BUILDING MOBILITY COMPETENCE OF INTENDING TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The main idea of modern education is to build competences as a produce of university educational process. One of the most important competences of intending teachers to be built is mobility competence, which is a component of professional pedagogical competence.

We believe, to train a mobile teacher is possible within a purposefully created cross-cultural educational university environment, where the designed technology of developing intending teachers' academic mobility based on the cross-cultural approach is implemented.

The empirical methods of the research are represented by observation, interlocution, interview, questioning, testing, expert review, generalization of independent data, pedagogical experiment, and mathematical statistics.

To estimate the readiness of intending teachers for academic mobility under the conditions of cross-cultural educational environment, four levels of readiness are offered: optimal (high), admissible (middle), critical (low), and inadmissible (not ready). To determine the level, we have developed three criteria (cognitive, motivational-valuable, acting-reflective) and their indicators.

At the motivating stage of the pedagogical experiment we conducted surveys of different respondent groups (random sample including online format, 1261 respondents) with the help of the questionnaires we had developed. The received data were used in the training course "Teaching a foreign language through the culture of native speakers", which contributed to the building of mobility competence of intending teachers.

At the monitoring stage of our experimental education the comparison of the results of the incoming and outgoing assessment according to the developed criteria and indicators showed significant growth of the students' readiness for academic mobility, which allows us concluding that the designed technology of developing academic mobility based on the cross-cultural approach is effective in building mobility competence of intending teachers.

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the Bologna Declaration, one of the key criteria of the quality of a national higher education system is students' academic mobility [1], which allows raising a competitive advantage of the national education when positive experience of native and foreign educational systems is taken into account [2].

Educational content at a pedagogical university should meet modern requirements and create favourable conditions for developing a personality capable for self perfection, self realization, and self development [3].

Inertia of thinking, immunity to criticism, fear of failure, unmotivated negation of any point of view, which does not coincide with their own opinion, affect negatively competent performance of professional duties by a teacher [4].

All this can be largely overcome or weakened on the basis of organized academic mobility, which allows studying and taking over successful experience of professional pedagogical activity at higher educational institutions in a native country and abroad [1].

Academic mobility plays a crucial role in the process of professional and personal growth, as every participant of academic mobility has to (when taking decisions) analyze life situations from the cultural point of view of the receiving and native countries [5].

So, one of the objectives of training professional teachers at a university is to build their mobility competence. We regard mobility competence as an integral trait characterizing the readiness of a personality to carry out professional activities under the conditions of academic mobility. Mobility competence is a complex structure including foreign language communicative, cross-cultural, adaptive, and media competences.

Foreign language communicative competence is a skill to solve, by means of a foreign language, topical issues of communication, to reach communicative goals [6].

Cross-cultural competence is an integral trait including knowledge of the other culture features, skills to interpret information of the other culture, experience of communicative activity, and such professionally important traits as empathy and tolerance [7].

Media competence is an integral professional trait consisting of skills to work with information including search, gathering, understanding the media language and subtext of media messages, their critical analysis, interpretation and an ability to create, receive and transmit media massages by means of multimedia [8].

Adaptive competence is possessing the knowledge and skills to get into the other culture by acquiring its norms, values, and patterns of behaviour.

To try and build mobility competence of intending teachers of foreign languages we have created cross-cultural educational environment at the Faculty of foreign languages of Novosibirsk state pedagogical university, Russia. We regard cross-cultural educational environment as a complex of conditions, where students' cultural features are taken into account, thus, contacting cultures in the face of students are compared and enriched, and this contributes to developing students' mobility.

The cross-cultural educational environment comprises four elements: spatial (the building, interior, infrastructure, equipment), cognitive (content of educational programmes, library and online resources), social (student-student, professor-professor, professor-student communication style; volunteer service, adaptive system, cultural and leisure activities), and valuable (values and traditions at a university, society, family, reference group).

