EXPLORING ASSESSMENT FOR DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AMONG MULTILINGUAL HIGH SCHOOL FINANCE STUDENTS

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Abstract

The formation of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as ability to participate in foreign language communication is the priority of ESP. In teaching English for multilingual University students on specialty "finance" in Kazakhstan for teachers often face the issue to measure students' language skills which they have achieved through designed tests, quizzes, online testing programs, etc. The purpose of our study is to measure three key components of ICC in order to observe and experimentally check multilingual students' academic achievement in cultural knowledge, attitude, and behavior. Moreover the evaluation of ICC formation is done through formative, summative assessment, rubrics at the beginning and after experimental teaching.

Two groups of students were involved into experimental teaching as control and experimental groups. In fact the results show that the students improve their foreign language acquisition, cultural awareness, self-esteem and motivation. Moreover the methodological guidelines provide in the field of selection of assessment types and strategies with setting appropriate tasks and making rubrics. Finally, comparing the results of ICC skills before and after experimental teaching as a whole we concluded that scores of control and experimental groups changed and even the students from experimental group got the higher points after experimental teaching.

Thus the present study attempted to address the problem of the ICC skills development while studying the improvement of students' cultural knowledge, attitude and behavior of multilingual students in Kazakhstani Universities alongside with the efficiency of task based evaluation used for students' assessing and other means of teaching. The results reflected a wide range of professional opinions, personal reflections as well as pedagogical and linguistic experiences.

Keywords: Intercultural communicative competence; assessment; ESP; multilingual skills, rubrics.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term communicative competence was created by Dell Hymes on the basis of specific concept of N. Chomsky "linguistic competence" which is used by scientist to nominate an inner mental grammar of the individual, arguing that language is presented here in the form of an abstract sets of rules which is most clearly reflected in the individual unconscious intuitive representations of language. D.Hymes defined the communicative competence as inner knowledge situational appropriateness of the language. Thus, communicative competence means language knowledge acquisition, providing possession of ways of interaction and communication skills with people from the different parts of the world, the performance of different social roles in society, and the ability to use different communicative strategies to resolve specific situations. Communicative competence has completely a clear structure with main components of which are the various competencies characterizing it from different speech activities. There is an indisputable common view that the knowledge of the culture, values and national characteristics of a foreign-language conversational partner allows language to be fully used as a means for intercultural communication therefore providing mutual-understanding collaboration between individuals and societies from different cultures generally.

During the last century the question of the interrelationship between language, society and culture has not only pedagogical interest but it has been central to the studies of philosophy, history, culturology, ethno-linguistics, anthropology, linguistics and other academic disciplines, especially as regards the applied aspects of intercultural communication.

Studies in 'intercultural communication' have established that one must bear in mind two groups of defining characteristics when considering the process of intercultural communication: firstly, intercultural communication is complicated by a range of factors, namely, communicative factors (situation, style and genre of language, form of communication, the presence of non-verbal means of communication, forms of behavior), psychological factors (type of reception, reaction, stereotyping, empathy; various types of reaction to a foreign culture such as alienation, assimilation, acculturation), cultural factors (basic outlook, norms, values, experience); secondly, different circumstances, situations and types of contact create different types of intercultural communication.

According to S.S.Kunanbayeva the intercultural communicative competence includes the following subcompetences: lingual cultural, social, social cultural, conceptual, personally centered, cognitive and communicative. At the present stage of development of foreign language teaching methodology there is a necessity and the need to strengthen the socio-cultural training component of intercultural communicative competence. Learning a foreign language, students are attached to a different culture, "the teaching of languages - it is always intercultural communication" according to S. Ter-Minasova.

The assessment of ICC is a field that is rife with controversy because the reason lies in the validity of the test. The validity of a test must be referenced against the skill, performance, ability, or whatever the instructional program purports to instill. In other words, unless what is being tested or assessed is clarified, adequately appropriate measurement tools cannot be developed. Therefore, before developing the method of ICC assessment, the content of assessment must be clarified.

Culture has been taught as bits and pieces of information included in foreign language studies. Culture testing has traditionally measured the scattered factual knowledge of culture, rather than insights or awareness of the essence of a culture. Despite of many efforts over the last three decades, the language teaching profession has not succeeded in developing a valid standardized measuring process for culture learning. However, difficulty doesn't mean impossibility in assessing ICC. As long as reasonable goals for intercultural communication are set up for high school students, it is feasible to assess their competence in intercultural contacts (L. Vygotskiy).

