

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE OF CHINESE UNIVERSITY TEACHERS WORKING WITH BACHELOR-TRANSLATORS

Liu Yanshi

Postgraduate Student at the Department of Pedagogy, Foreign Philology and Translation,
Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics, Ukraine;
School of Foreign Languages, Sichuan University of Arts and Science, China
e-mail: 936533660@qq.com, orcid.org/0000-0002-6588-8325

Summary

This article presents a factor-criterion model of determining the intercultural competence of Chinese university teachers who work with bachelor-translators. The practical result of the scientific research of the article is the system of recommendations to the management of the intercultural competence development of teachers who work with bachelor-translators in the condition of Chinese institutions of higher education. The article systematizes the main problems of improving the intercultural competence of teachers in Chinese institutions of higher education. The article considers the internal and external factors of developing intercultural teaching competence of teachers in Chinese institutions of higher education. The article emphasizes that the intercultural competence of the teacher, as a systematized set of knowledge, abilities and qualities that ensure the optimal implementation of pedagogical activities, is aimed at meeting both professional and social needs, is a multilevel system that develops over time from the three intercultural dimensions of emotion, cognition and skill. The essence of social and professional needs of teachers in the conditions of Chinese institutions of higher education is considered with the approaches of regular training and intercultural experience. The components of the model of determining the intercultural competence of the Chinese university teachers working with bachelor-transactors are analyzed and considered in detail. The article presents the essence of pedagogical conditions, which is necessary for designing the intercultural teaching training process in the conditions of Chinese institutions of higher education, and it contributes to the development of the intercultural competence of teachers in teaching implementation. The specifics of the pedagogical approach to the development of intercultural competence of Chinese university teachers are considered. The scientific result of the research was the proposed model of determining the intercultural competence of teachers in the conditions of Chinese institutions of higher education, which is verified to improve the intercultural competence of teachers who work with bachelor-translators.

Key words: intercultural competence, teacher, model, emotional aspect, cognitive aspect, skills, bachelor-translators, Chinese institutions of higher education, pedagogical approaches.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.23856/5622>

1. Introduction

Intercultural studies has been a hot topic in China's academia since 1980s. In the past, the contrast research on cultures seems to be done a lot, but the dynamic intercultural process needs to be done further. To develop students of undergraduates at the translation program, the teachers' professional competence is quite vital. Teachers occupy a pivotal role in developing students' intercultural competence.

Any teacher who responds to new social expectations, is capable of creative growth and professional self-improvement, perceives and creates innovations, and then updates one's knowledge, enriches pedagogical theory and practice, becomes an effective teacher with a high level of intercultural competence integrated into students' linguistic competence development.

That is the reason that the authors attempt to design a model of determining the intercultural competence of Chinese university teachers who are working with bachelor-translators, from the viewpoint of teachers in accordance with their professional competence. To verify this model, a survey is made and conducted to prove the good design and practice in teachers' intercultural competence teaching.

2. Literary review

Theoretically, Lessard-Clouston (1996) investigated Chinese foreign language teachers' attitude to cultural teaching, Sercu (2006) and Oranje & Smith (2017) probed foreign language teachers' cultural teaching faith, and Zhang Chun (2014) studied the intercultural competence development faith of university foreign language teachers, in addition, the cognition about intercultural communication competence of foreign language teachers of higher education institutions is also analyzed (Han Xiaohui 2014). But specialized literature sources do not provide sufficient information regarding the formation of the intercultural competence of teachers in the conditions of Chinese institutions of higher education.

Most teachers admit the importance of intercultural competence theoretically, but they embrace uncertain attitude or contradictory emotion toward the integration of cultural knowledge into language teaching. To make it clear, the authors have made hypotheses: do the foreign language teachers, working with bachelor-translators, have different interpretations on the policies? How much do they know about intercultural competence? Do they use some appropriate teaching methods to develop students' intercultural competence? Have they had some intercultural experiences to guide their teaching designs? Apparently, a project of teachers' training on inter-culture is necessary to be designed in the approaches of instruction and experience, so that teachers can transform their cognition, emotion, attitude, and behavior in their actual teaching activities.