The educational process within this environment is realized by means of the technology of developing students' academic mobility based on the cross-cultural approach. The technology embraces different pedagogical university activities, such as academic studies, scientific research, international projects, career guidance, etc., and is consequentially implemented in the following stages: analytical, prognostic, planning, motivating, acting, monitoring, and resultative.

Being limited by this paper framework, we will dwell only on the monitoring stage of the designed technology of developing academic mobility of intending teachers based on the cross-cultural approach.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted in the years 2012 – 2017, when the programme of the events of the technology of developing academic mobility of intending teachers based on the cross-cultural approach was being implimented at administrative, organizational and content levels.

The participants of the research were 449 second-year and third-year students of the Faculty of foreign languages of Novosibirsk state pedagogical university, Russia. The choice of these years of education is explained by studying, at this stage, academic courses related to the country studies, culture, geography, and history of the English-speaking countries. One of the aims of teaching these courses to the students is building and developing cross-cultural competence (part of mobility competence) of intending teachers of foreign languages.

The empirical methods used by the researchers were observation, interlocution, interview, questioning, testing, expert review, generalization of independent data, pedagogical experiment, and mathematical statistics.

To estimate the readiness of the students for academic mobility under the conditions of the cross-cultural educational environment we defined the levels: *optimal* (high – ready for the academic mobility: possessing the skill of a mediator of cultures, the skill to adapt to another culture); *admissible* (average level of readiness: knowledge of most social norms; possessing the skills to get orientated in student sociocultural environment, to choose adequate behaviour, to manage their own stereotypes, to interpret correctly the context of the message); *critical* (low level of readiness: student's cognitive and moral positions are very weak; a low level of knowledge of the main social norms, of the skill to define in the process of communication the behavioral models of the native and foreign cultures); *inadmissible* (the absence of readiness: the absence of positive stereotypes in regard to the main cultural phenomena of the receiving country, of the skill to realize cultural differences by the keywords).

To see the effectiveness of implementing the technology of developing academic mobility of intending teachers based on the cross-cultural approach we defined certain criteria and their descriptors demonstrating the readiness of a personality to participate in the process of academic mobility (Table 1):

Table 1. *Criteria and descriptors of personality's readiness for academic mobility*

Criteria	Descriptors
Cognitive	- a mature idea of the cultural diversity in the world is shaped; - the background knowledge of every culture under study is posessed
Motivational-valuable	- a need for learning a foreign language and constant language training; - collective with foreign students classes and extracurricular activities (visiting theatres, museums, exhibitions, and concerts); - values, traditions and norms of the native culture are mastered; - national-cultural specifics of initial and receiving communities are taken into consideration; - respect for other cultures
Acting-reflective	- getting effective result in the process of interaction with the representatives of another culture in a native or other community; - analysis and assessment in the process of cross-cultural interaction of one's own communicative acts aiming at effective cross-cultural communication

Source: Own source

RESULTS

During the period of 6 years (2012 – 2017) we were monitoring (incoming, intermediate, and final monitoring) the impact of the educational process on the 2nd and 3rd year-students.

The *incoming monitoring* was represented by questioning, testing, and interlocution.

When *questioning*, the students were asked to estimate their own level of knowledge and skills in the sphere of oral interethnic English language communication. The maximum possible number of scores being 2, the average respondent group score in the period of 2012 – 2017 was 0,36 by the motivational-valuable criterion and 0,38 – by the acting-reflective criterion, which corresponds to the critical (low) level. This confirms our assumption that interethnic communication skills of the intending English teachers are practically absent, which requires purposefully organized work to build and develop these skills, as the latter are the content component of the cross-cultural competence (an element of the mobility competence of intending teachers) and the basis of their readiness for the academic mobility.

The goal of *testing* was to reveal the level of students' knowledge of the culture, geography and history of the foreign country under study. The results of the incoming testing were the following: the average respondent group score in the period of 2012 – 2017 was 28,4 (at maximum 100) by the cognitive criterion, which corresponds to the critical (low) level of the knowledge under revealing. This confirms our assumption on the necessity to organize purposeful methodical activity on building and developing the cognitive component of the cross-cultural competence of intending English teachers.

