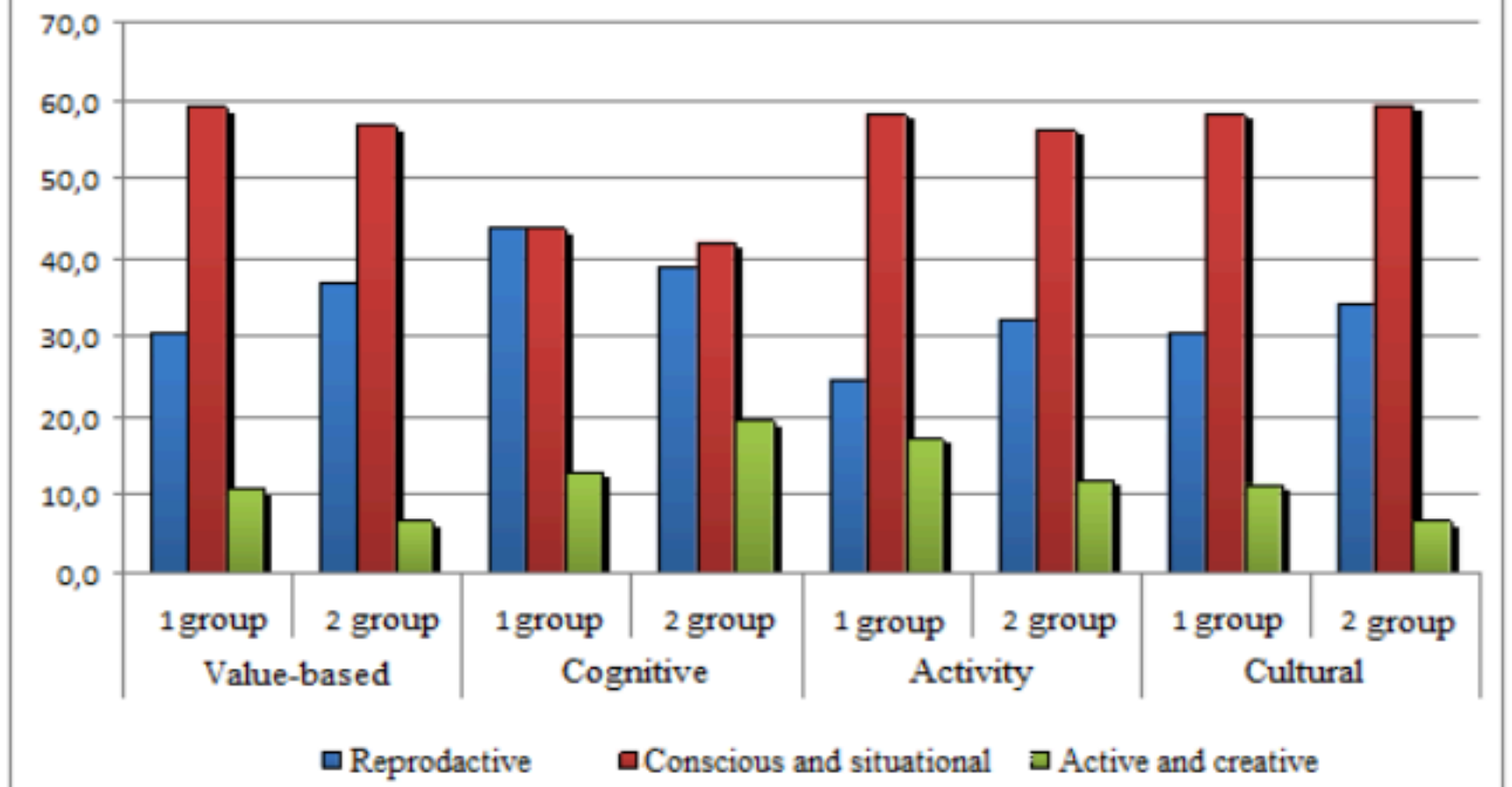
The experiment helped to determine that the total level of intercultural competence formedness is conscious and situational (intermediate). The key problems preventing from effective intercultural interaction of the representatives of different cultures are: low motivation for learning other cultures, lack of knowledge about standards, rules and behaviour strategies.

