

DEFINING THE COMPONENTS OF STUDENT TRAINING FOR PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

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Abstract. The integration of Ukraine into the European and transatlantic community is increasingly becoming more dynamic and vital. Ukrainian scholars, students, and professionals establish new diversified educational, business, cultural, scientific contacts in all spheres of life with European countries and throughout the world, which requires a number of special communication and activities skills. This paper investigates the student training process components, such as language learning, social and cultural skills development, psychological training, and patriotic attitude towards Ukraine abroad for developing a specific course for students. The students of Sumy National Agrarian University were surveyed about the ideal state of completing the international programs, both those who participated in the international programs and those who did not, but could assume the challenges they would encounter. The main problems which related to the participation in the international programs were found to be associated with language proficiency and social and cultural skills (about 45%), psychological and cultural adaptation to the foreign environment (about 25%), as well as the attitude towards Ukraine and the ability to represent oneself abroad adequately (about 30%). Many factors could influence the successful participation in international programs. However, we found clear indications that besides the language acquiring the course on preparing for the international programs should also include the social and cultural, psychological, and patriotic components.

Keywords: international programs; specific training; students; course components

Introduction

Given the implementation of Ukraine's strategic course toward integration into the European Union in the field of cultural and educational, scientific and technological integration to improve Ukraine in European cultural identity and integration into the European intellectual, educational and scientific and technical environment, the integration process is especially crucial in the implementation of joint scientific, cultural, educational and other projects, involving Ukrainian

scientists and specialists in European-wide research programs. It emphasizes the need to ensure European integration processes in higher education, the competitiveness of graduates of higher education not only in Ukraine but also abroad to realize the country's national interests.

Modern scholars in their research emphasize the primary issue of youth participation in integrative processes. Ukraine is the center of the European continent and a part of European civilization that renews the old and establishes a new diversified business, cultural, scientific contacts in all spheres of life with European countries, CIS countries. The generally acknowledged fact is that no understanding of political, economic, or social transformations is possible without the active participation of the population and the most it's active part – young people (Atroshchenko 2018). The policy on the development of youth communication in the EU supports youth cross-sector cooperation, youth mobility, and all-including involving the youth in all spheres of the modern European community.

At the time of the integration of Ukraine's national economy into the EU structures, the impact of globalization processes on European integration, and the strengthening of civil society, there is an urgent need to train highly skilled professionals with developed communicative abilities active interactions with the world. Modern students are future experts, and at the same time, the representatives of the Ukrainian university and Ukraine abroad should have a culture of logical discourse with the audience, be able to make decisions, choose a strategy of activity, to collect, systematize, generalize information, to form their views on, events and processes, model situations, predict behavioral expressions, to choose the strategy of activity based on analysis of historical, economic, and cultural factors.

At the same time, practice confirms that at present, higher education institutions are not paying enough attention to the training and development of communicative competence of the students, since students are supposed to come to a higher education institution already trained, or the communicative competence is perceived as of unique quality. The formation of communicative competence and the modern view of the methodological components is presented in a versatile and contradictory manner.

The contradiction between the social request and the preparation that exists between different points of view on the solution of the issues of preparation allowed to form the necessity in the definition of the technology components of student preparation for participation in international programs.

Previous research has addressed several aspects of forming intercultural communicative competence as the number of critical competencies: psychological as (1) personality characteristics, emotional as empathy, and professional training (Assanova & Kim 2014). (2) has communicative capabilities, compassion, ability to apply the professional skills (Chepel, 2019), and (3) language proficiency, performance factor, manifestation in person (Koval et al., 2019). Besides,

intercultural communicative competence implies cultural compound as awareness of native culture and other cultures, psychological and cultural components, as the ability to build the patterns of behavior and linguistic element, which corresponds to the intercultural communication situation (Livnat & Dori-Hacohen 2018).

Moreover, the scientists suggest that intercultural communicative competence should be developed by different means in higher education (López-Rocha 2019). Thus, simulation and gaming methodology may form the intercultural communicative competence (García-Carbonell et al. 2014); intercultural communicative competence may be acquired by the harmony of language with the circumstances of real-life and the practice of modeling conversational situations (Jackson & Givens 2014).