The most appropriate ICC assessment was proposed by Lafayette and Schulz who believed that culture can be learned as active cultural knowledge or passive cultural knowledge. They suggested three culturally oriented goals that can be tested in EFLT in reality: knowledge, understanding, and behavior.

The three components of ICC as knowledge, attitude and skills involve cognitive science, affection and behavioral science; therefore, the ways of assessing each of them varies.

First, assessment of cultural knowledge on the micro level should be placed in specific situations. Cultural knowledge and the situation in which an intercultural encounter happens are inseparable. The explanation of a communicative behavior varies with situations as L. Bachman and A. Palmer supposed. The situation decides whether a communicative behavior is appropriate and consistent with cultural norms.

Second, the content of cultural knowledge should be clearly defined. What have been taught should be assessed. J. Anderson wrote that the content of assessment limits the tasks that the students are realistically asked to perform on a test. Cultural knowledge assessed should focus on the knowledge which can influence intercultural communicative behaviors.

Third, knowledge on host culture should be included in the assessment. For a long period of time, host culture is ignored in culture teaching. However, without a deep understanding of one's own culture, a person's knowledge on intercultural communication is incomplete and unsystematic which affects the efficiency of his intercultural communication.

Attitude toward other cultures is an important component of ICC. If a student doesn't have the motivation to communicate intercultural nor has a hostile attitude to something culturally different from his own, he will never succeed in an intercultural communicative event. Since attitude toward other cultures is related with a student's psychology and cognitive ability, it is of great difficulty to assess it (Chapelle C., Brindley G.). To have a general idea of a student's attitude toward culture, assessors can make use of some well-developed tools for attitude assessment such as the social distance scale, the semantic differential approach and statement judgment method according to their specific purpose of attitude assessment according to F. Gattullo. What should be noted is that students' attitude toward other cultures may change with the progress of their culture studies, therefore, attitude assessment had better be carried out both at the beginning and the end of a teaching program to monitor the changes in attitude.

With adequate cultural knowledge and appropriate attitudes toward other cultures, how a student will behave in an intercultural communicative situation is the biggest concern of ICC teaching in language education (Zhussupova R., Beisembayeva G.). Culture behavior can be indirectly assessed by written test with multiple-choices, true or false questions and short answer questions to provide objective revelation of a student's competence in intercultural communication. However, written test is only an indirect way of cultural behavior assessment because what a student really does in real communicative situations and what he expects he could do is sometimes different. Written test always involves the factor of luck. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate a student's real competence in handling intercultural encounters in a more scientific way. Performance evaluation is a supplement to written test of cultural behavior as Bachman L., Palmer A. had pointed out in their works. In performance evaluation, students are assigned a specific task of intercultural communication and teachers observe their format of response to evaluate their behavior with reference to a prescribed scoring system. So the task-based method was thoroughly investigated by Cheng L. and Rogers T. and they concluded that the task must be carefully designed to cover the content of assessment. The scoring system should be clearly explained to the students so that they can understand the feedback the teacher gives to their performance.

2. DESCRIPTION OF EXPERIMANTAL TEACHING

2.1. Procedure

Citing references of some experts' research on ICC, this paper supposes to assess three components of ICC as language and cultural knowledge, attitude and skills. When cultural knowledge in language testing is mentioned, it generally refers to the following abilities: the ability to recognize cultural information or patterns, the ability to describe, or to ascribe to, the proper part of the population a pattern in the culture or social behavior, the ability to recognize a pattern when it is illustrated. This goal focuses on factual information about selected patterns of the target culture, the student's ability to recall, recognize, and describe cultural information. Attitude toward culture involves the student's attitude to other cultures, awareness and sensitivity of cultural differences and flexibility in dealing with culturally different ideas. The testing of cultural behavior includes the following abilities: the ability to use cultural information or patterns, the ability to react appropriately in a social situation, the ability to predict how a pattern is likely to apply in a given situation, the ability to describe or manifest an attitude important for making one acceptable in the foreign society, the ability to evaluate the form of a statement concerning a culture pattern, the ability to describe or demonstrate defensible methods of analyzing a socio-cultural whole, the ability to identify basic human purposes that make significant the understanding which is being taught. This objective refers to behavioral skills, such as the ability to act meaningfully, unobtrusively, and inoffensively in real or simulated cultural situations.

