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### **ENGLISH TRAINING IN ASIAN COUNTRIES AIMED AT INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

#### **ABSTRACT**

*The paper outlines the important role of cross-cultural competence in foreign language training and its role in the process of internationalization of higher education in the countries of Asian region. As foreign language proficiency remained a distinctive feature of social class, foreign language communication skills acquired special importance with increasing pace of internationalization of higher education. Under globalization foreign language proficiency has become one of the main requirements for academic mobility. Special attention is paid to English as the language of cross-cultural communication and necessary component of internationalization. As English is the language for education in universities all over the world, scholars and scientists consider that encouraging the use of English in teaching makes it easier for non-English speaking specialists to fulfill their study abroad. The experience of Asian countries is of great value to scientists as these countries are interested in increasing the number of foreign students in Asian educational establishments as well as studying Asian students abroad. China is put in the center of the authors' attention as it has acquired the status of a main exporter of higher education due to Chinese students' interest in oversea courses. The analysis of peculiarities of foreign language training in different countries has been conducted in the article. In non-English-speaking countries English is taught as an additional language or is used as a medium of instruction in education to make non-English speakers' participation in the process of internationalization possible. The authors have analyzed the main problems and difficulties in foreign language training, stresses the importance of cross-cultural competence for brining up tolerance for representatives from different cultures and awareness of cultural differences between nations as main condition for effective communication. There are some difficulties in students' attempt to develop adequate English proficiency to learn other subjects' content through English. On the other hand, cross-cultural communication skills enhance efficiency of teaching as a teacher should be aware of his students' culture and some traditions. The paper highlights the fact that one of the important factors, influencing foreign language training, is understanding not only linguistic, grammar, phonological differences such as differences in the structure of native and target languages, but cultural values and behavior patterns of verbal and nonverbal communication according to national cultures as well.*

**Keywords:** *foreign language training, the English language, cross-cultural communication, internationalization of higher education, Asian countries.*



## АНОТАЦІЯ

*У статті автори характеризують важливу роль кроскультурної компетентності у навчанні іноземної мови та її роль у процесі інтернаціоналізації вищої освіти в азійських країнах. Оскільки володіння навичками інішомовної комунікації залишається маркером соціального статусу, ці навички набувають особливої важливості з початком інтернаціоналізації вищої освіти. У контексті глобалізації, достатній рівень володіння іноземною мовою перетворюється на один з важливих вимог академічної мобільності. Особлива увага приділена англійській мові як мові міжнародного спілкування та необхідної складової інтернаціоналізації вищої освіти. Англійська мова є мовою навчання в багатьох університетах світу, вони заохочуються в її використанні, оскільки вона полегшує для не носіїв англійської мови процес навчання в закладах освіти інших країн. Досвід азійських країн викликає великий інтерес для науковців, оскільки ці країни зацікавлені у збільшенні кількості іноземних студентів в азійських закладах освіти та у їх навчанні за кордоном. Китай знаходиться в центрі уваги авторів, беручи до уваги той факт, що він перетворюється на основного провайдера міжнародних студентів: китайська молодь демонструє постійний інтерес у навчанні в країнах ЄС. У статті виконаний аналіз особливостей навчання іноземної мови в різних азійських країнах. Якщо англійська мова не є офіційною, вона викладається студентам як додаткова, щоб вони мали змогу брати участь у процесі інтернаціоналізації вищої освіти. Автори статті проаналізували основні проблеми та труднощі у вивченні іноземної мови, підкреслюючи важливість кроскультурної компетентності для виховання толерантності до представників інших країн та усвідомлення культурологічних відмінностей між націями як основну умову ефективної комунікації. Автори вказують на занепокоєність щодо труднощів у досягненні відповідного рівня володіння англійською мовою, який необхідний для оволодіння змістом професійної освіти. З іншого боку, навички кроскультурної комунікації забезпечують ефективність навчання, якщо викладач розуміє культуру його студентів та особливості традицій. В статті підкреслюється, що одним з важливих чинників, що впливає на вивчення іноземної мови, є розуміння не лише лінгвістичних, граматичних, фонологічних особливостей відповідних мов, а й культурних цінностей і зразків вербальної та невербальної комунікації відповідно до національної культури.*

**Ключові слова:** навчання іноземної мови, англійська мова, кроскультурна комунікація, інтернаціоналізація вищої освіти, азійські країни.