There are no literature results regarding the practical courses of preparation of the agrarian students for participating in the international programs to the best of our knowledge. Against this background, the purpose of this research is to answer the research question: “How can we develop the communicative competence of the students of agrarian universities to make their participation in the international programs more successful?” More specifically, this research has two objectives:

- 1) To study the attitude of the students to the factors that influence the intercultural communicative competence through the questionnaire;
- 2) To outline the leading ranked positions that may serve as the course components for forming the students of agrarian universities' intercultural communicative competence for participation in international programs.

This course will be useful in preparedness for international programs, practices, traineeships, and study visits for agrarian students and youth and professionals in any other spheres.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: first, a literature review covers the theoretical background, then a description of the research methods and procedures used in the study. The results of our inquiry are then discussed. Finally, implications, limitations, and directions for future research are offered.

Literature Review

Following the principle of the sociological research, we provided the literature review according to the empirical questions related to the factual information in our field, comparative questions making the comparative analysis within our research topic, developmental questions to understand the methodological development of the case, and theoretical questions seeking the background of the research question.

Communicative competence, being a complex entity, is suggested to be outlined through various components in aiming the communicative results. Intercultural awareness is considered to play a vital role in forming communicative competence, connecting the L1 and L2 within the cultural learning (Tosuncuoglu 2019). Intercultural competence is stated as one of the leading 21-century skills among

with communication, technical and information competences, and other soft skills (Karim et al., 2019), as well as the primary condition of acquiring language according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Guerra 2020). The importance of intercultural awareness as the fundamental component of communicative competence lies in a more profound understanding of cultural differences and similarities either in written or oral language, creating the unique emotional background in communicating (Genova & Kavrakova 2019).

On the one hand, intercultural competence is included in the whole term of communicative competence, being suggested as an ability to communicate efficiently and appropriately. On the other hand, it is separated from the communicative aspect, related to the interaction's cultural characteristics. In contrast, communicative competence has a broader meaning emphasizing knowledge, attitude, and communication skills (Hannouchi 2018).

Intercultural awareness is closely connected with attaining the professional development and growth with the graduates and becoming successful professionals at a workplace. Intercultural communication competence is an essential link between successful professional behaviors, such as adaptation, flexibility, appropriateness, and efficiency of intercultural communication within the authentic job preparedness for the future job (Candel-Mora 2015) essential professional skills of the 21st century.

Taking into account the cultural meaning of the intercultural communicative competence, containing the semiotic relativity, linguistic relativity, discursive relativity, and pragmatic aspect of cross-cultural speech realization, the constructivist view of language also lie expressing historical identity and subjectivity of the speaker, reflecting their citizenship, political and ideological views (Kramsch 2011). While studying abroad and confronting foreign culture, the students experience multi-dimensional cross-cultural communication. Keeping and saving their own national identity is the priority first in developing the self as a national of their own country (Byram 1992; Dolby 2004; Kurbakova 2015).

Another constituent of the whole cycle related to the development of intercultural communicative competence, covered in modern research, is emotional resilience, which is an essential component of the participant's professional portrait in the international programs. Intercultural skills and emotional resilience are crucial for professionals whose careers require frequent interactions with an increasingly diverse population. Moreover, there is a congruency between cultural competence and psychological flexibility in intercultural communication (Zayac et al. 2020).

Based on the discussion above, in our research, we propose that the university students need to demonstrate intercultural communicative competence, resilience, and national identity for the successful realization of the international programs. For this reason, we questioned the students at Sumy National Agrarian University, who have already taken part in international programs and processed the results.

Method

The study was conducted through a questionnaire distributed amongst a convenience sample of 130 undergraduate students at Sumy National Agrarian University. The study was presented as research on the impact of communicative competence within the participation in international programs. The development of intercultural communicative competence was manipulated by randomly assigning participants to a condition where they answered a survey to define the most critical components that influence intercultural communicative competence development. After that, the questionnaire results were assessed using the sum score on their grades, evaluating their performance on questionnaire positions. The most significant points were considered the valuable components for making the specific course for preparing the students for successful participation in the international programs. The results showed the most defining results in the necessity of intercultural communicative competence, psychological awareness or resilience, and national identity. Participants were debriefed about the real purpose of the study after the course was completed. The attained data were treated by the IBMTM 26 SPSS software grounding on the research questions. The results were processed with the nonparametric Wilcoxon test, like the one for assessing the statistical significance with large sample sizes two separate groups. As this test does not use the standard deviations and group means in its idea, we do not need to check the assumptions of normality (Field & Hole 2013; Salkind 2012).