Working out the questions for the *interlocution* with the respondents, we emphasized the motivational-valuable criterion of the formed traits of a personality prepared for academic mobility. The goal of the interlocution was to use the received results in the propaedeutic academic course "Teaching a Foreign Language through the Culture of Native Speakers". The results of the interlocution were the following: 30% of the students realize what the universal values are and can give their examples; 70% of the students know the notions "national interests", "homeland", but have difficulties in differentiating (or generalizing) interethnic and national interests; 90% of the respondents believe, that solving interethnic problems is possible through culture, but they could not give certain examples; 100% of the students consider it necessary to know the language of the country one lives in and English as the language of international communication, and they reasonably motivate their opinion.

The *intermediate monitoring* was represented by observation and interview.

We were *observing* the students during their academic classes (interactive lectures and practical lessons of professional courses) and under the conditions of extracurricular activities (linguistic and cultural tours abroad, international student projects in England, Belgium, France, Germany, Croatia, and China). When observing, taking into account the criteria of personality's readiness for academic mobility, we registered the following:

- cognitive criterion: development of cultural and country studies competence (in-depth knowledge of geography, history and culture of the language-speaking countries; knowledge of background vocabulary, of precedent material; comparative studies of mentality, national features of foreign language speakers and Russians; analysis of stereotypes of foreigners and Russians, etc.);
- motivational-valuable criterion: increased motivation to learn a foreign language; development of foreign language communicative competence (more confident use of vocabulary and foreign language structures); facts of tolerant behaviour to other culture representatives, their opinion, appearance and way of life; etc.);
- acting-reflective criterion; development of communicative competence (barrier-free communication); analysis of one's own speech and behaviour in order to effectively communicate).

The observation results let us see the positive tendency in forming and developing students' mobility competence due to the organized academic mobility at the faculty of foreign languages.

We *interviewed* the teaching staff of the faculty of foreign languages with the goal in mind to find out the changes, from their point of view, occurring in the students' readiness for academic mobility. The opinion of the teaching staff was based on observing the students in the education process and interpersonal communication. The interview results certify that by the year of graduation around 80% of the students;

- realize the world cultural diversity, possess the background knowledge of their native culture and culture of the language-speaking countries (cognitive criterion);
- behave in accordance with the norms, values and traditions of their own culture and culture of the receiving country; realize and take into account mentality features of the receiving cultural community; demonstrate an increasing interest in learning foreign languages by communicating with foreign students at their home faculty and in receiving countries (motivational-valuable criterion);
- are able to make their own decisions and act appropriately to get the result; analyze and estimate their own behaviour (including speech behaviour) from the point of view of achieving effective cross-cultural communication (acting-reflective criterion).

Thus, around 80% of the graduation year students majoring in foreign languages possess mobility competence and are ready for the process of academic mobility.

The *final monitoring* was represented by testing, questioning, expert review, interview and generalization of independent data.

The *testing* results (cognitive criterion) demonstrated that during the period of 2012 – 2017 the average score of the respondent group (83,2) corresponds to the optimal (high) level of cultural and country studies knowledge. Figure 1 shows the results of incoming and final testing in comparison.
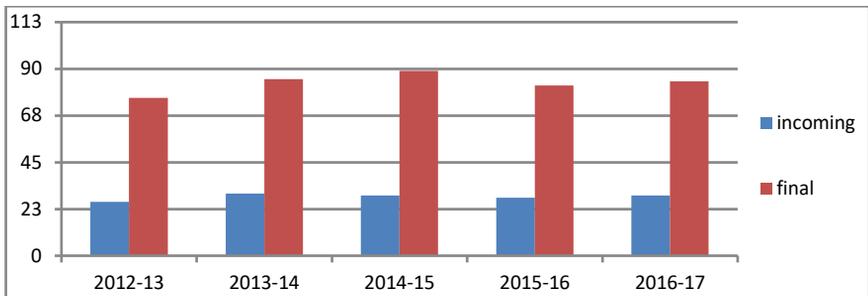

Fig. 1. *Comparison of the levels of cultural and country studies knowledge.*

Source: Own source

The obtained data was analyzed by using Student's t-test, which showed significant difference between the results of the experimental groups. Thus, the fact of increasing the level of cultural and country studies knowledge of the respondents, hence their levels of cross-cultural competence and readiness for academic mobility is statistically reliable.