3. Research aim and tasks

The aim of the article is to develop the model of determining the intercultural competence of teachers in the conditions of Chinese institutions of higher education, who work with bachelor-translators. To achieve this goal and get the proper verification of the model, the following tasks were set:

- Analysis of the factors of determining the intercultural competence of teachers in the conditions of institutions of higher education of west China;
- Study of the teacher's intercultural competence model in the conditions of Chinese institutions of higher education, who work with bachelor-translators.
- Identification of pedagogical conditions that contribute to the development of the intercultural competence of the Chinese university teachers.

4. Materials and methods

The object of research is the status of intercultural competence of Chinese university teachers who work with bachelor-translators.

The subject of the study is the processes of developing the teacher's intercultural competence in the conditions of Chinese institutions of higher education.

An applied problem on this topic, is the complexity of the emotion, cognition and behavior of teachers working with bachelor-translators in the environment of Chinese institutions of higher education.

The scientific problem lies in the lack of methodological principles regarding the development of the intercultural competence of teachers in the conditions of Chinese institutions of higher education.

The following research methods were chosen:

- generalization – for the analysis of the factors of determining the intercultural competence of teachers in the conditions of institutions of higher education of west China;
- classification – to highlight and substantiate the main components of the teacher's intercultural competence development model in the conditions of Chinese institutions of higher education;
- deduction – for the parameterization of the components of the teacher's intercultural competence development model in the conditions of Chinese institutions of higher education;
- analysis and synthesis – to identify pedagogical conditions that contribute to the development of the intercultural competence of teachers in the conditions of Chinese institutions of higher education.

5. Research results and discussion of results

The status of intercultural competence development of the teacher in Chinese institutions of higher education determines the desire to satisfy the social needs of bachelor-translators with high-level intercultural competence, which reflect the necessities of the enhancement of the university teachers' professional competence and intercultural teaching actions, especially working with bachelor-translators.

The concept "teaching language to form intercultural competence" refers to "an educational activity of individual world outlook, values, identity, intercultural awareness and ability carried out by the school through the determination of training objectives, curriculum setting, selections of teaching content and materials, update of teaching concepts, designs of teaching methods and teaching activities, and organic combination of school education and social practice" (Zhang Hongling 2012: 4). Thus, the goal of teaching is to enhance intercultural awareness and sensitivity and help students observe, analyse, and settle the questions from the intercultural viewpoint; to develop students' attitude of respect, inclusion, understanding, and appreciation, towards different cultures; enrich their cultural knowledge and own a global vision; to increase their intercultural communication competence to ensure the efficiency and appropriateness; cultivate students' cooperative competence in the diversified settings.

The process of intercultural competence development is determined by both external factors (social and professional requirements for pedagogical condition) and internal factors (the level of development of individuality as a teacher's attitude, emotion, skills and qualities that determine the teacher's readiness to overcome intercultural barriers in the pedagogical activity and other applied translations).

The factors of determining the intercultural competence of teachers in the conditions of Chinese institutions of higher education are as follows:

The authors have developed the factor-criterion model, which includes six types of professional activities of teachers of the translation discipline. The first one is organizational competence, which refers to six skills, namely: the ability to organize educational activities; the ability to organize extracurricular activities of students; the ability to foster student participation in the team; the ability to educate ideas; the ability to coordinate all aspects of internal and external education; the ability to organize and manage their own learning and life in professional development.

The second is related to professional knowledge, that is, the cognitive component. The fourth component is keen observation, rich imagination, good memory and ability to think logically.

The third indicates competence in developing curricula for teachers working with students in the translation program. It requires five components: clear teaching objectives; careful study of teaching materials; activation of teaching activities; attention to teaching strategies; implementation of teaching assessment.

The fourth concerns communicative competence. It includes the ability to linguistic expression; the ability to non-verbal expression; the ability to use modern educational technologies. All three elements constitute the teacher's ability in terms of communication to establish harmonious relationships with students and their colleagues. Thus, their translation educational activities can function as an effective act of intercultural communication to bridge the gap between different languages and cultures.

The fifth is synergistic competence. It contains three aspects: teamwork management, task adjustment, organizational structure.

The last one concerns performance. It includes positive dynamics of translation learning, active participation in professional activities, increased interest in the translation discipline, methods of self-assessment of teaching.