The ICC assessment has gained popularity in the field of second language teaching during the past few years. Rubrics provide the criteria for assessing students' work. They can be used to assess virtually any product or behavior, such as essays, research reports, portfolios, and works of art, recitals, oral presentations, performances, and group activities. Judgments can be self-assessments by students; or judgments can be made by others, such as faculty, other students, fieldwork supervisors, and external

reviewers. Rubrics can be used to clarify expectations to students, to provide formative feedback to students, to grade students, and/or to assess courses and programs. The term 'rubrics', has been used in the field of assessment for more than two decades now. However, the meaning of the term is not clear to many teachers and they misunderstand that a rubric is any scoring criterion. H. Andrade defines a rubric as 'a scoring tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work' and one that 'articulates gradations of quality for each criterion, from excellent to poor. According to H. Andrade, rubrics are useful for teachers and learners for five reasons: they are useful as tools of teaching and assessment; they help students become more thoughtful judges of the quality of their work and those of their peers; they save teachers' time spent on evaluating student work; they accommodate heterogeneous classes; they are easy to use.

A good activity never guarantees the accurate determination of a student's competency at a given task. At this point, rubrics stand for this main requirement. Since it specifies the skill being examined and what constitutes various levels of performance success. In order to construct a good rubric focus on what to measure exactly, how to measure performance and decision on what a passing level of performance competency plays the key role according to Rea-Dickins P. and Gardner Sh. Even though based on the general guidelines a general rubric design may be organized and be used multiple times. Here is the process in detail:

1. Defining the Behavior to Be Assessed. Expected student outcomes, what they should accomplish at the end of each unit and end of each term should be clarified.

2. Choosing the Activity. After the determination of the purpose of the assessment, we choose an activity and consider issues regarding time constraints, resources, and how much data is required.

3. Defining the Criteria. Third step after the decision of activity and tasks to be used, defining of which elements of the project/task are used to find the success of the students' performance. This part is aimed to provide an understanding "a rubric in language teaching". It consists typically two sections: scores along with one axis of the grid and language behavior descriptors inside the grid for what each score means in terms of language performance; language categories along one axis and scores along the other axis and language behavior descriptors inside the grid for what each score within each category means in terms of language performance.

Research done in English as a second language context is also rare. Hence the University finance students make use of rubrics for self-assessment and the effects of rubrics on the development of language skills, mainly the productive skills as writing and speaking are worth investigating.

2.2 Results

The research was organized at the Eurasian National University, Nur-Sultan city for the 3d year students of the speciality "Finance" during the term in 2019. The total number of students were 30.

The participants were 19-20 years old learners of different nationalities: Kazakh, Russian, Uzbek, German, Kirgiz, Ukraine, etc. They master their own native language, the language of communication either Kazakh or Russian, and less than one foreign language.

15 weeks had been scheduled for data collection.

The discipline under this research was Professional-oriented English according to the syllabus.

Each group is divided into two subgroups due to the academic aptitude: subgroup "A" and subgroup "B", 15 students in each. Subgroup "A" overall has the same scores and level of knowledge as subgroup "B".

The research was held in group "B" which called experimental with implementing teaching speaking was assessed with the help of rubrics, while group "A" control has a traditional teaching approach.

Students are quite united; they respect and value each other. The academic proficiency of the whole group is high enough. There is no evident leader in the class. We conducted a pre-experimental data analysis of the students' writing and speaking skills before the experiment so that to check it after experimental teaching (Table 1).

Table 1. The data of students' achievement in developing ICC skills before experiment

Score (points)	95-100	90-94 A-	85-89 B+	80-84 B	75-79 B-	70-74 C+	65-69 C	60-64 C-	55-59 D+	50-54 D	0-49 F

	A										
Control group (%)	8	16	16	15	14	12	11	8	-	-	-
Experimental group (%)	6	14	15	13	13	14	13	10	2	-	-

The results of ICC skills development before experiment were counted by rubrics. As far as it seen, the control group passed the tests more successfully and got the higher scores than experimental one. In comparison 95-100 points received only 6% of students in the experimental group but in control group - 8%. 60-64 points in experimental group were 10% comparing to control group 8%.