Within the methodology proposed, the experimental test on the formation of intercultural competence components was performed.

The second stage of the study lasted for two years. The number of students in the experimental group was 158, in the control group the quantity equaled 150. The experimental learning management involved a set of exercises, divided into blocks (based on the classification by S. Bachmann, S. Gerhold, G. Wessling aimed at intercultural communication skills establishment): intercultural awareness and perception, suggestions, comparison of cultures, and situations of intercultural communication. The tasks of each block were interrelated and gradually getting complicated (from a simple material description connected with a specific topic to a self-production of utterances and implementation of students' intentions in different kinds of speech) (Bachmann, S., Gerhold, S., Wessling, G., 1996).

Section one includes the following tasks: description or commenting of the text previously read, the picture seen, picture-based story, description with support, description of the picture or some situation from memory. The aim of the work was to increase and complement students' active vocabulary, getting them familiar with the cultural realities of different countries.

The enrichment of students' cultural awareness was based on the performance of the tasks involving information comparison, image-word correlation, vocabulary enlargement and establishment of argument skills viewed from the perspective of different cultures. At this stage, the input of information with cultural background was emphasized to enhance cognitive and emotional interest as well as to develop logical, analytical and creative thinking. The exercises were developed to help students see the features of each culture, form value vision of other nations' culture and its representatives, get subjects involved in cultural heritage, deepen students' knowledge, and increase the level of readiness for intercultural communication.

Next block of exercises was proposed to develop skills of expressing thoughts and adhering to language standards. The tasks were based on the knowledge acquired in the previous section and envisage grouping of words by various categories (synonyms, antonyms); creating of associograms for crafting a visual-semantic concept image; detection of the word, inconsistent with the content or which contains cultural studies information; drawing up questions to receive information; continuation of a picture-based narrative; projects preparation.

The content of block three exercises implied obtaining of the information on cultural traditions, worldview peculiarities, beliefs, and moral values of different nations. In the exercises the principles of cultural variability and domination of problem-solving tasks were taken into account; the tasks were aimed at the development of logical and analytical thinking. The exercises were the means of mastering culture-universal, spiritual values and standards. They contributed to the individual's moral and ethical progress, unbiased attitude to representatives of other cultures and awareness of the equality of cultures through comparison and analysis.

Establishment of skills to use the acquired knowledge in situations of intercultural communication involved learning by samples with further statement creation, taking into account cultural differences of other cultures representatives. The ability to form such expressions was based on the information obtained in the previous blocks; when, after tasks studying, the students better understood cultural and speech peculiarities of other cultures representatives.

The tasks proposed within unit four were aimed at the development of all kinds of speech activity; they were predominantly creative. Drawing parallels between cultures, dialogue interaction of educational process participants promoted the development of the ability to use the acquired knowledge for achieving a positive result of communication and preventing from conflict situations.

Stage three involved the evaluation of the experiment results concerning personality's intercultural competence development. For this purpose, the tools and questionnaires used at stage one were applied with appropriate corrections.

To determine development levels of the value-based component of intercultural competence, a tolerance measurement questionnaire was applied (Practical course on psychodiagnosis and tolerance research, 2003).

The test results showed that 25 EG students (15.8 %) have the reproductive level of formedness of the value-based component of intercultural competence, 93 (58.9 %) – the conscious and situational, 40 (25.3 %) – the active and creative. Whereas the students of the control group demonstrated the following results: 55 students (36.7 %) have the reproductive level of formedness of the value-based component of intercultural competence, 79 (52.7 %) – the conscious and situational, and 16 (10.6 %) – the active and creative.