Participants

To define the possible components of developing intercultural communicative competence for international program participation, 130 students were interviewed. The first group was 43 students, who already participated in the international professional programs, so they could objectively know about the problems related to communication abroad. The second group was 97 students who did not participate in the international programs but could assume the perfect state of the future program and related to its training.

Materials and procedure

The students were asked to answer the questionnaire questions related to the participation in the international programs evaluating the options for answers in points on the degree of significance:

1. Have you taken part in international programs abroad?
2. What, in your opinion, is the vital thing in communicating with a foreign language?
3. What do you think are the problems in communicating with a representative of a foreign language culture?
4. What knowledge do you think is necessary for successful communication with a foreign language culture representative?

5. What, in your opinion, the main motivations that lead to communication quality development?

The students who had already taken part in the international programs evaluated the needs for developing communicative competence. The students who did not participate in the international programs were asked to create the ideal image of a successful participant in the international program abroad and try to follow this suggestion.

Result and Discussion

When analyzing the questionnaires, we determined that the students pointed the challenges associated with intercultural competence (about 45%), psychological resilience to the foreign language environment (about 25%), as well as the attitude towards Ukraine and the ability to adequately represent themselves abroad – national identity (about 30%). Therefore, we assumed the language proficiency, psychological factors in communication, the comparison between the cultural knowledge of the native and foreign countries, motives, and conditions, which influence the quality of communication to be the main components of the intercultural communicative competence.

Defining the factors in communicative competence as a component of the training course

To define what should have been heeded about in teaching communication, the students were asked to answer the question: “Please range the following statements from 1 to 7, where 1 is the most important in communication”.

These survey results are shown in Table 1, where Ss1 – students who participated in the international programs, Ss 2 – students who did not participate in the international programs.

Table 1. The most critical factors in language communication with a representative of other culture

| № | Indicators | % | | Difference | Rank | |
|---|--|-------|-------|------------|------|------|
| | | Ss 1 | Ss 2 | | Ss 1 | Ss 2 |
| 1 | Listening Comprehension | 66.98 | 71.96 | -4.98 | 7 | 6 |
| 2 | Ability to build the language structure | 72.09 | 89.7 | -17.61 | 5 | 2 |
| 3 | Ability to speak | 95.34 | 94.85 | 0.49 | 1 | 1 |
| 4 | Ability to understand the intents of the interlocutor | 87.44 | 81.23 | 6.21 | 2 | 3 |
| 5 | Controlling the situation | 84.65 | 79.59 | 5.06 | 3 | 4 |
| 6 | Ability to use the phrases and idioms in the speech | 70.7 | 72.37 | -1.67 | 6 | 5 |
| 7 | Ability to conform to the interlocutor speaking manner | 74.42 | 63.95 | 10.5 | 4 | 7 |

Although both groups presented quite similar results, we should pay attention to building the language structure and conform to the interlocutor speaking manner. The results indicate that the students who participated in the international programs gave the highest rank to serve the interlocutor's saying style. In contrast, the students who did not participate in the international programs did not see this factor's importance. Building the language structure was not as crucial for the students-participants, while the students who did not participate in the international programs gave the second rank to this factor.

Thus, taking into account the assessments of students-participants that can be as close as possible to the objective ones, attention should be paid to the development of speaking, the ability to understand the intentions of the interlocutor, the possession of the situation, adaptation to the manner of the interlocutor, consequently, in the psychological aspect of communication the formation of the ability to predict the problem and work out the behavioral pattern.

Psychological factor in communication – a resilience component of the course

Table 2 shows the psychological factors in communication or psychological resilience. The students of both groups (Ss1 – students-participants of the international programs and Ss2 – students who did not participate in the international programs) were asked to range the main fears in the communication abroad from 1 to 5, where 1 is the highest rank.