55-59 points scored 2% in the experimental group.

So we conducted a post-experimental data analysis of the ICC skills of students before the experiment so that to check it after experimental teaching (table 2).

**Table 2. The data of students' achievement in developing ICC skills after experiment**

Score (points)	95-100 A	90-94 A-	85-89 B+	80-84 B	75-79 B-	70-74 C+	65-69 C	60-64 C-	55-59 D+	50-54 D	0-49 F
Control group (%)	8	16	16	15	14	13	12	6	-	-	-
Experimental group (%)	8	15	16	14	14	13	10	10	-	-	-

After experimental teaching both groups we conducted tests and got the following results described above in the Table 2. The results of speaking after experiment were counted by rubrics. As far as it seen, both the control and experimental groups passed the tests nearly equally. More successfully were the students from the experimental group because they got the same scores in 95-100 points. The experimental group received 10% of students in the experimental group in 65-69 scores just as in the control group 12%. The experimental group improved their scores and nobody got 55-59 points.

Actually in comparison with the control group, the moderated average variance of the experimental group is higher in many scores. The results point out that all participants of the control group had made some improvements after the study but the improvement was not as huge as the one made by the experimental group learners.

Comparing the results of ICC skills before and after experiment as a whole we concluded that scores of control and experimental groups improved and even the students from experimental group got the higher points after experimental teaching.

Diagram 1 – The development of ICC skills
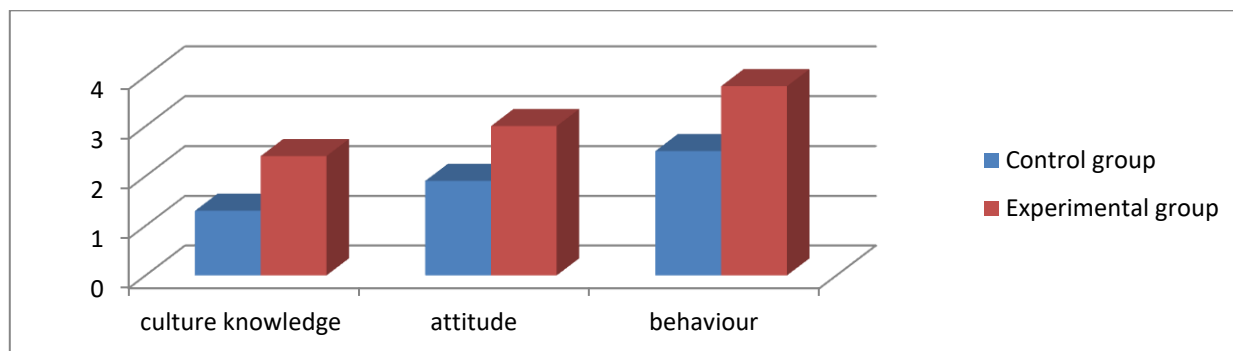
As it shown in Diagram1 the results of experimental groups in ICC skills had improved form beginning of the

experimental teaching till the end. The average percentage is 10%, 12% and 15%.

Thus the present study attempted to address the problem of the ICC skills development while studying the improvement of students' cultural knowledge, attitude and behaviour of multilingual students in Kazakhstani Universities alongside with the effects of provision of tasks used for assessing to students and other means of teaching. The results reflected a wide range of professional opinions, personal reflections as well as pedagogical and linguistic experiences. It gave a new input in terms of initial education and ongoing training to teachers and teacher trainers at various levels of instruction.

3 CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of assessment is to support student learning because its process engages students in behaviors and activities that support them to learn. The important point is that well done assessment tasks also provide scope for students to show their level of achievement, the extent to which the learning objectives have been achieved.

A well designed task will be able to discern between excellent, good and poor levels of achievement. By contrast, if all students do equally well on an assessment item, it is of less value. Selection of forms of the assessment in order to evaluate pupils' achievement should be done very accurately.

Theoretical value is identified through integrative approach to the study of ICC and its formation in assessment process. The research also serves as a resource of knowledge in the field of assessment for the future educators. They can easily explore the given material and select the tasks and strategies in order to successfully assess their students' language progress.

Finally, this paper proclaims some of the new directions for long and short-term perspective as practical value of the investigation which may include the comparative analysis of assessment types that are the most suitable for multilingual high school students.

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