To define levels of formedness of the cognitive component of intercultural competence (evaluating of the effectiveness of cross-cultural interaction and potential adaptability in cultural diversity), the same test as at the first stage was conducted (Solodka, 2015). Thus, according to the test results, it can be concluded that in terms of the experimental group, 32 students (20.3 %) have the reproductive level of formedness of the cognitive component of intercultural competence; 57 (38.0 %) – in the context of the control group. The conscious and situational level was demonstrated by 75 EG students (47.5 %) and by 68 CG students (45.3 %). The active and creative level was shown by 51 EG students (32.2 %) and by 25 CG students (16.7 %).

Indicating of formedness levels of the activity component of intercultural competence involves the students' performance of appropriate exercises. Formedness of the activity component of intercultural competence at the reproductive level was demonstrated by 20 students of EG (12.7 %) and by 43 students of CG (28.7 %); in terms of conscious and situational level – 92 students of EG (58.2 %) and 89 students of CG (59 %); and in the context of active and creative level – 46 students of EG (29 %) and 18 students of CG (12.0 %).

Determination of formedness levels of the cultural component of intercultural competence involves "Detection of the level of cross-cultural competence" methodology (Solodka, 2015). The results of the survey showed that 25 EG students (15.8 %) have the reproductive formedness level of the cultural component of intercultural competence, 88 (55.7 %) – the conscious and situational level, and 45 (28.5 %) – the active and creative one. 47 CG students (31.3 %) are with the reproductive level of formedness of the cognitive component of intercultural competence; 90 (60.0 %) are with conscious and situational, and 13 (8.7 %) are with active and creative one.

Table 2 and figure 2 explain the distribution of the students according to their formedness levels of intercultural competence components at the third experiment stage.

Table 2
Distribution of students according to formedness levels of intercultural competence components at the third stage of the experiment

Components of intercultural competence	Compared groups of students	Levels		
		Reproductive	Conscious and situational	Active and creative
		Percentage, %	Percentage, %	Percentage, %
Value-based	EG	15.8	58.9	25.3
	CG	36.7	52.7	10.6
Cognitive	EG	20.3	47.5	32.2
	CG	38.0	45.3	16.7
Activity	EG	12.7	58.2	29.1
	CG	28.7	59.3	12.0
Cultural	EG	15.8	55.7	28.5
	CG	31.3	60.0	8.7
Average value	EG	16,2	55,1	28,8
	CG	33,7	54,3	12,0

Figure 2
Distribution of students according to formedness levels of intercultural competence components at the third stage of the experiment