Table 2. Problems in the psychological sphere when participating in international programs

| № | Indicators | % | | Difference | Rank | |
|---|--|-------|-------|------------|------|------|
| | | Ss 1 | Ss 2 | | Ss 1 | Ss 2 |
| 1 | Fears to be ridiculous | 60.47 | 54.64 | 5.88 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | Fears not being able to express their opinion | 81.4 | 82.47 | -0.66 | 2 | 2 |
| 3 | Fearlessly construct sentences | 60.47 | 70.1 | -8.97 | 4 | 4 |
| 4 | Fear not to understand the essence and content of the conversation | 76.74 | 84.54 | -7.38 | 3 | 1 |
| 5 | Fear to be unclear | 86.05 | 76.29 | 13.69 | 1 | 3 |
| 6 | Inability to avoid stressful situations | 48.84 | 52.58 | -3.69 | 6 | 6 |

The highest rank related to the factors of fear of being unclear and not understanding what you say indicates that there may be psychological problems and language barriers in communicating with a representative of a foreign language culture even with perfect language proficiency.

Intercultural awareness component of the course

Another essential component of students' readiness for participating in international programs is the ability to compare the culture of their own country and a hosting country.

Table 3 outlines the students' answers to the question about the main cultural issues of knowledge necessary for communication abroad.

Table 3. Comparative analysis of indicators of the intercultural awareness component of students of agrarian universities

| № | Indicators | % | | Difference | Rank | |
|---|--|-------|-------|------------|------|------|
| | | Ss 1 | Ss 2 | | Ss 1 | Ss 2 |
| 1 | Knowledge of a foreign language | 90.7 | 94.85 | -3.22 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | Knowledge of the culture of communication | 83.72 | 76.29 | 9.97 | 3 | 2 |
| 3 | Knowledge of the culture of this country | 79.07 | 70.1 | 8.76 | 4 | 4 |
| 4 | Knowledge of the world | 53.49 | 60.82 | -7.39 | 6 | 6 |
| 5 | Knowledge of the rules and norms of behavior of a foreign language society | 88.37 | 7.26 | 12.65 | 2 | 3 |

As Table 3 shows, the need to acquire the knowledge of the culture of communication, the culture of a foreign language, rules, and norms of behavior among students participating in international programs is significantly higher than that of students who did not experience a foreign language environment. Students who already completed programs stated the rules and rules of conduct of a foreign language society and the culture of communication as essential issues in communication. These figures ranked first and second. Thus, this proves the need to include the component of sociocultural studies in the curriculum for students who are going to participate in the international program abroad.

The motives used for participation in international programs

One of the qualifying experiment tasks was identifying the motives for the successful implementation of international professional programs. The research results helped determine the motives that encourage the students to participate in international programs abroad and specify motivational elements. In the general motivation of cognition, we identified four groups of motives:

- 1) social motives that imply a sense of responsibility;
- 2) communicative motives associated with the desire of the individual to self-improvement and assertiveness of the person in a team of peers;
- 3) cognitive motives which involve interest in the process of obtaining knowledge;
- 4) professional-value motives reflecting the students' aspirations for future activities (Palchykova 2018).

Table 4 provides the results of studying the motives of students of agrarian universities.

Table 4. Comparative analysis of students' motives for participating in international programs

| № | Indicators | % | | Difference | Rank | |
|---|---|-------|-------|------------|------|------|
| | | Ss 1 | Ss 2 | | Ss 1 | Ss 2 |
| 1 | University pressure | 48.84 | 84.54 | -36.21 | 5 | 2 |
| 2 | Meeting the needs of society | 53.49 | 52.58 | 0.65 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | Confidence that this will make participation in the program more compelling (to become more popular, to get as close as possible to a foreign language society, etc.) | 86.05 | 76.29 | 9.3 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | Standing for their own country - a desire to act worthy as its representative | 67.44 | 58.76 | 9.19 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | Parents' requirements | 44.19 | 47.42 | -4.11 | 6 | 6 |
| 6 | Desire for self-assertion | 88.37 | 87.63 | 0.8 | 1 | 1 |

Based on the statement that motivation is a system of motives or incentives which prompts a person to specific forms of activity (Schultheiss & Brunstein 2010), we studied what factors encouraged students to implement international professional programs. In our opinion, the desire for self-assertion (more than 88%), which has Rank 1 both among students of international professional programs and students who did not participate in international professional programs, was a high indicator.

