

FRI-116-2-LLH-04(S)

**MODELS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE,
LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE AND THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE EXPRESSIONS
FOR DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE⁶**

Ivelina Zhechkova, Assist. Prof.

Department of Philological Sciences, Silistra Branch,

“Angel Kanchev” University of Ruse

Phone: 086-821 521

E-mail: ivelina.zhechkova@abv.bg

***Abstract:** The paper deals with linguistic competence as a part of Intercultural Communicative Competence of users and learners of foreign languages in the light of the six-level Common European Framework. Culture is conceived through language and by that an important element of the foreign language learning process. Some idioms, sayings and proverbs are viewed here in the context of culture.*

***Key words:** intercultural competence, linguistic competence, culture, idioms, sayings, proverbs*

INTRODUCTION

Dynamic changes in society and cultural diversity had become a challenge in our educational system. They suppose presence of intercultural dialog. For the realization of such a dialog we have to become well acquainted with ourselves and the others, to accept the otherness and to overcome the preconceptions in order to live in a tolerant and broad-minded society. The modern world is characterized with a growing intercultural exchange and globalization processes on the basis of which lies the issue of intercultural competence and the existing multilingualism. Culture is expressed through language and thus acquiring the linguistic competence is an essential point in foreign language teaching. Foreign language learners get to know the beliefs and the perceptions of the respective culture. Learning a foreign language gives a chance to look at another culture as a source of knowledge and to accept and respect the differences between cultures.

Successful intercultural interactions are at the heart of what intercultural education is all about. But what does it mean to interact successfully with people from different cultures? This is the key question underlying the concept of intercultural competence. Intercultural communicative competence is defined as the ability to communicate and interact with people from a different culture using a foreign language [1]. The need for intercultural communicative competence arises when the participants of an interaction have different cultural backgrounds. The cultural background can be the basis for a common shared world, behavior and a set of beliefs. According to Van Ek intercultural competent person must possess the following competences: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, socio-cultural competence and social competence [2].

EXPOSITION

Linguistic competence is a component of intercultural communicative competence. Noam Chomsky introduced the concept of “linguistic competence” as the aim to be achieved by any speaker. [3] Hymes proposed the concept of “communicative competence” adding the ability to discern when and how to use language in specific context to the sheer linguistic ability when speaking. Van Ek emphasized the idea that language teaching is not concerned merely with training in communication skills but also involve the personal development of the learner as an

⁶ Presented a plenary report of May 20, 2016 with the original title: ЛИНГВИСТИЧНАТА КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТ И РОЛЯТА НА ЕЗИКОВИТЕ ИЗРАЗИ ЗА РАЗВИВАНЕТО НА ИНТЕРКУЛТУРНА КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТ.

individual. [4] Van Ek's model of "communicative ability" comprises six competences. According to Byram "his approach is like someone observing a globe by circling around and stopping at six points. At any point one aspect will be central but others and their relationship to that aspect will also be in view" [5].

The Common European Framework of Reference for languages is an international standard for describing language ability. It is used around the world to describe learners' language skills. It was designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabus, the design of teaching and learning materials and the assessment of foreign language proficiency [6].

The Common European Framework of Reference describes six levels for accessing foreign language proficiency:

- A1- Basic user; Breakthrough or beginner;
- A2- Basic user; Waystage or elementary;
- B1- Independent user; Threshold or intermediate;
- B2- Independent user; Vantage or upper- intermediate;
- C1- Proficient user; Effective operational proficiency or advanced;
- C2- Proficient user; Mastery or proficiency.

Common European Framework of Reference summarises the Council of Europe's key aims and its policy regarding the language needs. According to it communicative language competence can be considered as comprising several components: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic. Linguistic competences include lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and other dimensions of language as system. Sociolinguistic competences refer to the sociocultural conditions of language use (rules of politeness, norms governing relations between generations, sexes, classes and social groups). Pragmatic competences are concerned with the functional use of linguistic resources – production of language functions and speech acts. "It also concerns the mastery of discourse, cohesion and coherence, the identification of text types and forms, irony and parody" [7]. Foreign language teaching develops learners' communicative ability. Byram summarizes different competencies defined from Van Ek. Attention should be paid to Van Ek's model:

1. *Linguistic competence*: "the ability to produce and interpret meaningful utterances" [8]. Linguistic competence comprises the basic element for communication- the sentence patterns and types, the constituent structure, the morphological inflections and the lexical resources.

2. *Sociolinguistic competence*: "covers the relation between linguistic signals and their contextual meaning" [9].

3. *Discourse competence*: "the ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and the interpretation of texts" [10].

4. *Strategic competence*: "when the communication is difficult, we have to find ways of getting our meaning across" [11]. This competence is related to the knowledge of communication strategies and how to use them.

5. *Socio-cultural competence*: when language is situated in specific socio-cultural context.

6. *Social competence*: involves our desire to communicate with someone from a different country, the skill to do it, our motivation, self - confidence and empathy.