Intercultural competence. Stage three
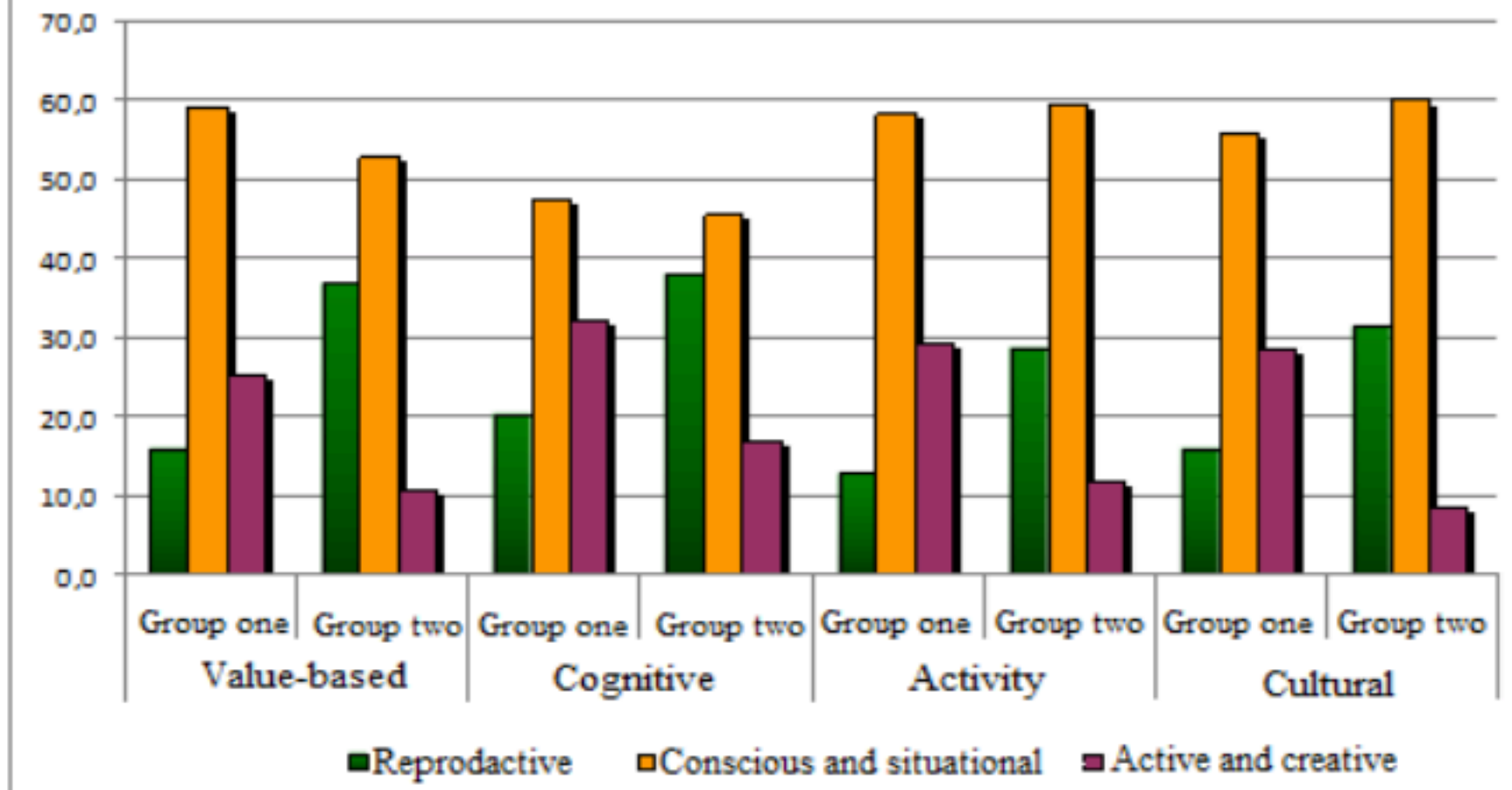
On average, 16.2 % of EG students showed the reproductive level of intercultural competence, which is 17.5 % less than in CG; 55.1 % – the conscious and situational level, which is 0.8% more than in CG; 28.8% – the active and creative level, which is 16.8% more than in CG.

The diagnostic assessment analysis allows to state that the methods introduced to contribute to better language acquisition, increase motivation for getting knowledge of other cultures and reduce the level of foreign culture rejection.

The results of diagnosis at the third stage of the experiment proved that the percentage of students with the reproductive level of formedness of intercultural competence components has decreased, and the percentage of students with the active and creative level has increased.

Thus, the results of the experiment showed the effectiveness of the proposed methodology of personality intercultural competence development in the process of teaching foreign languages.

4. Conclusions

Nowadays, teaching of foreign languages requires refocusing of knowledge paradigm, which involves knowledge accumulation, on the competence one, aimed at practical application of skills in education and life. Therefore, the content of modern methods of teaching foreign-language has to involve cultural material that contributes to personal enrichment, revealing different aspects in language and cultural systems of different ethnic groups.

It has been found that the necessity for intercultural competence development is stipulated by the society need for experts with an appropriate level of intercultural communication, who can successfully work in a multicultural world; by the desire of countries to compete successfully in the global educational space; and by the importance to overcome misunderstandings, barriers, conflicts in the process of communication with native speakers.

The experiment substantiated the structure of intercultural competence and its content including value-based, cognitive, activity, and cultural components. Methods of personality's intercultural competence formedness have been worked out; their effectiveness in the

process of teaching foreign language was experimentally proved. The experiment demonstrated intercultural competence evolution dynamics and confirmed the advantages of the developed methodology to improve the level of linguistic, cultural, and intercultural knowledge.

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