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the trends of unification and standardization can characterize the development of higher education systems in different countries in the world. The agreement called “Bologna Process” originally signed by 29 countries in 1999 nowadays comprise 45 countries. Its main aim was to harmonise education in Europe universities with the British model, according to common approach to levels and length of courses, facilitating mobility of students, mutual recognition of the qualifications got in different educational establishments, enhancing qualifications to present time requirements of labour market, providing competitiveness to the educational establishment’s graduates.

Due to internationalization of higher education, students get opportunity to enter any establishment in any chosen by them country, to study peculiarities of a foreign culture and its people’s mentality. Internationalization involves the following forms of partnership and cooperation between higher educational establishments in different countries:



individual mobility, i.e. mobility of students and teachers for educational purposes, mobility of curricular, institutional cooperation with the strategic aim to form educational alliances. Advantages of internationalization can be seen in unity of resources, prevention of overlapping researches, authentication of educational projects, better higher education access, implementation of international standards of quality, more innovations in higher education, strengthening of international cooperation.

#### **THE AIM OF THE STUDY**

The paper aims at the analysis of Asian countries experience in the field of internationalization of higher education and the contribution of the English language to this process. Cross-cultural competence is viewed as integral component of foreign language training and as considerable contributor to effective communication between representatives of different nations, main difficulties in its mastering are in the focus of the attention.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS**

The issue of the English language contribution into the higher education development and the process of its internationalization have been in the focus of many scholars for a period of time. They stress the necessity to improve the efficiency of English language acquisition with the purpose of further education and professional development (Roy-Campbell, 2014), study its role in strengthening the position of countries in international political area and on transnational markets (Abad, 2013), analyse the integral character of a language and culture that can not be studied separately (Chunyan Sun, 2015).

Many scientists begin to consider cross cultural competence as means of effective communication in the globalized world. They speak about promoting a foreign language cross-cultural competence as promotion of a professional competence (Yudina, 2009) and about appearance and functioning of a language directly related to national traditions (Wilder & Escobar, 2010). For this reason foreign language training in higher educational establishments acquires cultural meaning, as a future specialist of a new type who masters a foreign language, may carry out professional activity on an international market, quickly adapting in multicultural space to the new means of communication, study peculiarities of another culture and comprehend own ethnic and cultural origins, manifesting tolerant attitude toward representatives of different countries.

As our research is qualitative, we have used a range of general scientific methods such as study and the analysis of reference, scientific educational print as well as systematization and generalization. The research included documents analysis and narrative inquiry.

#### **RESULTS**

Nowadays no one doubts the importance of the development of cross-cultural connections with European countries for the acceleration of higher education internationalization in Ukraine. It is vital for a specialist in any sphere of activity to acquire skills of professional foreign language communication, together with knowledge of rules and norms of cross-cultural communication enhancing its efficiency. Foreign language training means forming skills of cross-cultural communication in the field of future professional activity.

The tendencies of internationalization of higher education forced many countries in the world to implement unprecedented educational reforms, aimed at increasing efficiency in languages training, and especially English as an international language, without a good command of which a specialist can not compete on labour markets. During last decades Ministries of education of different countries presented National bilingual programs making for their citizens mastering two foreign languages (English and native) available, and thus, strengthening the position of these countries in international political area and on transnational markets (Abad, 2013).



Dramatic move towards internationalisation in university education across the world since the turn of the century is explained by various factors which have contributed to this move: the internationalisation of industry and commerce, leading to internationalisation and mobility of the workforce with internationally-recognised qualifications; the development of trans-national education, with universities offering their qualifications in other countries; the introduction of the Bologna agreement of 1999, for harmonising the structure of degree programmes and documentation; the consequent need for quality education in universities and as a result publication of annual tables ranking the top universities of the world (Bolitho & West, 2017, p. 14).