Intercultural competence of teachers' working with bachelor-translators actually involves three aspects of emotion, cognition, and behaviour in the teaching and education. Emotional competence refers to a teacher's constant reflection of his native language culture's reference frame, its influence on his and students' thinking and ways of behaviour, of his attitude to target language culture, stimulating and helping students to actively do an intercultural leaning. Cognitive competence includes teachers' accumulation of alien culture's comprehension and intercultural theory and practice, and internalization of intercultural education and teaching, among other things, training the ability of seeking common ground while reserving differences. Behaviour competence is to conclude the experience of intercultural practice, by searching and collecting the intercultural teaching stuff and cases, promote the close linking with translation teaching and intercultural practice, and form the students' ability of applying intercultural theory and knowledge into thinking, analysis and solution to the intercultural problems.

In addition, teachers' working with bachelor-translators have to respect students' characters of intercultural learning, based on this, take proper modes, methods and means to develop students' intercultural competence. To develop the level of bachelor-translators' intercultural competence through teaching, it is difficult for a part of teachers to achieve it. More cooperation among teachers is essential, along with the systematic design and implementation of training project and teaching plan, which can be adopted into the different courses and stages.

In the questionnaire survey conducted based on the design of empirical study, all 57 correspondents are the colleagues working in the Chinese universities, Sichuan province, west

China. As for questions regarding intercultural competence from the dimensions of concept, connotations at the emotional, cognitive and skill aspects, and self-assessment and evaluation on their students, corresponding teachers are giving their selections. Actually, the degree of cognition of the teachers will impact their focus on the intercultural competence training for students in their pedagogical designs and tasks. Only 15.09% of them chose the choice “weak” and 35.85% selected the “strong” and “very strong”.

In the terms of the connotations of intercultural competence, the author provides the five choices: [1] Respect the world’s cultural diversity; [2] Through comparison, understand, interpret and evaluate the similarities and differences of cultural texts and products, etc., deepen the understanding and identification; [3] Critically learn the basics of western intercultural theory and research methods, and carry out preliminary research based on intercultural practice; [4] Carry out intercultural communication in a flexible, effective and principled manner; [5] Provide intercultural communication services through interpreting or translation, to mediate between people with intercultural communication difficulties.

The second choice [2] is accepted by all teachers, and 78.16% of correspondents select the fourth one [4]. Thus, the language service such as interpreting and translation is very important but quite difficult in fulfilling the communication tasks concerning cultural transference.

However, “the appropriateness of the teachers in intercultural experience is in proportion with the pedagogical competence” sounds true. 16.36% correspondents think they have relatively weak points in adapting themselves to bridge the cultural link. Only they had very strong intercultural awareness and sensitivity, they could excavate the cultural elements in the textbook or use relevant translation materials.

Nevertheless, as for “how is the intercultural competence of the students you have taught?” the teachers have made assessment on the intercultural competence of bachelor-translators. On average, most of the students own the competence at the general level. 12.73% correspondents as teachers think their students have strong competence in the intercultural aspect.

In the light of data analysis above, the authors come to conclusions on this investigation: 1) The concept of intercultural competence and its connotations needs to be known deeply by teachers. More further study and trains are provided to foreign teachers to enhance their professional competence in teaching. 2) From the average rate of intercultural competence of teachers and the one of students, the similarities between them are decided by the teachers’ competence. Only by developing teachers’ professional competence, students’ competence can be improved with the implementation of teaching, learning and assessment. 3) Some difficulties in teaching practice are often met, especially, what to teach, how to teach, and how to test are in urgent need of creative exploration. In addition, foreign language teachers’ emotion is another focus for further research.

In the process of competence development, it is necessary to identify the pedagogical conditions that contribute to the development of teachers’ intercultural competence in the conditions of Chinese institutions of higher education. By pedagogical conditions, the authors mean the pedagogical environment, in which the process of training develops and functions, corresponds to the goals of the development of intercultural competence in the conditions of Chinese universities and implements the didactic principles of selecting the contents of intercultural training for teachers, with the approaches of instructions and experience, in professional orientation of linguistic-cultural teaching activity, which determine the development of this quality as one component of the specialist’s professional competence.