The best-known model for intercultural communicative competence is supplied by Byram [12]. It is the model that most definitions of intercultural competence are based upon today. Byram explicitly says that the model is designed to help teachers of languages understand the concept of intercultural competence. Byram's model is based on Hymes and Van Ek's model. Byram proposes five components of intercultural competence:

1. *Attitudes*: For a successful intercultural interaction curiosity and openness are needed. Presence of willingness to relativize one's own culture and to value the other meanings, beliefs and behaviour are also important.

2. *Knowledge*: Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and interlocutor's country; of self and the other and of interaction.

3. *Skills of interpreting and relating*: The intercultural speaker should be able to identify ethnocentric perspectives and thus be able to mediate in conflicting interpretations.

4. *Skills of discovery and interaction*: They constitute the ability to acquire new knowledge of the culture and cultural practices.

5. *Education*: Critical cultural awareness/ political education: an ability to evaluate critically the perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures [13].

The model also shows that Byram defines intercultural communicative competence as an interplay of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and intercultural competence. Byram also makes sure that the connection of language and culture is acknowledged. According to his model, five competences are needed to develop intercultural competence. All five of them are strongly intertwined with communicative competence.

Byram's model gives a detailed outline of what intercultural competence is and what kind of skills need to be considered when teaching language. The model is specifically designed for the language classroom and it points out that linguistic competence is part of achieving intercultural competence.

Culture is conceived through language and by that an important element of the foreign language learning process. A specific place in the context of the development of linguistic culture is learning foreign language phrases which reflect the target language and culture. Such type of language expressions are idioms, sayings and proverbs. Knowing them draws the attention to the lifestyle of the people, to their beliefs and perceptions. On the basis of the understanding of the abovementioned linguistic expressions is the method of comparison. They are presented with their literal translation and the Bulgarian correspondent counterparts. Some examples are given:

- A good beginning is half the battle – Добре започнатото е наполовина свършено (букв.: Доброто начало е наполовина спечелена битка).

- A watched pot never boils – С търпение всичко се постига (букв.: Наглежданото гърне никога не кипва).

- A penny saved is a penny gained – Спестеният грош си е спестен грош (букв.: Спестеното пени-спечелено пени).

- Talk of the devil and he is sure to appear – За вълка говорим, а той в кошарата (букв.: Говори за дявола и той със сигурност ще се появи) .

- Burn not your house to rid it of the mouse - Заради бълхата не изгаряй юргана (букв.: Не си подпалвай къщата, за да се отървеш от мишката).

- To pay one back in one's own coin – Каквото повикало, такова се обадило (букв.: Да платиш на някого със собствената му монета).

- Birds of a feather flock together – Краставите магарета през девет баира се подушват (букв.: Птици с еднаква перушина се събират в едно ято).

- A curst cow has short horns – Пази Боже сляпо да прогледа; На бодлива крава бог рога не дава (букв.: На проклетата крава рогата са къси).

- A watched pot never boils – С търпение всичко се постига (букв.: Наглежданото гърне никога не кипва).

- All is fish that comes to his net – Родил се под щастлива звезда; Върви му като по вода (букв.: Всичко, което влиза в мрежата му, е риба).

• As sure as eggs is eggs – Като две и две – четири (букв.: Сигурно е като това, че яйцата са си яйца).

• Better the foot slip than the tongue – Думата не е врабче, ама като я изпуснеш, не се улавя; Дума назад се не връща (букв.: По-добре да стъпиш накриво, отколкото да кажеш нещо накриво).

• Every cloud has a silver lining – Всяко зло за добро (букв.: Всеки облак е поръбен със сребърно).

• Cat – and – dog life – Обичат се като котка и куче (букв.: Живеят като куче и котка).

• Charity begins at home – Всеки тегли чергата към себе си; Всеки на своята воденица вода навръща (букв.: Милосърдието започва вкъщи).

• A friend in need is a friend indeed. – Приятел в нужда се познава (букв.: приятел в нужда е истински приятел).

• As naked as a picked bone. – Гол като пушка (букв.: Гол като оглозган кокал).

• To lock the stable- door after the horse is stolen. – След дъжд- качулка, Като се прекатури колата, пътища много. (букв.: Да заключиш вратата на обора, след като са откраднали коня).

• With time and patience the leaf of the mulberry becomes satin. – С труд и постоянство всичко се постига. (букв.: С време и търпение листото на черницата става коприна).

• The best is oftentimes the enemy of the good. – Много хубаво не е на хубаво (букв.: Най-хубавото често е враг на хубавото).

The following kind of exercise develops intercultural competence through the understanding of the meaning of the idioms. Idioms are expressions whose meaning is not predictable from the usual meanings of its constituent elements (as *kick the bucket*) or from the general grammatical rules of a language (as *the table round for the round table*) and that is not a constituent of a larger expression of like characteristics. [14]

An idiom is an expression that has a meaning of its own and it shouldn't be translated "word by word". The learners should find their equivalents in the native language. [15] Some examples are given:

• He brings home the bacon – Той носи вкъщи парите (букв.: Той носи вкъщи бекона).

