

# **Intercultural Competence Formation: Teaching Reading of Profession-Related Texts in a Foreign Language to Agricultural Bilingual Students<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

The paper deals with the features of teaching of profession-related texts reading in a foreign language to bilingual students in agricultural higher education institution. Article's purpose was to analyze the technology of intercultural competence formation by means of profession-related texts reading. The method of intercultural competence formation included using the profession-related texts containing intercultural information of native language (L1-Yakut), second language (L2-Russian) and foreign language (L3-English). The conclusion about the importance – when teaching reading to bilingual students, the skills of intercultural reading to be formed while intercultural competence formation process on several levels depending on its components. Revealed teaching reading to bilingual students, ethnic features of bilingual students were taken into account. Discussed in the article technology of intercultural reading skills can be used as a strategy of intercultural competence formation to bilingual students of agricultural higher education institution.

**Keywords:** Intercultural Competence; Bilingual Students; Reading Teaching; Intercultural Reading.

## **1. Introduction**

The Federal State Educational Standard (hereinafter FSES) for higher education is aimed at communicative competence formation at teaching foreign languages, at the same time it is profession-related. According to FSES intercultural competence (hereinafter ICC) is a part of communicative competence.

Therefore, the paper deals with the problem of intercultural competence formation to agricultural bilingual students in the foreign language teaching process.

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Federal state budgetary educational institution “Yakut State Agricultural Academy” (hereinafter YSAA) trains personnel for the North-east of Russian Federation and the most of its students are from country-side where live indigenous people of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The country-side of the Republic is a source of native language, national culture and mentality.

The foreign language studied at the Academy is English (hereinafter L3) and the students are bilinguals. The students’ first language is Yakut (hereinafter L1) and the second is Russian (hereinafter L2) and “the whole educational process in non-language higher education institution goes on the situation of National-Russian bilingualism, and the bilingual students’ intercultural competence formation in the process of foreign language teaching in educational trilingualism situation” (Borisova, 2015).

In this paper we defined intercultural competence consisting of four components (linguistic-sociocultural, discursive, strategic and substantive-professional) and work on its formation has an integrated character.

The development of the subject-professional component of the ICC is determined by the future professional communication sphere of the future specialist, therefore it is necessary to refer to profession-related texts (hereinafter PRT) that potentially contain professionally relevant information for the future agricultural specialists. In this context one of the important tasks is intercultural teaching of reading of profession-related texts.

The study of the theoretical and pedagogic- psychological frameworks of the intercultural competence formation to bilingual students in a non-linguistic higher education institution, which determined the need to substantiate the content of pedagogical activity on this issue served as a prerequisite for the technology development of ICC to bilingual students by means of profession-related texts.

As a result of the analysis of work on this issue, when selecting a profession-related text for the formation of an ICC to agricultural bilingual students, we took into account the following traditional principles of text selection:

- the principle of dealing with psycholinguistic features and mentality of bilingual students,
- principle of professional value,
- the principle of authenticity, and
- principle of intercultural value.

In this regard, authentic agricultural texts in English, with a substantive sociocultural component were selected, culturally adapted and empirically tested and

the source of which were scientific-journalistic and publicistic media texts from Internet sources.

## 2. Literature review

When defining the essence of the concept “intercultural competence”, we relate it to the notion “personality’s readiness for activity”, which currently does not have a single interpretation. This concept is defined as the presence of certain abilities (Ananiev, 2001; Rubinstein, 1989; Slastenin, 1992).

In scientific publications, the concept of “readiness” is often associated with the concept of “competence” (Zimnyaya, 2003, Blinov & Sergeev, 2007; Tatur, 2004).

Competence is a person’s readiness to mobilize knowledge, skills and external resources for effective activity in a specific life situation. It is a willingness to act in situations of uncertainty (Segeev & Blinov, 2007). Tatur (2004) defines competence as a person’s willingness to use their potential.

Recognizing the publications of educators and scientists, who noted that intercultural competence means readiness and ability to intercultural communication, it is worth underlining the works of the researchers Elizarova (2005), Gerasimova (2010) and Pluzhnik (2003).

According to Gerasimva (2010), ICC is the ability of the individual to carry out successful professional communication with partners from other cultures. As stated by Pluzhnik (2003), ICC is the ability to interact with people of another culture, on the basis of taking into account their values, norms of ideas and choose communicative and appropriate methods of verbal and non-verbal behavior at the macro and micro levels.

Subdividing native and imitative bilingualism, and underlining the works of researchers Sherba (1974), Vishnevskaya (1997), and Chernichkina (2007), it is determined that our subjects are native coordinative and subordinative bilinguals and the process of their formation is in the conditions of the National-Russian bilingualism

As follows from the work analysis of researchers and taking into account their scientific perspective on this issue, we defined the concept “intercultural competence of bilingual students” as an integral personal quality, expressed in readiness to interact with representatives of different cultures through mutual understanding by overcoming interference and using transference at all structural levels of intercultural competence arising in intercultural communication in the context of Yakut-Russian-English trilingualism.