All of these developments have led to an increased demand for English language skills across all educational sectors as graduates need sufficient English proficiency to work or study overseas. English is one of dominant languages of the world, that is native for a population of five countries (Australia, Canada, England, New Zeland, USA), and which B. Kachru attributes to the so-called “internal circle”. English is an official language in many other countries, the former colonies of Great Britain determined as an “external circle”. As English is spoken in the countries of external circle together with the mother tongues, its role differs from a role in an internal circle because every country has its own rules of communication (Graddol, 2006).

In most countries of external circle foreign language training takes place in cross-cultural environment. The students speak English for specific purposes, largely, in formal education, as basic part of communication off educational establishments is conducted in native language. In the countries where English is native, it is taught to non-English-speaking students, mostly immigrants, as additional language to make their participation in all spheres of the English-speaking country life possible. Thus, we can state the existence of two contrasting contexts for mastering English: English language students’ training for perfection of skills and knowledge got in comprehension schools, and non-English-speaking students’ training for their further socialization in the English-speaking environment. Common problem for both of these contexts, though so contrasting, is the necessity to improve the efficiency of English language acquisition with the purpose of further education and professional development (Roy-Campbell, 2014).

In the analysed literature a communicative competence is determined as a general “construction” that embraces all necessary skills for effective communication with the use of verbal and nonverbal facilities. L. Bachman and A. Palmer consider that it is divided into organizational and pragmatic knowledge. Organizational knowledge is knowledge of grammar on the level of words and sentences, whereas textual knowledge gives possibility to communicate and interpret the words of interlocutor, and sociolinguistic knowledge allows the users to communicate effectively in a socio-cultural context. In addition to these types a communicative competence also includes a strategic competence and psycho-motor skills (Abad, 2013).

In the context of non-English-speaking students’ training it is necessary to highlight the importance of national culture and traditions that considerably influence students’ tolerance to the representatives of other cultures. A language and culture are interdependent components that can not be studied separately (Chunyan, 2015). As culture can not be separated from a language and a language gets to all aspects of people’s life, by means of which people cognize the world and pass knowledge from generation to generation. A language forms a certain nation as a cultural group, distinguishing it from others.



After S. Hrygoryshyn, a language is one of main factors of social functioning. It fulfills the enormous amount of functions in a society: nominative (ability of a language to nominate and present objects and processes), cognitive (participation is in the process of cognition), communicative (participation is in the process of communication of people) and others (Hrygoryshyn, 2009, p. 54).

Language allows to identify itself as a member of a certain social group, that has its own vision of the world, allows people to be aware of their potential at present time and see the prospects of their development in the future on the basis of past experience. P. Freire & D. Macedo consider that these components are closely connected with national economic interests and ideology aimed at uniting poor, underprivileged citizens and national minorities in one nation and dominant cultural tradition. Scientists consider that appearance and functioning of a language is directly related to national traditions (Wilder & Escobar, 2010, 28–129).

Traditions and socio-cultural context considerably influence students' attitude to the study of English in all countries. If socio-cultural surroundings encourage the development of competition, it forms positive attitude toward studies and motivation to the study of English. In other words, positive attitude and motivation toward the study are conditioned by society. This phenomenon exists worldwide, and theoretical researches prove that competitive and encouraging environment enhances motivation to study. Besides, researches reaffirm that different national and socio-cultural factors influence considerably English proficiency.

We should consider in more detail's national views on foreign language training and socio-cultural factors that influence the process of mastering foreign language competence in some Asian countries as such training contribute considerably into internationalization of higher education in this region. For this purpose, we appeal to determinations of basic research concepts. In Oxford dictionary, tradition is determined as a long-term custom or belief, that is passed from one generation to other, and that influences all aspects of human life, including education (Ahmad, 2015, p. 191). Conception of tradition is often considered the basic component of religious beliefs, culture, knowledge and skills that does not end with the death of generation and is consciously kept and passed to the next one. It provides connection between generations and storage of national values, attitudes, identity etc.