In the second place, students participating in international professional programs are confident that students' preparation for implementing international professional programs will make participation in the program more effective. This includes increased popularity, a maximum approximation to foreign-language society, material success.

The emphasis that the current factor of affection for the state is now relevant - to act as worthy of its representative has a higher rank among students who have already visited abroad than those who have not yet been. The percentage is also higher – 67.44% and 58.76%. We believe that this motive's development should be given the maximum attention, as precisely this factor contributes to the formation of the individual's social, political, and national identity. Consequently, deepening the civic position is the most important in forming international diplomats, representatives of the diplomatic corps. And every student who travels abroad is an ambassador of their own country.

The components of preparation forms for participating in the international programs

To determine the teaching and methodological provision of the process of preparing students for participation in the international programs and identify the

students' attitudes to the preparatory course, the respondents were asked about the preferences for the components of the course, as it is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Components of preparation forms of future agrarians for participation in the international programs

| № | Indicators | % | | Difference | Rank | |
|---|---|-------|-------|------------|------|------|
| | | Ss 1 | Ss 2 | | Ss 1 | Ss 2 |
| 1 | Analysis of the experience and practice of staying abroad | 62.79 | 70.1 | -7.57 | 4 | 3 |
| 2 | Study of special literature | 60.47 | 65.98 | -5.57 | 5 | 5 |
| 3 | Consultation with professionals | 76.74 | 79.38 | -2.69 | 2 | 2 |
| 4 | Mastering the particular course "My success abroad" | 74.42 | 67.01 | 8.28 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | Special training | 76.74 | 80.41 | -2.33 | 1 | 1 |

As we can see from the results, special training and consultations with the professionals took the first rank. This indicates that students are interested in high-quality professional teaching of the preparatory material. When developing the course, the educators should consider that adding the consultations with specialists in the training program is a professional and valuable motive for future participants in the international programs.

Having collected the students' answers on the trends in essential issues for preparing them for successful training for participating in the international programs, we have outlined the leading ranked answers on each block of answers and obtained this diagram so far.

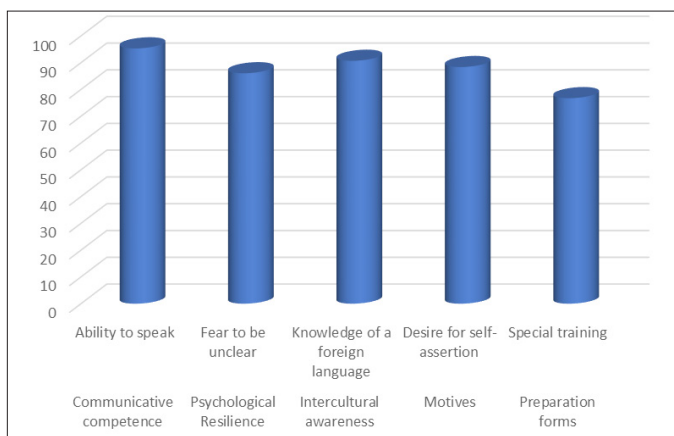


Figure 1. The leading ranks of the components of the course from the control group

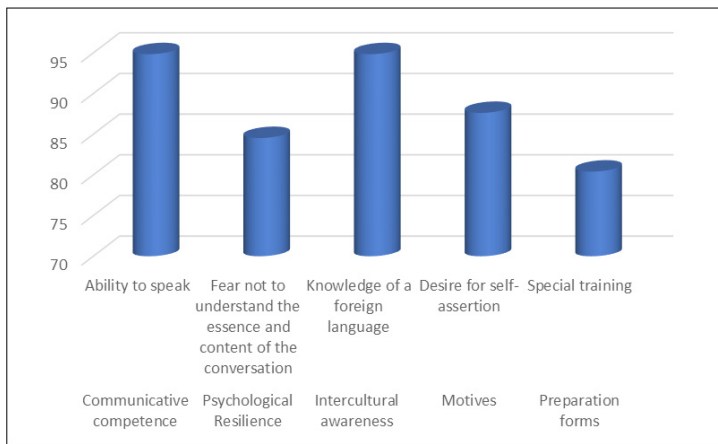


Figure 2. The leading ranks of the components of the course from the experimental group

As the charts show, the meanings of the components we defined are significantly high, so we have proven that the theoretical background goes along with practical results.