We proceed from the fact that intercultural teaching of reading follows the patterns of the traditional communicative teaching of reading in a foreign language and they complement each other.

First of all, the text as a communicative unit is characterized by “the presence of a communicative task (most important task, if we are talking about the indirect impact on the addressee ...)” (Folomkina, 2005) and the student learns through the texts “knowledge, social values and norms, to a variety of information accumulated in the course of practical and practical and theoretical activities, which is important for him to participate in social life, for social activities with other people”(Dridze, 1984).

Giniatullin notes (2010) notes that communicative reading is the activity of perceiving a written text as a speech message with its understanding at the level of meanings and at the level of connotation and intercultural reading is a cognitive-productive activity. Then, intercultural reading is, on the one hand, a part of text understanding, and on the other hand, it is actions of using information retrieved in reading that are continuation of the understanding processes, as far as they can correct and deepen the previously achieved understanding of text content phenomena.

### **3. Methodology**

The methodological background of the study is formed by a sociocultural approach in accordance with the principles personality-oriented approach.

While intercultural competence formation in the process of learning a foreign language, not only three languages come into contact, but also three cultures, where native culture is of paramount importance for bilingual students.

As can be seen, of all the currently existing cultural approaches, in our opinion, the most rational for formation of intercultural competence on a cognitive basis can provide a sociocultural approach, as stated by Safonova (1996) allows interrelated learning of language and culture.

The advantage of the sociocultural approach is that the selection of educational material is carried out on the principle of similarity between the culture of the native language and the cultures of the second and foreign languages.

In the context of a sociocultural approach, learning through the language the cultural values of other peoples, students learn more about their own value systems and the norms of language use determined by the national culture.

By technology of forming competences, we understand “the system of ways of organizing the teacher’s activities and a student, which forms a programmed (automated) process of their interaction, aimed at achieving the planned learning

outcomes (in the competence format) by increasing the efficiency of the educational process due to its maximum optimization” (Sklyarenko 2011). The main goal of the developed technology is the formation of the ICC to bilingual students. ICC formation implements in the teaching process of PRT intercultural reading.

When developing technology, we were guided by the following pedagogical principles that allow us to realize the goal in practice:

- completeness, implemented through the development of common approaches to the selection of training content and ensuring the interconnection of various components aimed at the realization of the goal - the formation of the ICC,
- integrativeness, which implies the integration of knowledge from various general professional disciplines, various approaches, forms, methods and means of education,
- culturally-related study of a third language - a foreign (English) in the context of bilingualism,
- comparison of languages and cultures based on a comparison of cultures, in which the native culture is the basis for mastering the country culture of the learning language, and
- phasing, implying a consistent learning process from simple to complex activities: perceptual-reproductive, reproductive-productive, productive and creative.

Taking into account the fact that the ICC formation is carried out in the process of learning to read by means of PRT, accordingly, when describing technology, we should concentrate on teaching of intercultural reading using PRT.

By intercultural reading, we understand cognitive-productive reading activity, which includes “cognitive actions of perception, recognition, comparative interpretation of another culture phenomenon, as well as productive actions of applying the results of such interpretation in subsequent speech and non-speech activity” (Giniatullin 2010).

Professionally related text is a source of cultural phenomena. When developing the technology, the four-component structure (linguistic-sociocultural, discursive, strategic and substantive-professional) of the ICC was taken into account and the following activities of perception, recognition, comparative interpretation of PRT were highlighted on every level:

1. On linguistic-sociocultural level they represent the skills and abilities of perception and recognition of phenomena and linguistic, lexical, grammatical units with national and cultural specifics: 1) native

language (L1) culture; 2) second language(L2) culture; 3) foreign language (L3) culture.

2. On substantive-professional level they include the skills and abilities to perceive and recognize vocabulary, terminology, realities of agricultural professional subjects and culture, reflecting:
  - national-regional specificity including subject knowledge of professional practice area of L1 (the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia),
  - 2) regional and branch specifics, including subject knowledge of professional practice area of L2 (Russian Federation),
  - 3) foreign culture specifics of. professional practice area of L3 (foreign countries),
  - On discursive level they include the skills and perception, recognition and comparative interpretation of the language design of authentic PRT, and
  - On strategic level they include the skills of perception, recognition, comparative interpretation of the "external" and internal "plan of the text content: concepts, intentions, norms and rules characteristic for authentic agricultural PRT.

The success of intercultural teaching of reading of profession-related texts is due to the methodically focused process management of the intercultural competence components' formation.