To identify the pedagogical conditions for the development of the Chinese university teachers’ intercultural competence, it is necessary to: determine the system of the goals of the

intercultural training process; justify the didactic principles of the selection of the subject matters, structure the content of the educational material mostly from the target language not the source language; identify the factors which functions mainly in this process (methods, means, organizational forms); to provide a program for intercultural competence development as the main means of achieving the given goal, to test the developed program in an experiment.

The level of the Chinese university teacher's intercultural competence is determined by knowledge about other multi-cultures, the culture processing, skills and abilities to use means and methods of culture information processing and analysis in various types of intercultural activities, the ability of emotion to recognize and control oneself and bachelor-translators in professional teaching activities, the ability of reflection on the teacher's classroom action as a practitioner. Any creative teacher cannot be separated from the realities, and teachers working with bachelor-translators are in search of new forms and methods of intercultural teaching, pedagogical support in the educational process. The translation materials the website that the teacher select should help the bachelor-translators to transform the information and culture as well so as to achieve the intercultural communication in the educational training and practical process.

The approaches of enhancing the teacher's intercultural competence in teaching include a regular and systematic training program, which highlights the importance of further teacher education, and an intercultural experience project by means of web platforms such as digital reading, media materials, and video from the target language countries, to promote the cooperation and communication of intercultural teachers.

In the process of using the proposed results, the following limitations of a subjective essence may be imposed:

- in the process of development of intercultural competence environment, social and professional needs of teachers' intercultural pedagogy may arise in the condition of Chinese institutions of higher education;
- the list of organizational and pedagogical conditions in the Chinese universities may change depending on the peculiarities of undergraduate programs.

Further areas of research may be:

- assessment of the effectiveness of intercultural interaction and expedience of teachers in the environment of Chinese institutions of higher education to cultivate the development of intercultural competence;
- assessment of the quality of taking into account the web technological aspects and the function of multi-modal teaching means for Chinese university teachers in the development of intercultural competence in teaching.

6. Conclusions

The concept of intercultural competence and its connotations needs to be known deeply. More further study and trains are provided to enhance their professional competence in teaching. From the average rate of intercultural competence of teachers and of students, the similarities between them are decided by the teachers' competence. Difficulties in teaching practice are often met, especially, what to teach, how to teach, and how to test are in need of creative exploration.

From the dimensions of emotion, cognition and skills, teachers' intercultural competence can be evaluated so that, according to the model, the professional competences of teachers such as organization, professional knowledge, curriculum teaching design, communicative

competence, synergy competence and performance could be developed increasingly. Furthermore, the approach to fostering the foreign language teachers' competence will emphasize the intercultural experience and its reflection. More chances are offered to teachers to get cognition and promote their skills. In the meantime, the multi-modal devices of internet technology impact foreign language teachers' competence development, which needs more attention.

References

1. Han Xiaohui. (2014). *The status quo and consideration of the cultivation of intercultural communication ability of college students: a case study of college English teachers* // *Journal of Foreign Languages*, No. 3. p. 106-110.
2. Lessard-Clouston, M. (1996). *Chinese teachers' view of culture in their EFL learning and teaching* // *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, Vol. 9. No. 3. p. 197-224.
3. Oranje, J. & L. Smith. (2017). *Language teacher cognitions and intercultural language teaching: The New Zealand perspective* // *Language Teaching Research*, Vol. 22. No. 3. p. 310-329.
4. Sercu, L. (2006). *The foreign language and intercultural competence teacher: the acquisition of a new professional identity* // *Intercultural Education*. Vol. 17. No. 1. p. 55-72.
5. Zhang Chun. (2014). *A quantitative study on the belief of foreign language teachers in Chinese universities: Based on the cultivation of intercultural communication competence* // *Foreign Languages in China*. No. 6. p. 91-95.
6. Zhang Hongling. (2009). *Research on intercultural competence training of foreign language teachers. Study on Intercultural Studies (Vol. 1)* / Beijing: Higher Education Press, 278-290.
7. Zhang Hongling (2012). *Intercultural education-oriented foreign language teaching: history, current situation and future* // *Foreign Language World*. No. 2. p. 2-7.
8. Zheng, X. (2017). *Translingual identity as pedagogy: international teaching assistants of English in college composition classrooms* // *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 101. No. S1. p. 29-44.