Since the beginning of 21 century the indicators of academic mobility in such countries as the USA, Japan and Korea, have increased twice. At the same time, it is necessary to draw attention to the fact that the USA gradually yields to Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Germany, France in the questions of encouragement of foreign students. Such countries as China, India, Korea and Japan come forward among the main suppliers of students for study overseas. In the last decade the world market of educational services became the witness of considerable changes. For example, Singapore in 2015 accepted 150000 foreign students, Japan intends to increase their number to 300 thousand by 2025, China – to 500 thousand by 2020 (Krechetnikov, Pestereva, & Rajović, 2016, p. 231).

At the same time, the attractiveness of the Asian educational market is high enough. Scientists expect the increase in the number of foreign students from 17 to 87 million by 2025. It is proved that the pace of internationalization process in Asian higher education is in direct connection with educational policy of countries in this region. We can distinguish three basic models of internationalization of education: state-managed (China, Malaysia, South Korea), market-driven (Hong Kong), transitional from state-managed to market-driven (Japan, Taiwan). It is important that the primary purposes of internationalization of higher education implementation in the Asian countries are:



improvement of international reputation of universities (ranking in the world ratings of the best universities), strengthening of educational and scientific potential of universities, increase in the number of students due to diversification of countries-suppliers, improvement of academic quality. It is interesting that the last purpose named was the accumulation of finances (Kazuo, Takako & Kyuwon, 2010, p. 24).

The world's universities ranking which the Shanghai Jiao Tong University Institute provides every year has become a standard international reference. It reflects an American and other English-speaking universities dominant position. According to the ranking nearly 75 % of the world's top 100 universities are in English-speaking countries. It explains increasing importance of English in the role of the medium of education in universities across the world. And it gives direction of further actions for such universities. It explains either strong concern that was expressed by Thailand, the Philippines, Japan, and Taiwan about proficiency in English in their countries and their desire to start new educational initiatives by the end of 2005. They usually invite teachers and researchers from around the world; encourage international students to enroll on the courses, in such a way enriching the university's prestige, revenue, and intellectual climate (Graddol, 2006, p. 74).

In one of the most quickly developing Asian country, China, Department of education marks that English training courses in colleges must be focused on acquisition of cross-cultural competence, development of foreign language proficiency, especially listening and speaking skills, foreign language communication skills for real life situations. It is recognized that ability to conduct effective communication is extremely important for future career and full-fledged life in multicultural society. As proficiency in English is considered a necessary factor of 'graduateness', universities in many countries began to require from students a certain standard of English proficiency before obtaining their degree (Graddol, 2006, p. 96).

The new policy adopted by China has resulted in appearance more than 20 million new users of English each year. China's intention was to make English a decisive factor of its strategy for rapid economic development (Graddol, 2006, p. 95). The English language curriculum in Chinese schools runs that the primary purpose of study is the improvement of students' listening, reading, speaking and translation skills. However, language training has no sense if students do not have the possibility to communicate in the English-speaking environment. In the non-English-speaking countries the situation is more complicated because of many teachers' accent, which they are not aware of. Thus, teachers are the first to improve their proficiency and set example to the students of accurate pronunciation (Kazuo, Takako, & Kyuwon, 2010, p. 7). Chinese teachers say that often during foreign language lessons students are afraid to make a mistake, and it is an obstacle to those, who do not communicate in authentic language environment. Regardless language proficiency, usually, in Chinese schools the main task at speaking lessons is learning speech patterns. That is the reason why after lessons a student still focuses his or her attention on reading and writing. That is why the change of training methods is of vital importance for acquiring speaking skills in Chinese educational establishments.