The technology includes three stages: motivational-incentive, analytical-synthetic and realizing-control. At the same time, intercultural reading with the use of PRT is considered as an object of study, and the ultimate goal is ICC formation. Teaching of reading of profession-related texts in order to form intercultural competence to bilingual students consists of sequential and interrelated stages within one thematic unit, which allow gradual "introduction from the familiar realities of the professional field to the unfamiliar" (from simple to complex).

Each thematic unit contains texts on levels of language accessibility, reflecting national-regional and branch subject knowledge from the professional field:

- agriculture of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia),
- agriculture (Russian Federation), and
- agriculture (foreign countries).

After the methodical organization of selected texts, teaching intercultural reading was based on the use of texts on the basis of a set of exercises and assignments

to them, aimed at the formation of the above mentioned knowledge, skills and abilities.

#### **4. Results**

The experiment was conducted from 2015 to 2018 among first and second-year students.

Theoretical and empirical methods (observation of students in the study of foreign language, questioning of students), and a pedagogical experiment were used in the research.

Four bilingual student groups of bachelors of the Yakut State Agricultural academy were selected for the research: 1) experimental group (hereinafter EG); 2) control group (hereinafter CG). The groups were selected because they had special course of study “Profession-oriented English”.

The purpose of the research was to form ICC to bilingual students in the process of teaching reading of authentic. profession-related texts.

The following components were selected as indicators of formed intercultural competence: linguistic-sociocultural, discursive, strategic and subject-professional.

To identify the formedness of ICC in bilingual students, the following methods were used:

- evaluation of the indicators (knowledge, skills and abilities) of intercultural competence, observation of the students’ answers when carrying out the tasks, and
- analysis of the obtained results.

The diagnostic method of the bilingual students employs a questionnaire consisting of 4 intercultural competence components and ready-made answers.

The experiment consisted of three stages: ascertaining, formative and summative. At the first stage, the teacher was questioned to identify which technologies were used in teaching of intercultural reading; students were questioned to identify formed ICC; it included primary diagnostics of intercultural reading abilities at the basic level.

At the second stage favorable conditions were created (compilation and use of traditional reading exercises combined with especially developed intercultural ones), using modern pedagogical approaches, methods, technologies and tools, which were aimed at the formation of intercultural competence to bilingual students.

At the third stage, the level of the increase in intercultural competence was controlled and the obtained results were analyzed.

The components of ICC of bilingual students include: 1) linguistic-sociocultural component – knowledge of language and its structure; knowledge of the phenomena, the realities of culture with national and cultural characteristics; the ability to find, recognize and interpret phenomena, cultural realities with national cultural characteristics; 2) substantive-professional component - -knowledge of professional vocabulary with national and cultural specifics; knowledge of communicative behaviors with national-cultural specifics of professional communication partners; the ability to find, recognize and interpret them; 3) discursive - the ability to compare, interpret realities, cultural phenomena, communicative behavioral models with cultural identity; 4) strategic - knowledge of the strategy and tactics of the communicative process; the ability to apply speech strategies; the ability to display personality traits that give mobility in professional communication.

By the end of the experiment, summative assessment was performed (2017-18 academic year). Tests and tasks were conducted to check the quality of acquired knowledge, skills and abilities in intercultural reading, indicating the formedness of bilingual students' intercultural competence.

According to the results of the summative assessment, at the final stage of the experimental work in the experimental group, students were redistributed according to the levels of ICC formation among bilingual students.

Table 1. *Results of ICC at the Beginning and at the End of the Experiment, in%*

Components of ICC	Level of ICC formedness	Experimental group	
		Ascertaining assessment %	Summative assessment %
linguistic-sociocultural	high	0%	8,9%
	sufficient	10,7%	48,2%
	average	42,9%	35,7%
	low	46,4%	7,1%
discursive	high	0%	7,1%
	sufficient	8,9%	46,4%
	average	41,1%	37,5%
strategic	low	50%	8,9%
	high	0%	7,1%
	sufficient	12,5%	50%
	average	44,6%	35,7%



	low	42,8%	7,1%
substantive-professional	high	0%	5,4%
	sufficient	10,8%	55,4%
	average	57%	33,9%
	low	32,2%	5,4%
	СП	1,68	2,57
	ΔСП		0,89

The mean value (hereinafter MV) of EG at the beginning of the experiment was 1.68 and at the end of the experiment 2.57, where  $\Delta MV$  means the absolute increase of MV reflecting the difference between the beginning and final importance of MV.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the research, the following conclusions were made:

To form intercultural competence to agricultural bilingual students while studying foreign language it is required:

- to take into account individual characteristics and personal qualities of students based on a student-centered approach,
- apply educational technology on a sociocultural basis, and
- to use teaching methods of different reading types of authentic professionally –related texts.

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