Questioning 300 students, who studied abroad, proved the necessity and correctness of the international activity, including students' academic mobility, organized at the faculty of foreign languages.

Expert review gave the questioning average score 1,5 against 0,36 by motivational-valuable criterion and 1,4 score against 0,38 by acting-reflective criterion, which is equal to the admissible (average) level, close enough to the optimal (high) level (Figures 2, 3).
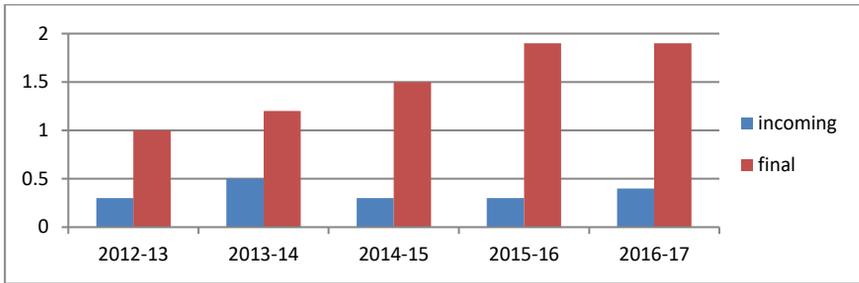
Fig. 2. *Motivational-valuable criterion: incoming questioning and final expert review of students' readiness for academic mobility.*
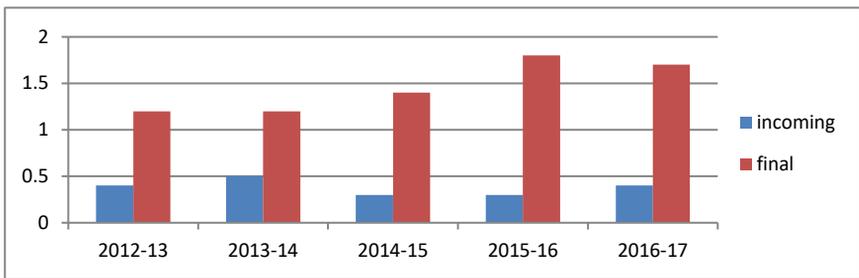
Source: Own source

Fig. 3. *Acting-reflective criterion: incoming questioning and final expert review of students' readiness for academic mobility.*

Source: Own source

Being *interviewed* the administrative staff of the University pointed out qualitative and quantitative growth of students' participation in the process of academic mobility due to the organized cross-cultural training at the faculty of foreign languages.

The teaching staff *independent data* received (education, PhD degrees, rewards, studies abroad, international exams, guiding international projects, Web of Science and SCOPUS papers, etc.) attest in favour of professionalism, which allowed the teaching staff to create the cross-cultural educational environment at the faculty and form students' readiness for academic mobility.

CONCLUSION

The technology of developing academic mobility based on the cross-cultural approach was realized in the form of experimental education at the Faculty of foreign languages of Novosibirsk state pedagogical university, Russia. The goal of the technology was to build students' mobility competence. The results were monitored with the help of such research methods as observation, interlocution,

interview, questioning, testing, expert review, and generalization of independent data applied in accordance with the developed criteria to estimate the level of students' readiness for academic mobility.

The programme activities of the technology, taking place during the period of 2012 – 2017, covered educational, scientific, international, further training and other spheres. Methods and technologies, used depending on the activity, became the following, for example: communicative method, method of projects, technology of creative thinking, technology of debates, portfolio technology, etc. (academic studies); planning, experiment, analysis (research); case studies, integration, creating of polycultural environment, etc. (international).

The monitoring data bring us to the conclusion that the proposed technology of developing academic mobility of intending teachers based on the cross-cultural approach is adequate and effective.

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