S. Krashen considers that the main function of a teacher in a classroom is providing students with possibility to acquire necessary knowledge and under such conditions a classroom transforms into the place where students learn information to which they have not had access anywhere. At the same time, teachers should simulate situations in which students may find themselves and give them opportunity to practice foreign language settling cultural conflicts. Thus, speaking lessons become an activity during which the students have opportunity to improve the verbal and nonverbal communicative skills. And



the basic part of this process is forming cross cultural communication skills. The ultimate goal of foreign language training is to teach students to communicate fluently and freely as well as to improve general cultural knowledge and skills.

The teacher, as an organizer of the verbal communication, should set a proper example for the students. On condition of possessing certain knowledge of cross-cultural communication, the teacher will be able to manage a class with high-class mastery. Therefore, these teachers ought to have high level of oral proficiency in foreign language and cross-cultural competence (Chunyan, 2015, p. 8).

Our analysis allows us to make a conclusion, that absence of profound understanding of national culture of the country language of which is studied is the main reason for failures during acquisition of cross-cultural communication skills. In most cases, basic attention is paid to traditional aspects of training (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary). Unfortunately, the study of corresponding cultures that are connected with the language is often ignored. As a result, students do not know about a culture and values of the English-speaking countries. It is often the reason for mistakes and misunderstanding between them and English-speaking interlocutors. Another reason for the insufficient skills of foreign communication is the absence of English-speaking surroundings simulated by the teacher. It takes place when at lessons the teacher plays a dominant role, and students remain passive listeners during the class memorizing only language patterns. As a result, such lessons do not provide communicative efficiency because the students are limited and passive in their participation. Although the students memorize set expressions and idioms, they make many mistakes, because they do not understand their meanings that are conditioned by a culture. Such situations often take place at Chinese universities.

Besides, the students are deprived of the possibility to use what they have learned at lessons in the real-life situation. Another reason for unsatisfactory level of English proficiency is misunderstanding of style, the choice of which depends on a certain situation as well as the content of conversation, origin of interlocutors and type of communication. Often students do not pay attention to the interlocutor's title or rank, surroundings the conversations take place in, that, in its turn, results in incorrect cross-cultural communication.

In the analyzed literature researchers stress that for the development of students' cross-cultural competence, promoting oral communication skills must be based on corresponding pedagogical, psychological and linguistic theories. Development of oral skills means diversified cooperation in accordance with the aim, content of training, strategies and methods of assessment. Student-centered teaching, real life language surroundings and cooperation with teachers were determined by foreign scientists as basic factors for effective foreign language training and improvement of students' cross-cultural communicative skills (Chunyan, 2015, p. 9).

Another important aspect in foreign language training, as the organized activity, is the choice of questions and themes for the competitive and modern curriculum. In this context, efficiency of educational process depends on the aim with which a language is studied. Usually teaching is predetermined by educational standards or curriculum concerted with educational authorities of the country. But scholars underline the necessity to conduct foreign language training taking into account poly cultural character of society that requires additional culture-oriented subjects (Roy-Campbell, 2014, p. 16).

Invitation of well-known scientists and experts for delivering lectures on cross cultural issues, sending teachers overseas, addition of extra curricular activities for development of cross-cultural competence and awakening cultural consciousness are very



effective. Such events may be held in the form of cultural forums, discussions of foreign films, English-language competitions, debates etc. (Chunyan, 2015, p. 9).

### CONCLUSIONS

Thus, modern trend in internationalization of higher education has made English language study not only as a “code system of signs” but also as a necessary condition to conduct of dialogue with the representatives of other cultures. Such initiative of the developed Asian countries as strengthening of international cooperation means activation of these countries in the sphere of higher education internationalization and increase of their students’ mobility. The result of these initiatives is close attention to forming students’ foreign language communication in Asian universities. One of important factors that influences forming foreign language communication skills under internationalization of higher education is acquiring specific knowledge about cross cultural relations, differences in the speech acts of native and target languages, systems of cultural values, peculiarities of verbal and nonverbal behaviour according to the rules of national culture.

Our further research will be focused on the analysis of foreign language teachers’ training in the universities of the Asian region.

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