Applying nonparametric criterium Spearman's rho, we checked the correlation between the intercultural communicative competence, psychological resilience, and the national identity factors. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Spearman correlation between the factors - components of the course

| | National identity | Psychological resilience | Intercultural communicative competence |
|--|-------------------|--------------------------|--|
| National identity | 1.0000 | 0.537** | 0.834** |
| Psychological resilience | 0.537** | 1.0000 | 0.586** |
| Intercultural communicative competence | 0.834** | 0.586 | 1.0000 |

The congruency between the intercultural communicative competence and national identity and psychological resilience is strong and positive (0.834 and 0.586 consequently, $p < 0.01$).

Discussion

One of the main goals of this experiment was to attempt to determine the course components for forming the intercultural communicative competence of

the students of agrarian universities for participation in international programs. These results support our hypotheses. It was predicted that the successful communication abroad while participating in the international programs consists not only of the language proficiency but of the set of additional factors, such as social and cultural skills, ability to be psychologically flexible and resistant to the new foreign language environment, patriotic attitude to the native country and desire to represent it abroad in a proper way. Moreover, we found out that the students want to get additional assistance and training, which can be professional and elaborate.

Our data suggest that participation in international programs requires specific training. Complex training course with the sociocultural, psychological, cultural and patriotic components was associated with the students' successful results in taking part in the international programs. A number of studies connect communication competency with the range of additional factors in building successful interrelation: with sociocultural and intercultural aspect (Anderson et al. 2006; Arasaratnam & Doerfel 2005; Brooks 1992; Cowley & Hanna 2005; Grundmann & Steinhoff 2014; Jackson & Givens 2014), with psychological difficulties (Hendrickson et al. 2011). Some studies make the important the complex of the components, such as sociocultural and psychological factors (Presbitero & Attar 2018; Yang et al. 2018).

In our research, we found that the necessary components for preparing to the participation in the international programs are not only the language proficiency, sociocultural and psychological components in training, but also the upbringing aspect on national identity. Our survey's elaborated responses contribute to further research in designing a special course for preparing the students for participation in the international programs.

Since not all the results were significant and full, the overall direction of results showed trends that could help learn about the most desirable components in the specific preparation for participation in the international programs. Moreover, depending on the program's type, the components may vary and be added to the course. Thus, international traineeship may require a professional component in language teaching and the sociocultural environment.

Although it is a narrow study on agrarian students, the results may be generalized to other specific areas. Our results may hold not only for the youth but also for any different categories of people going to study, work, and travel on tourism abroad.

Conclusion

Students and staff mobility have become an essential part of the modern educational society. It was found that there is a need to arrange the specific preparatory courses for interrelations abroad, particularly in participation in the international programs, as in our case. The research survey of two groups of students – those who participated in the international programs and those who did not take

part revealed that the most often problems arise in language usage, cultural and social sphere, with overcoming a number of psychological problems and the ability to be a worthy representative of one's own country. The survey analysis allowed us to conclude that the agrarian students participating in the international professional programs require comprehensive training for participation in the international programs, apart from the language courses.

Based on the survey, an integrated course with components should be created to develop communicative competence, which would emphasize solving communication problems when participating in international programs. Such training should include the language course with a communicative way of teaching. This course should consist of enhancing cultural knowledge and the development of skills to act following the rules of ethics or behavior of the hosted country. Improved patriotic and civic education is vital. The primary forms of training might be socio-psychological training, disputes, dialogues, policymakers, etc.

In light of the continually growing sphere of mobility and modern technologies, our findings suggest that there may be different forms of training and various components of the preparatory course.

Future work will investigate the course's practical design, taking into account the necessary methodology and content.

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