• She has bitten off more than she can manage – Тя се е захванала с повече, отколкото може да се справи (букв.: Тя отхапа повече, отколкото може да сдъвче).

• To talk through one's hat – Говоря глупости, каквото ми дойде наум (букв. Говоря през шапката на някого).

• To keep the ball rolling – Поддържам разговора, поддържам ритъма (букв.: Държа топката в движение).

• To play ball with somebody – Комбина съм с някого. (букв.: Играя на топка с някого).

• To rain cats and dogs – Вали като из ведро (букв.: Валят котки и кучета).

• His excuse was hard to swallow – Трудно е да се приеме (букв.: Неговото извинение беше трудно да се преглътне).

• It costs an arm and a leg – Струва майка си и баща си (букв.: Струва ръка и крак).

• It is plain sailing – Просто е, лесно е като фасул (букв.: Обикновено плаване е).

• It is nothing to write home about – В това няма нищо интересно, нищо изключително (букв.: Няма за какво да пиша вкъщи).

Learning a foreign language and culture always proceeds on the background of the native ones. Thus both the cultures are evaluated. A proverb is a short popular saying that gives advice about how people should behave or that expresses a belief that is generally thought to be true.

Proverbs and idioms often have a meaning that is greater than the meaning of the individual words put together. Idioms can be almost impossible to understand unless the person have learned or heard about them before. Idiom is a fixed expression that contains a figurative meaning while a proverb is a short and well- known saying that contains advice. Idioms do not contain a moral while proverbs contain a moral or an advice based on a general truth. Idioms are not complete sentences while proverbs are sentences. Idioms do not make sense if you are not familiar with them while proverbs can be understood even if you hear them for the first time. The understanding and skillful use of the language expressions as proverbs, sayings and idioms contributes to the development of the linguistic competence and thus to the intercultural competence. Learning idiomatic expressions will enhance the learners' communicative ability and will result in understanding cultural norms. Culture not only reflects the real world around humans but a nation's consciousness means thinking, lifestyle, traditions, value systems and world views.

CONCLUSION

Language and culture are closely connected to each other. Language embodies and transfers culture. The knowledge of other cultures is as important as proficiency in using a foreign language. Language and culture are inseparable. Culture is the foundation of communication. Language itself makes no sense and has no meaning outside the cultural setting in which it is spoken. Learning a foreign culture is often intricately intertwined with learning a foreign language. In the foreign language teaching great attention should be paid to teaching culture of the target language as well as to teaching linguistic knowledge so that learners intercultural communicative competence should be enhanced [16]. Knowing idioms, sayings and proverbs not only makes the speech productive and enriched but also help them to learn and understand the target language culture. Idioms, sayings and proverbs appear to be the natural decoders of customs, cultural beliefs, social conventions and norms. Idioms, as a major component of native- like communication, enable a language learner to understand the thoughts, emotions of the people from the foreign culture. Learning idioms and proverbs provides learners with a significant chance to acquire information about target language and culture. For this reason they need particular attention. Language is a special product of human society and it is a tool of understanding the target culture.

REFERENCES

- [1] Byram, M., Teaching and assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence, Multilingual Matters Ltd, Frankfurt Lodge, 1997.
- [2] Byram, M., Teaching and assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence, Multilingual Matters Ltd, Frankfurt Lodge, 1997.
- [3] Chomsky, N., Aspects of the Theory of Syntax. Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1965.
- [4] Van Ek, J., Objectives of Foreign Language Learning, Strasburg, 1986.
- [5] Byram, M., Teaching and assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence, Multilingual Matters Ltd, Frankfurt Lodge, 1997.
- [6] www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic
- [7] www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic
- [8] Byram, M., Teaching and assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence, Multilingual Matters Ltd, Frankfurt Lodge, 1997.
- [9] Byram, M., Teaching and assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence, Multilingual Matters Ltd, Frankfurt Lodge, 1997.
- [10] Byram, M., Teaching and assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence, Multilingual Matters Ltd, Frankfurt Lodge, 1997.
- [11] Byram, M., Teaching and assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence, Multilingual Matters Ltd, Frankfurt Lodge, 1997.

[12] Byram, M., Teaching and assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence, Multilingual Matters Ltd, Frankfurt Lodge, 1997.

[13] Byram, M., Teaching and assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence, Multilingual Matters Ltd, Frankfurt Lodge, 1997.

[14] www.dictionary.com/browse/idiom

[15] Huber-Kriegler, M., Lazar, I., Strange, J., Mirrors and windows, An intercultural Communication Textbook, ECML, Council of Europe, 2003.

[16] Byram, M., Zarate, G., Neuner, Sociocultural competence in language learning and teaching. Studies toward a common European Framework of reference for language learning and teaching. Council of Europe Publishing, 1997.